

Matthew 5:13-16

Introduction

What is our role with our non-Christian friends? If they found out we were Christians would they be surprised or would that make sense of how we live our lives?

The Passage

I. We have a valuable role to play in the world

- A. We don't exist for ourselves, we exist for the world
 - 1. Salt doesn't exist for itself, salt exists for food
 - 2. Light doesn't exist for itself, it exists to give light to a dark room
- B. What if we went about our lives with that sense of identity (that the world is bland food in need of our flavor and the world is a dark place in need of our light)
- C. It's easy to turn our church into "Club Grace"
 - To assume that the church exists for us
 - But Jesus has a larger, riskier adventure for us—a role in the world

II. We fulfill this role by being "distinct but not distant" from the world

A. Being distinct (v. 13)

- 1. Salt has a distinct flavor (think of garlic salt or even wasabi)
- 2. When people spend time with us and watch us go about our lives they should come away with a very distinct flavor
 - a. We should taste like Jesus
 - b. They won't always like this taste but at least it will be distinct
- 3. We fail to fulfill our role in the world by not being distinct
 - a. v. 13: unsalty salt is totally useless for food
 - b. When we lose our distinct flavor, we become useless to the world
 - c. How do we lose our distinct flavor?
 - 1) We lose our passion for and commitment to Christ
 - 2) We fall in love with the world
 - We love the world's approval more than God's and we want to fit in with the world
 - But the moment we want to fit in with the world, we become useless to the world

B. Not being distant (v. 14-16)

- 1. We should live in "open intentional proximity" to others (v. 16)
 - a. Jesus is not necessarily telling us to do our religious activity in front of others (prayer, worship, giving alms, etc—see Mt 6:1)
 - b. Rather he is telling us to live our everyday lives openly
 - e.g. doing business with integrity, raising our kids, going through painful experiences, etc
 - c. The purpose is not to draw attention to ourselves but to God (see v. 16)
- 2. We fail to fulfill our role by not living in "open intentional proximity" to world
 - a. v. 14-15: How silly it would be to hide a light!

- b. This guards against withdrawing from the world, isolating ourselves, and simply living our Christian lives in our safe Christian circles

C. Our identity as salt and light

- 1. Being “In but not of the world”
- 2. Living as “Resident aliens”
- 3. “Living lives that demand an explanation” (see 1 Peter 3:15)

D. Practical Examples of ways to live distinct but not distant lives

Ask ourselves, “what is the gospel and it’s implications in our lives”

Ask ourselves, “what are the idols of this culture”

- 1. How we walk through hard times (perseverance and faith)
- 2. How we handle our mistakes (apologizing)
- 3. How we treat people at the bottom of the social chain
- 4. How we serve others radically
- 5. How we deal with materialism (living below our means and giving)
- 6. How we deal with entertainment (getting rid of the t.v.)

Conclusion

I. Jesus’ words should convict us

If our lives don’t look any different from those around us, we should ask ourselves, “Am I really following Jesus with passion and commitment?”

II. Jesus’ words should encourage us

Jesus is not commanding us to be salt and light, he is simply saying that if we follow him, we are salt and light. We don’t have to try to be salt and light; we just have to follow him and leave the rest up to him.

III. Action steps this week

- A. Identify one way you have become too much like the world and lost that salty taste that you’d like to change in the next month. Pray about it, talk about it with someone, and take some practical steps.
- B. Identify one way you can pursue Jesus with more passion and commitment this week.

Discussion Questions

1. Opening questions: What struck you most about the sermon/the passage? What surprised you? What confused you? What did you disagree with?
2. Who are some non-Christian people in your life who God is giving you an opportunity to engage more intentionally?
3. As you think about Christians living out the gospel in our culture generally, in what area/ issue do we have the best opportunity to be different in a way that will have an impact on the people around us?
4. As you consider Jesus' words about being "salty" Christians, what's one area in your own life where you'd like to work on being more distinct from the world (more salty)?
5. How would you describe your own passion for and commitment to Christ at this season in your life (are you in a dry season, a learning season, a rich season, etc)? What's one way you might more intentionally pursue Christ in the coming weeks?