

## Matthew 5:13-20

Epiphany 5; February 5/6, 2023

Remember the film called the Lion King. The Lion King is the story of Simba, an adventurous and energetic lion cub who is next in line to be king of the Pride Lands, a thriving and beautiful region in the African country side. When Simba's father Mufasa is killed by his uncle Scar, though, Simba is led to believe that his father's death is his fault, and he is encouraged to run away forever. Scar seizes power and with his already unstable mind deteriorating, the Pride Lands experiences a darkness and desolation from which only Simba can save the animals of the kingdom. Mufasa appears in the sky and reminds Simba who he is with the lines: *"You have forgotten who you are, and so forgotten me. Look inside yourself, Simba. You are more than what you have become. You must take your place in the Circle of Life." "How can I go back? I'm not who I used to be." "Remember who you are. You are my son, and the one true King. Remember who you are."*

As we continue to look at Jesus' Sermon on the Mount," Jesus wants his followers to remember who they are. **"You are the light of the world.... You are the salt of the earth."** The Christians blessed by Christ are called to be blessings to this world around us. Jesus' words remind us that we don't need to discover how we become salt and light because he is preaching to those who are believers. Jesus simply calls us to be what we are. Light shines because it is light. Salt preserves things because it is salt. As we continue to look at this section of Matthew 5 of the Savior's Sermon and see that **"You are... so be!"**

**"You are the light of the world."** What does a light do? A light brings hope. A light brings comfort. A light brings peace and joy. Like the moon reflects the sun's light, you reflect Jesus. Your life is meant to point to Jesus. Point to Jesus' love. To Jesus' forgiveness. To the peace that comes from knowing you're going to heaven someday. You let your light shine with the effort you put in at work, with the love you show your children, with the kindness you give to strangers... **"that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."** How do we become lights and salt? By God's grace.

Why do we need to be lights? Sin leaves us in the darkness. This dark world needs Christians who say, **"God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life"** (John 3:16). This dark world needs Christians who say, **"As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us"** (Psalm 103:11-12). This dark world needs Christians who share God's promise: **"Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name, you are mine"** (Isaiah 43:2). This dark world needs Christians who say, **"It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God"** (Ephesians 2:8-9). Every single Christian has a powerful purpose in life. Let your light shine! The world needs you.

But not just for light. **"You are the salt of the earth."** That doesn't sound like a compliment! But salt in Jesus' day was important. It preserved things. It preserved meat from spoiling. It preserved bodies from decaying. Without salt, food was wasted. Lives were lost. Disease spread. Jesus also calls us the **"salt of the earth."** Christians help keep the world from spoiling. Christians keep sin from spreading out of control. We are the **"salt of the earth"** when with our lives and actions we stand up for what's right in God's eyes and condemn what's wrong. It's a tough job, because like salt on a wound, God's Word can sting and burn. But this is what a Christian does. You are salt!

You are the salt of the earth! Note this: Salt doesn't stop decay. It slows it down. Christians help slow the moral decay in society. Christians help slow the spread of sin in their cities and countries. Yet, it's still decaying. Sin is still spreading. But Christians make a difference. You matter. You are the salt of the earth! That's hard. God gives us this unique purpose: To be salt and light. To share law and gospel. To point out sin and point to Jesus. Let your light shine! Imagine what the world would be like without Christians. Without people who do their jobs to the best of their ability because they are working for the Lord. Without people willing to serve instead of being served. Without people not afraid to stand up for what God says. Without people who are not afraid of death. Without people who say, *"Jesus loves you."* The world needs Christians. The world needs you! That's just how God has planned it: We are the salt of

the earth and the light of the world! Just as a city cannot be hidden, so a Christian is not to hide his light of faith. In our words and our actions, we let the light of Christ be seen in us.

Light and salt - they both have a purpose. Light – by its very nature – is seen. It shows things for what they really are – both good and evil. If it didn't do that, it wouldn't be light. Salt's purpose was to preserve things. Even though it had a sharp taste to it, it would help stop food from decaying and preserve the good. If it didn't do that, it wouldn't be salt. Salt and light – that's what Jesus calls us.

May God help us to be light of the world; to be a city on a hill that cannot be hidden.... **“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”** Amen.