KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 5:13-16

(Sermon from Sunday 30 April 2023, Richard van Lieshout)

1. Information

a) Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions

b) Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.

- The information in the CG guide focuses mainly on the beatitudes in this section, so there is no additional material on the Salt & Light passage in particular.

Sermon Outline

- Because the 'Salt & Light' passage is not very complex, and thus would not require too much time to explain, I used some time in the sermon to be clear on the connection between the 'beatitudes' and the 'salt & light' passage.
- **This is essential** (and is the reason, I believe, for the 'bridge' verses 11 & 12) in order for us to see that the beatitudes, while personal, are **not meant to be lived out in private.** They are lived out in our daily lives, and are meant to be visible & tangible.

- After making this connection, I went into the 'salt & light' passage.

- In my own experience preaching this passage previously, and in the many sermons I have since heard on the passage, the focus narrows to particular usages of 'salt' and how that might apply to our lives today.
- While this approach may not be wrong, I think it sometimes is guilty of 'not seeing the wood for the trees'. In any of Jesus's metaphors (or parables), **we can get caught up in the details and miss what is important about the whole**.

- In this case, both the 'salt' and the 'light' images are complimentary, and thus in the sermon I pointed out three features common to both, which I am convinced would be the main features Jesus was emphasising:
  - **i. We are to be present and visible**
  - **ii. Our presence is beneficial**
  - **iii. A little goes a long way**

2. **Activation**

- **The primary activation points for the CG time would be to ensure groups discuss what the three points in the sermon (outlined above) mean for us in our particular situations today.**

- For example, you could also questions on the three points like:
    i. **What are some ways that we 'hide' our Christianity, either at home, work or play?** How do Christians 'keep the salt in the shaker' instead of intentionally applying themselves in a meaningful way to the world around them? What can we do to 'uncover' ourselves and 'let our good works shine'? Be really practical here!
    ii. **Have we become embarrassed or ashamed at being identified as Christians?** Why?[1] How does this image give us reason to be bold in our Christian identity and 'hold our heads up high' as we live out our Christian lives in view of a watching world?
    iii. **How does the fact that we don't need to be the moral majority** encourage us as we live out an authentic faith?

—-

- With question (i) above, it is important to relate Matthew 5:16 with Matthew 6:1, which warns **against** publicly displaying acts of righteousness. **It would be worthwhile discussing this tension in your group!**
- Commenting on this, a scholar friend of mine advised:
    - '*Perhaps Jesus is saying something along the lines of having courage to identify with him and his words, and to be public about it, but not to make a show of things when your goal is to impress others, and your heart is removed from God. Maybe an application is not to make a big noise about things in the church, but rather to be abundant in good works when no one is watching, and to model Christ amongst the outside worl*d'

—-

- I finished the sermon talking about the **warning against losing saltiness**, and connected it with Romans 1:21-23, which may be worth reading (note: the same Greek word is used in Rom 1:22 'they became fools' as Matthew 5:13 'lost its taste').
- Essentially I ended by referring back to the first beatitude: that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are spiritually poor, those who realise their spiritual need before God.

- This would be a good place to end in praying meaningfully for God to make us salt & light in an authentic way by His Spirit!

3. **Implementation**

- The 'transformation equation' can similarly be described as:
    i. What? (Information)
    ii. So what? (Activation)
    iii. **Now what? (Implementation)**

- What resolutions can your group make together for the coming week?

---

[1] Potential reasons could be some of the awful things done in the name of Christianity in the past, or perhaps the ridiculing of Christians in current media etc