

The Sermon on the Mount
You are the Salt of the Earth;
You are the Light of the World; Matthew 5:13-16

Matthew 5:13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Background on salt

Salt was used as a form of payment for Roman soldiers, which is where the term “salary” originates. The Latin word *salarium* referred to the allowance given to soldiers to buy salt, a valuable commodity in ancient times. Salt was used for preserving food and as a seasoning.

Soldiers were not paid directly in salt. The *salarium* was a stipend specifically for purchasing salt, reflecting the significance of salt. Soldiers were also paid in money, grain, and other goods.

Salt cannot lose its taste, but fools salt or fake salt was a problem and if you got fake salt you’d just throw it out. The idea was that fake salt was salt that had lost its flavor. Some have accused Jesus of being ignorant of basic science.

First, no one in first century AD knew the reason why fake salt looked like salt but was failed to function as salt.

Second, what other scientific misunderstandings would Jesus need to correct. He spoke to His world in the time, history, culture, and knowledge of His day. To do otherwise would have created nothing but confusion.

Third, in His humanity, Jesus set aside the prerogative use of divine knowledge. He functions with true humanity, learning discursively and from His culture. And yet, still spoke with wisdom that is timeless due to His sinless and divine life.

Fourth, can you image Jesus explaining high level chemical structures and why only certain crystalline molecules were salt and others appeared to be salt but the molecular structures were different. The sermon on the Mount would have devolved into a ridiculous lecture on science not known for 1800 years.

Salt as an expression of a believer’s relationship to the world, Matthew 5:13

In context of the kingdom and the beatitudes, Matthew 3-5

Matthew 4:23 Jesus was going throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people.

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Matthew 5:13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

As salt provides flavor and preservation to food, so too should kingdom citizens provide flavor and preservation to those inside and outside the kingdom.

Colossians 4:6 Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.

Matthew 5:13 You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

If salt ceases to give flavor, it is completely useless. Don't be useless!

Light as an expression of a believer's relationship to the world, Matthew 5:14-15

Matthew 5:14-15 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

As light provides help to those in darkness, so too should kingdom citizens provide help to those both inside and outside the kingdom

A light that is covered is completely useless. Don't be useless!

Jonathan Edwards and his resolutions.

Resolution 17: Resolved, that I will live so, as I shall wish I had done when I come to die.

Philippians 2:14-16 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Salt and light as analogies for good works, Matthew 5:16

Matthew 5:16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Distinction with the warning in Matthew 6:1

Matthew 6:1 Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

A warning about works done for the purpose of impressing others

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A warning about the specific works of “practicing your righteousness” of giving of alms, praying, and fasting

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Good works for the purpose of glorifying our Heavenly Father

The planetarium: Making massive objects to appear as they really are and not as we see them in our limited ability. This is our goal as believers. We function to make God appear as He really is.

Conclusion: Kingdom citizens live with purpose, not wanting to waste their lives, but instead to be useful the way salt and light are useful. The primary purpose of a citizen of the kingdom is the glory of the Heavenly Father. We bring Him glory when we do good to others in His name.