

Salt and Light to Every Generation

by Paul Washer

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world, by being more like Jesus Christ and reflecting his life and power.

Duration: 53:18

Scripture: Exodus 20:1-17, Matthew 5:1-2, Matthew 5:13-16, Matthew 6:33

Topics: "Evangelism"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of remembering the essential truths of the Christian faith. He uses the analogy of a city set on a hill and a lamp on a lampstand to illustrate the idea that as believers, we are called to be lights in the world and to let our light shine before others. The preacher also highlights the significance of recognizing our absolute dependence on God, comparing it to a drowning person grabbing onto someone for help. He emphasizes the need for humility and servanthood in Christian leadership, stating that our authority comes from Christ-likeness and standing on the Word of God.

Transcript

Let's open up our Bibles to Matthew chapter five, verse 13. Matthew chapter five, verse 13. Before I read the text, I would like to say that it is always a great privilege to preach the gospel.

But especially here today, it is not only a privilege, but it is also very humbling. I realize that I am preaching to men, many of whom have been in the ministry longer than I have, who know more than I do and are more conformed to the image of Christ than I am. So it's always very humbling to preach.

At the same time, we recognize that we are what we are by the grace of God. So prayerfully, I will preach by faith and hope that God will bless this time in the word again, Matthew chapter five, verse 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. 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. 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. Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Father, I come before you in the name of your son. Father, you know all things, you know, that apart from Christ, we can do nothing. And Lord, that's the case here today.

Lord, I just don't want to preach. But I want your people to be blessed, Lord, even though they are greater and I'm lesser. Lord, I pray that you would somehow use what I'm going to say here today.

To bless your people. That they might be strengthened. Encouraged.

And helped. In every way possible. Lord, I feel so weak to be here today.

Please help us in Jesus name. Amen. There are two truths being presented here.

First of all, you are the salt of the earth. And second of all, you are the light of the world. Now, we know that that pertains primarily to Jesus Christ.

But here as his disciples, he is calling us light. He is calling us salt. Now, there are several truths that I want us to understand.

First of all. Jesus is not saying that we must become salt. He is not saying that we must become light.

He is saying that we are salt and light by nature. Through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit. Through this supernatural work of God in our hearts, all of us have become so distinct from the world that we can work in the world as salt and light.

There is as much difference between you and the world because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in you as there is between light and darkness and salt and the thing that salt is poured upon. And this is what I want you to see. The whole world is talking about all that we must do.

But I want to talk to you today about all that we must be. Now, you and I are salt and light, but there are things that we can do to hinder the impact that we have upon the world. And what are those things? Primarily this.

We limit our impact upon the world by our lack of sanctification, by our neglect of looking at ourselves in the mirror of God's word and seeking to be more like Jesus. I've got a question for you. I know you labor a great deal in the ministry.

I know that you work very hard to grow the church in Korea. But let me ask you a question. How much time do you dedicate to growing you? How much time do you dedicate to becoming like Christ? You see, you and I must remember something.

We have a lot in common, although I'm from the West and you're from the East. There is a sense in which our cultures have a great deal in common. Korean men are known as strong men.

They are known as men with strong wills who are very determined, who are going to grab a hold of something and get it done. Now, that's a good characteristic. Yet at the same time, it's very dangerous.

Why? Because the task that we have before us is impossible. Even for the strongest man, it is only in the power of the Holy Spirit and according to the word of God that you and I can prevail. You see, we have to understand something, you and I will not necessarily have an impact upon the world because of the size of our congregations.

We will not have an impact upon the world because of the number of university degrees that we have hanging on the wall. We will not have an impact upon the world because of the eloquence of our preaching. We will have an impact upon the world only because we are conformed to the image of Jesus Christ.

Now, let me ask you a question with regard to you. What is your wife's greatest need? What is your children's greatest need? What is your congregation's greatest need? What do they need from you more than anything? They need the example of a Christ like man. They need the example of a man who reflects the virtue and the power of Jesus Christ.

How can we have a great impact upon secular Korea? How can we have an impact upon our generation? How can we have an impact upon the generation that is coming? It is not by learning some new strategy. It is not by studying church growth. And it is most certainly not by adopting much of the silly things that go on in the United States in the church.

How are we going to have an impact? It is by you and me becoming more like Jesus Christ. It is so easy to preach. It is so easy to look spiritual around people who do not know you.

But the great need of the day. Is that we be like Christ? Around the people who are closest to us, you realize that today in Korea, in the United States, all around the world, many people are disillusioned with the evangelical church. Even the reformed church.

Ungodliness in the church, worldliness in the church, it has soiled our testimony. How can we regain that testimony? How can we prove to the world that the gospel is truly powerful? It begins with us. It begins with us, the preachers.

Not just reflecting power. Not just possessing authority. Not just preaching mighty sermons.

But living mighty lives. The old Methodist preacher, Leonard Ravenhill, he used to say this all the time. Everybody is looking for a new definition of Christianity.

But what we need more than anything is a new demonstration of the power of Christianity. Christianity. Lived out in men and women like us.

Now, he says you are the light of the world. Let's read verse 14. 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. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven. Now, from this, I want to bring forth three texts.

And let me let me say this. I know that many of you men have read countless systematic theologies. I know that many of you are brilliant thinkers.

And I know that what I'm teaching here today seems almost like a class for new believers. But sometimes we need to take a step back, don't we? And not learn something new. But we need to remember what we have forgotten, the essentials of our Christian faith without these things, all our words.

They mean nothing. Now, the first truth I draw from this passage that I've just read, verse 15, a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Remember what I said, you are light and light by its very nature cannot be hidden.

If you take a candle and light it one single candle and it's sitting there in the darkness, you can see that candle for miles, can't you? And this is a great encouragement. You see, what we need to concentrate on is not how to grow our church or how to expand our ministries or how to promote ourselves. That's not what we need to concern ourselves with.

We only need to concern ourselves with reflecting more of the light of Jesus Christ. I am 52 years old. I have been in the ministry for 30 years.

My great desire right now and what I want to dedicate my life to for the rest of my life is simply just seeking to be like Jesus, because I know that the greatest hindrance in my life is my lack of conformity to him. This is a great encouragement. If you and I are more like Christ, if our churches reflect more of the life of Christ, not only will we be seen.

It will be impossible to hide us, it will be impossible to hide us. Now, the second truth I want to point out, God does not light a lamp in order to hide it. Look what he says in verse 15.

Nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand. What did Jesus tell his disciples in John 15, 16? He said, I have chosen you, I have chosen you and appointed you that you would go out and bear much fruit and that your fruit would remain. We can use that metaphor also with regard to light.

God has chosen you and appointed you. To bear light, to reflect the life and the power of Jesus Christ, it is God's sovereign will to use you in a mighty way to advance his kingdom. And yet you and I must understand something.

That there are things that we can do to hinder that and there are things that we must do to make ourselves usable. Well. God desires to use a clean vessel, God desires to use a man who has a heart for God and doesn't care about other things as much as he fails, as much as he is weak.

You can say one thing about this man. He doesn't care. Except to be used of God and bring glory to God's tozer.

One time he was wearied because he was hearing all these men complaining about not being used of God, and so he said this is all these men wanting to be used of God. But I have discovered this, if a man will make himself usable, God will wear him out. God will use him until there's nothing left of him, and that should be our passion, men, to concern ourselves with being usable.

And then let God take care of how he will use us. Another thing that I want to point out, a third truth. Well, before that, let me say this, we are reformed, we think a lot about doctrine.

Theology and truth and all that is very important, but I want you to understand something being used of God depends more upon devotion, submission and character than it does upon the intellect. Our great training. And our gifts, you know this as well as I do.

You know it better than me right now in different places around the world. In Asia. In Africa, in South America.

There are men being mightily used of God. Who can barely read, they're starting hundreds of churches. God is using them in a way that you and I could maybe never even understand.

Why is that? Because although they may not know as much as we do, God has their heart. They belong to God. They care for nothing else but God.

Now, thirdly. Our motives must always be for the glory of God, look in verse 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. No one who is in their right mind, no one who is sane is drawn to a light bulb.

No one draws near to just a light bulb to look at a light bulb. But they draw near to the light that the light bulb gives off. And that should be the same with us.

We shouldn't desire for men to come to us. We shouldn't desire for men to think about us. We should not desire for men to exalt us.

We should not even desire that men respect us. But we want to be vessels to turn all men to Christ, to turn them to Christ. John the Baptist knew this well, didn't he? Listen to what he said in John three thirty.

He said he that is Jesus must increase, but I must decrease in evangelicalism today. And even in reform circles, there are the great men. The heroes.

The popular men, the men everybody knows. The men who speak in all the conferences. This is wrong.

It's just wrong. We shouldn't look to men. We shouldn't want to be seen on the day of judgment.

Don't you realize, brothers, on the day of judgment? Everything is going to change. And it's frightening. It's frightening for me.

I know that people know me all over the world, but that means nothing in God's eyes. Nothing. I know two young ladies.

You don't know their names. They minister in a country in Asia that is primarily Muslim. They have suffered for Christ like you and I could not even imagine.

They've never preached before thousands of people and no one knows their name. But on the day of judgment, those two little Indonesian ladies will be exalted and men like me will be humbled. Don't you see that? We always need to live in light of that.

There's there's a philosophical question that is sometimes asked. Would God take the most beautiful flower he has ever made and put it in a forest where no man will ever walk? Why would he do that? How would he get glory from that flower? No man sees it, so how will he receive glory? He receives glory because he looks at it every day. It belongs to him, he made it for him, he delights in looking at it, whether any man sees it or not.

And that's the same way with some pastors, their names are not known. Their congregations are small, but on the day of judgment. They may be exalted above the most famous names.

Why is that? God cares about Christ likeness, a heart that belongs to him. Is more important than a man who has a church of 50000, we must not look at things as men look at things, we must look at things as God looks at things. How will he judge us on that final day? Listen to George Whitfield.

He says, let the name of Whitfield perish, but Christ be glorified. He said, let my name die everywhere, let even my friends forget me, if by that means the cause of the blessed Jesus may be promoted. He says, let us look above names and parties.

Let Jesus be our everything. So that he is preached, I care not who is uppermost, I know my place even to be a servant of all were light. But for him.

But for him and now the Bible says we are also salt. Salt. In verse 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 under foot by men.

Now, as you know, salt has several very important characteristics. It permeates everything around it. It purifies.

It preserves things from rots and it gives taste to something that has no taste at all. Another thing about salt that is so very important. It does not assume the characteristics of the things that it is poured on, but it transforms the things it touches.

Now, the disciple of Jesus Christ. Is to be very similar. In what way? We are to influence those around us.

Brothers, listen to me. I'm not talking here about religious power, I'm not talking about authority. I'm not talking about even preaching, I'm talking about the way you and I live, because if our preaching is great.

But our living is small, those who hear us will eventually hate us. The gospel stands on its own, but there is a sense in which we can adorn the gospel or we can take power from it by the way that we live. So we influence those around us.

The disciple is to have also a purifying effect upon every thing he touches, everyone around him should be changed for the good. Also, a disciple preserves the world and the people around him from moral corruption. You can see this in the life of Abraham.

It seems like everyone that was around Abraham was somehow changed, was somehow helped because of his life. Also, the disciple of Jesus Christ has the power in his own life to revive other people and to even beautify them. I have known men of God that have done this to me.

There's a man I know by the name of Bob Jennings. He died a few years ago. No, you don't know his name, but every time I was around him, I wanted to be more like Christ.

I've been around a lot of famous people, but never has anyone impacted my life like his life. Because he was so godly, he was so kind, he was so loving, he was so humble, he was such a servant, that is the power of a disciple. Now, this passage that I've read.

Is often used as a proof text for Christian activism, you know, we need to be salt in the world. So let's unite, let's organize, let's march upon the world in order to change it. That's not what this verse is teaching at all.

When you look at this verse, it is saying that we are to change the world, but not first of all, through what we do. Not through some external activity. We are to change the world through what we are.

Being more like Jesus Christ now, I want us to look at verse 13 again. And we are going to see the true meaning of what Jesus is saying, what does he mean when he says you are the salt of the earth? But if the salt has lost its saltiness, it's good for nothing. But to be trampled underfoot by men, what does he really mean? I want you to look at it this way.

Salt has certain characteristics, salt has certain essential properties. If salt loses those characteristics, it is no longer salt. If you take those characteristics of salt away and you put other good characteristics in their place, you still no longer have salt.

There are certain essential qualities to salt that gives it its power to influence. Take those away. Salt is no good for anything except to be thrown out in the street and walked upon by men.

Now, in the same way, there are certain essential characteristics to true discipleship. Now, you say, Brother Paul. We're pastors, why are you talking to us about discipleship? We're pastors.

You're not a pastor. Unless you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. And you're not a disciple of Jesus Christ unless you are very serious about reflecting his life.

And his teaching, we need to hear this, we need to hear that there are certain characteristics of being truly Christian. And if we lose those characteristics. We can no longer have an impact on the world, it doesn't matter if our churches are large, it doesn't matter if we preach to thousands or millions, we will not have an impact on the world unless these characteristics are found in our life and they are growing.

Now, what are these characteristics? What are they? They're found in this chapter. They're found in chapter five, these characteristics are the Beatitudes. Now, I want you to think about this for a moment, how much attention do you give to these Beatitudes in your life of reflecting these things in your life? These are essential.

This is not just poetry. This is not just good literature being written for us. Jesus is not just trying to say something beautiful.

These are the things that give us power to transform the world. Now, we don't have time here today to look at all of them, but we are going to look at a few of them, a few of the most essential. And I want you to ask yourself, are these growing in my life? Would my wife see these growing in my life? Would my children, would my congregation, would the smallest member of my congregation recognize these things in my life? He starts out in verse three, he says, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

What is poverty of spirit? It is a recognition of our weakness. And a recognition of our absolute dependence upon God. Now, is this a growing reality in your life? Pastor, do you remember when you preached your first sermon? It was possibly before you even went to seminary.

And you were afraid. You realized, I don't know anything. If God doesn't help me, there's going to be no benefit.

I need God. But now we're older. We've had many years of preaching.

Do we think that we need God any less? Are we preparing our sermons with just as much fear? Are we crying out to God to help us, knowing, oh, God, if you do not help me. I'm going to say nothing today. What is poverty of spirit? It's realizing that apart from grace, we're condemned, apart from the grace of God,

we're condemned.

It is recognizing that apart from the word of God, we are fools. We have no wisdom in ourself. It is recognizing that apart from the power of God, you and I are completely impotent.

That we can do nothing apart from him now, if there is poverty of spirit in our lives, how will it manifest itself? It will manifest itself in the end of all self-righteousness. We will realize that it is Christ and Christ alone that justifies us. We will put all our hope in Jesus Christ and trust in nothing of the flesh.

Also, it is the end of doing what is right in our own eyes. Pastors, listen to me, the Chinese Christians are right when they say be afraid of the American. Be afraid of the American, they're right.

Why? Because America is going to come to you with all sorts of gimmicks, with all sorts of strategies, with all sorts of things that you can do to grow your church and your ministry. And most of it, if not all of it is wrong. It's wrong.

It's like when the Chinese Christian came to America and visited many of our churches and after visiting our churches, this is what he said. It is amazing what you Americans can accomplish without God. If we are truly poor in spirit.

We will stop doing what is right in our own eyes. In our lives and in our ministries, we will put away cleverness, we will put away pragmatism. And we will submit our lives and our ministries only to what God has said, there is in the world a growing resurgence of the reformed faith.

And I rejoice in that. But I'm also very, very afraid of it because I see a lot of young men. They're reading Calvin, they're reading the Puritans, but they want to be reformed and they also want to move in the realm of the flesh.

They want to use worldly strategies in order to grow their church. And that is not what the Reformation is about. The Reformation was not about Calvinism.

The Reformation was about the sufficiency of scripture, and it was by studying the scriptures alone. That the men came to these great truths, it's not just our theology that must be submitted to the scriptures, it is also our practice. That must be submitted to the scriptures.

It must also be our marriages that are submitted to the scriptures. It must be every aspect of our life submitted to the scriptures. Also, if there is poverty of spirit.

We will stop trusting in the arm of the flesh and we will devote ourselves to prayer, we will devote ourselves to prayer. Martin Lloyd-Jones said this. When a man begins his ministry, he will oftentimes dedicate himself to the study of God's word and prayer, and then through the study, he will become usable to God.

But when he becomes usable to God. He becomes so busy. That he no longer has time for personal study of the scriptures and prayer.

And he neglects the very thing that made him usable to God's pastors. A warning to you and to me. You cannot live on a past prayer life, you are only as spiritual today as your devotional life today.

Also, if there is poverty of spirit, we will stop exalting ourselves and we will become the servant to the lowliest saint in our church. I hear many men today talking about how much they love the church, but they don't have time for the small saints in the church. When that's the case, you're not loving the church, you're loving your ministry.

You're loving your organization that you built. How much do you love the church? As much as you love the smallest saint in the church, that's how much you love the church. Now, the great men of God, they tenaciously held on to Christ.

Tenaciously, and I want you to see that. But they did not hold on to Christ because they were strong, they did not hold on to Christ because they were determined or because they were better men than us. They held on to Christ because they recognized their weakness and they recognized the impossibility of the task.

They knew that nothing and no one could help them but Christ, and they knew that the only weapons of their warfare was the word of God and prayer. Now, let me give you an example. Many of you, well, you're from Korea, so you know Taekwondo.

Now, listen. Many of you may be good fighters and maybe if we got in a fight. You could beat me up, but if we change the circumstances just a little, I could kill three of you at one time.

How? How could I do that? I'll tell you how. And you will recognize this has happened before. Put me in the ocean and the waves are very large.

And I'm drowning, I've gone down two times now, I know I'm going to die, I'm terrified. I know I cannot save myself. And then three of the strongest men in this auditorium, you swim by and you come to help me, but I am so afraid that I grab a hold of you three men.

Terrified. So strong I am now. Because of my fear that I'm able to drown all three of you.

You can't get away from me. It isn't my strength that made me strong, it was my recognition of absolute dependence that made me strong. If I don't grab a hold of you.

I'm going to die. And so I grab you with a strength. That no man can pull apart in New York City, we have many tall buildings.

And they were built by men who know how to walk on small little beams this wide, walking up and down all day, hundreds of feet above the ground. Imagine one of those men walking on a beam. He's full of confidence.

He's not afraid. He's done this all his life. He's powerful.

He's balanced. There's no problem. But then as he's walking, all of a sudden, a wind blows against him and as the wind blows, he begins to fall and he grabs a hold of a beam.

And when he grabs that beam so tight. With so much fear. To keep himself from falling.

But then what happens? The men come and try to pull his hands off the beam. And they cannot do it. They have to take a hammer and beat his hands and break them because he's so strong, because he's holding on to the beam.

That's the way you and I must be. That we realize we have no hope but Christ. That we cannot serve him, we cannot overcome the enemy, we can't do any of this.

And so we cling to Christ in his word and prayer. This is the reason why God weakens his men. This is the reason for the thorn in Paul's flesh.

God weakens a man so that he might strengthen him. God empties a man so that he might fill him. A young man came to me one time.

And he said, how can I learn to be dependent upon God? And I said, young man, you can do it the easy way or you can do it the hard way. And he said, what's the easy way? I said, you can read God's word. And believe it when it says you can do nothing, that's the easy way.

Or you can do it the hard way. Trial after trial, after trial, after trial. God fighting against you, not because he does not love you.

But because he must teach you that you must live in absolute dependence upon him. Now, brothers, there were other characteristics that I wanted to get to, but our time has come to an end. But I want to point out one thing before we finish.

And it is this, if you look in verses one and two of chapter five, let's read that text. Verse one and two. Amen.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on the mountain and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. He opened his mouth and began to teach them, saying, now, you know that Matthew is writing to Jews and there is a reason why he uses the word mountain. It wasn't necessary, but he uses the word mountain with a purpose.

And I believe that he is identifying what we see here with Mount Sinai. On Mount Sinai, God gave his law to a man. So that that law would be taught to his people.

But here we see something else, God comes down and speaks for himself. Isn't it amazing there is only one time in human history when God becomes a man. When God comes to this earth and when he does, the first time he opens his mouth to teach.

He teaches us the Beatitudes. You got to see that this is essential to the Christian character. This is essential to who we are supposed to be.

I have seen pastors of very large churches who were humble men. Who were good men. Who were kind men, I've seen other pastors.

With the moment they walked in the room. Everybody else had to bow their head. Everybody else had to back up.

That's not a Christlike attitude. That's not a Christlike spirit. We are to be servants.

Our authority comes. From two things. Our Christlikeness and our stand upon the word of the living God.

This is what we must see. As I said. The men gathered here today, you have studied many great things.

And I have taught very simple things, but sometimes it's more important. To remember what we have forgotten. Then to learn something new, the Trinity is a great doctrine, as a matter of fact, that's what I will be teaching on tonight in another church, and even though no man can comprehend everything there is to know about the Trinity, I can say this.

It is easier for me to teach on the Trinity than it is to live this life that I see in Matthew, chapter five. In fact, it is impossible to live this apart from the power of the Holy Spirit. May God bless his word.

Let's pray.

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