
First Baptist Dyersburg • Sermon Notes

You are to be an Influencer for Christ

Message #10 in the series

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Sunday, April 12, 2026 • Mike Hickman, Senior Pastor

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:13-16, NLT)

Matthew 5:13-16 flows naturally out of the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:1-12. Taking on and exhibiting the character of the Beatitudes is what makes it possible for us to be salt and light on the earth, in the world, among the nations. ***In fact, there is an important and eternal truth we must never forget: those who love and follow King Jesus are the only real salt this world will ever taste and the only authentic light it will ever see!*** Jesus' words in these verses take it as an undeniable truth that we live in a decadent, decaying, dark world. Where there is decay, we need salt. Where there is darkness, we need light. We, the citizens of the kingdom of heaven (5:10), are God's plan to stop decay and stamp out darkness. This plan finds its crescendo in the last words of the last chapter in this Gospel with what we call “the Great Commission” (Matthew 28:18-20). To the nations we go as salt and light. (Danny Akin, *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount*, page 16.)

We think of salt as a flavor – the people hearing the Sermon on the Mount that day saw it as a preservative. (Jen Wilkin, *Sermon on the Mount*.)

Salt had at least five functions in the ancient world: (1) purity; (2) preservation; (3) flavor; (4) healing; and (5) creation of thirst. Followers of Jesus can and should be all of these, but it seems that the primary ideas are of purifying

and preserving. (Danny Akin, *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount*, page 18.)

³⁴ “Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again? ³⁵ Flavorless salt is good neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. It is thrown away. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!” (Luke 14:34-35, NLT)

Salt was so important and valuable in the ancient world that God made a Covenant of Salt with the Israelites and their leaders on different occasions. These covenants were an unbreakable, everlasting, and incorruptible agreement between God and humanity, often symbolizing enduring loyalty and preservation. (Numbers 18:19, with the priests; 2 Chronicles 13:5, concerning the kingdom of David; and Leviticus 2:13, that salt was to be included with their offerings of grain to represent their covenant with God.)

¹⁵ Instead, you must worship Christ as Lord of your life. And if someone asks about your hope as a believer, always be ready to explain it. ¹⁶ But do this in a gentle and respectful way. Keep your conscience clear. Then if people speak against you, they will be ashamed when they see what a good life you live because you belong to Christ. ¹⁷ Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong! (1 Peter 3:15-17, NLT)

⁵ Live wisely among those who are not believers, and make the most of every opportunity. ⁶ Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone. (Colossians 4:5-6, NLT)

I suggest to you, therefore, that the Christian is to function as the salt of the earth in a much more individual sense. He does so by his individual life and character, by just being the man that he is in every sphere in which he finds himself. For instance, a number of people may be talking together in a rather unworthy manner. Suddenly a Christian enters into the company, and immediately his presence has an effect. He does not say a word, but people begin to modify their language. He is already acting as salt, he is already controlling the tendency to putrefaction and pollution. Just by being a Christian man, because of his life that was manifesting itself, and he does so in every sphere

and in every situation. (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, page 134.)

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father. (Matthew 5:14-16, NLT)

The world will learn more from us by what they see than what they hear. In Jesus' day, they knew what it was like to live in total darkness. If you want to prevent crime and improve safety after dark, you flood the area with light. Light reveals what is hidden in the darkness. Light causes things to grow. If the children of God don't show the light, who will? Our influence matters because children of God are the only ones who possess this light. (Jen Wilkin, *Sermon on the Mount*.)

So when Mary and Joseph came to present the baby Jesus to the Lord as the law required, ²⁸Simeon was there. He took the child in his arms and praised God, saying,

²⁹“Sovereign Lord, now let your servant die in peace,
as you have promised.

³⁰I have seen your salvation,

³¹which you have prepared for all people.

³²He is a light to reveal God to the nations,
and he is the glory of your people Israel!” (Luke 2:27-32, NLT)

⁴The Word gave life to everything that was created,
and his life brought light to everyone.

⁵The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness can never extinguish it. (John 1:4-5, NLT)

But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.” (John 9:5, NLT)

¹⁶“For this is how God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him.

¹⁸“There is no judgment against anyone who believes in him. But anyone who does not believe in him has already been judged for not believing in God's one and only Son. ¹⁹And the judgment is based on

this fact: God's light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. ²⁰ All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed. ²¹ But those who do what is right come to the light so others can see that they are doing what God wants." (John 3:16-21, NLT)

Charles Spurgeon said, "Christ has lighted us that we might enlighten the world. . . . God intends His grace to be as conspicuous as a city built on a mountain's brow" (*Exposition*, page 41). God did not redeem us and call us into His kingdom to hide us. He did not save us to be silent saints. (Danny Akin, *Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in The Sermon on the Mount*, page 20.)

Christian people, you and I are living in the midst of men and women who are in a state of gross darkness. They will never have any light anywhere in this world except from you and from me and the gospel we believe and teach. They are watching us. Do they see something different about us? Are our lives a silent rebuke to them? Do we so live as to lead them to come and ask us, 'Why do you always look so peaceful? How is it you are so balanced? How can you stand up to things as you do? Why is it you are not dependent upon artificial aids and pleasures as we are? What is this thing that you have got?' If they do we can tell them that wondrous, amazing, but tragically neglected news, that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners', and to give men a new nature and a new life and to make them children of God. Christian people alone are the light of the world today. Let us live and function as children of light. (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, page 147.)

⁸ For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! ⁹ For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. (Ephesians 5:8-9, NLT)

Work hard to show the results of your salvation, obeying God with deep reverence and fear. ¹³ For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him. ¹⁴ Do everything without complaining and arguing, ¹⁵ so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. (Philippians 2:12b-15, NLT)