

SEE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD – MATTHEW 5:13-20

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“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.



This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it,

How many of you have heard of the movie *Dumb and Dumber*? How many of you have watched the movie, *Dumb and Dumber*? If you haven't watched it you aren't missing too much, but I couldn't help but think about that movie when I read our gospel from Matthew for this morning. Now, before you think Pastor's gone off the deep end and is just pulling at straws trying to get us to pay attention, hear me out. In the movie, one of the main characters Lloyd, played by Jim Carey, is in love with a woman by the name of Mary. He asks Mary what his chances are of having a relationship with her. Mary says, "Not good...like 1 in a 1,000,000." But instead of seeing this as an impossibility, Lloyd sees it as an opportunity, because in his mind there is still a chance.

Now I can't help but wonder if people think the same thing when they hear these words of Jesus, **“I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees...you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”** “So you're saying there's a chance I can get to heaven.” But is that really what Jesus was saying? Was he saying that there is a chance for us to make it to heaven by what we do? To see if that is what Jesus was saying, we must use one of the basic rules in Bible interpretation of looking at the surrounding verses to determine Jesus' intentions. And we see in the surrounding verses, Jesus is talking about light, and specifically him as the light of the world. **CONSIDER THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.**

1. Fulfilled for us
2. Revealed in us

If you are particularly well versed in your Bible, you might have realized that this section of God's Word for consideration this morning comes from Jesus' famous Sermon on the Mount – the most complete sermon that we have from Jesus. It is the same section where Jesus starts, **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."** So it is in this context that Jesus talks about light, his being the light is the reason why all these seemingly down and out people are in fact blessed.

But in this second section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus begins to talk about the reason he is the light of the world. The whole concept of light, carries with it the idea of purity, knowledge of the truth, and being in the presence of God. So Jesus brings truth, but what exactly is that truth? Jesus makes it crystal clear what his mission on earth here is. **"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."** He starts it off with a **"Do not think."** Or "Do not consider." There was plenty of speculation going on about who Jesus was and what he came to do. One of the accusations being made against Jesus was that he was the greatest Jewish rebel of all time – because he seemed to be abandoning the Law of God the Jewish religious leaders held so dear – healing people on the Sabbath, hanging out with unsavory characters.

But in fact, Jesus did not come to do away with the Jewish law, he did not come to purposefully break it, he came to fulfill it, to fulfill it in a way the law was meant to be lived. Jesus' life clashed with that of the religious leaders, because his life was actually keeping, his life was actually fulfilling God's laws, while their lives, and everything they taught everyone else to do wasn't. He was fulfilling God's law because that is what God's law demanded.

No letter of God's law would be compromised, no tittle of God's law is considered less important. **"Be perfect as I the Lord your God am perfect."** Surely the Jews strived to be perfect, much like other cultures both yesterday and today. We try to be good people, we try to make the world a better place, but what happens when perfection isn't achieved? That's the difference between what we think and what God says. People think they are generally good people whom God should accept, God says, **"surely you were sinful at birth."** People think they are Christians and yet reject God's Word, worship with God's people, reject the Lord's Supper and baptism, God says, **"Away from me, I never knew you."** People think Jesus was a life coach who just taught how we are to live a successful life in this world, God says, **"Jesus is the way, the truth and the Life, no one comes to me except through him."** Jesus is more than a life coach, he is the fulfillment of the law for us.

He came to be completely obedient to God's law because we couldn't be. Because there's no way we have always lived as the salt of the earth, there's no way we've always lived as the light of the world, there's no way our righteousness surpasses that of Mother Theresa, or Pope Francis, or Martin Luther. To think God will accept anything less than perfection would be calling God a liar. There's no way we could do it, but **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD fulfilled it for us.** He fulfilled the law, taking away its curse, taking away its demands. But that is no reason for a believer who had been bought back from sin to abandon the law and turn right back to sin. The law no longer makes a demand on us for salvation, but it does give us a guide to live. Which leads us to the second reason Christ came, **THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD is revealed in us.**

If Jesus lived in a day when he could have seen *Star Wars*, he may have used the wise master Yoda as an example. “Do. Or do not. There is no try.” Jesus did not say that we must try to be the salt of the earth or the light of the world. He said, “**You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world.**” How can we be this when so often we don’t feel like it? It doesn’t matter how hard you try, it’s who you got on your side. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Galatians, “**I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.**”

Whether we feel saved or not, Christ has saved us, his fulfilling of the law, death on the cross, and resurrection from the dead has given you the title of saints, has given you a ticket to heaven. Just as that is true, so also is the truth that you are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world. In Jesus’ day, salt was not just used to flavor foods, but its primary purpose was to preserve things, make sure they didn’t go rotten. Light too was a very precious commodity in the days before electricity, especially at night. Light’s purpose was to shine so that you could see.

As believers we are the salt of the earth, that is our purpose, to season the world, to preserve the world from rotting away uncontrollably. It is who we are, we don’t have a choice. This is made even more clear with the other metaphor – we are the light of the world. Not that we have our own light, but we are revealing, we are reflecting Christ’s light in us. To be a Christian and not be salt, not be light, you would serve no purpose. Instead of hiding our light, we have been placed on a stand, a stand where everyone can see. Both of these metaphors make one thing really clear – Christians are a little different, God’s Word tells us to be different. Something for you to think about – how have you acted differently than the world in the last day, in the last week?

Thankfully we have guidance from God’s Word for ways we can be different, for ways we can let our light shine. Jesus says, “**whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**” So hearing God’s Word here in church, or at home in your personal devotions is good, but it will also have the effect of changing how you live, it makes you practice what is taught in God’s Word. If you don’t believe me try it. Yes, we’re more than a month into the new year, but make a New Year’s resolution to get into God’s Word – whether that’s here in church, in a personal devotion, or a Bible Study, and see where that leads.

Maybe another way to break out of a rut, is to do something unpredictable. I was reading some articles about the result of the Superbowl and one of the Seahawk defenders said that the Bronco’s offense was too predictable, they knew what types of plays the offense liked to run, and they jumped on those plays. If the Broncos would have been a little bit less predictable, the Seattle defender said they would have been exposed. As a Christian, sometimes we can become a little bit too predictable. We know the right things to say, we know the “right” things to do. We can become a little too predictable which could give the devil or the our own sinful tendencies the jump on us. In your Christian freedom, mix it up a little bit. I challenge you to be unpredictable in your Christian freedom. This doesn’t mean I want you to go out and ignore what God clearly says in his Word, but do one thing differently, adjust one habit, “**let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.**”

If we turn the page back to the *Dumb and Dumber* movie, when Lloyd hears from Mary that his chances are not good, he's excited to have a chance, even if it is a 1 in a 1,000,000 chance. As Christians we too have a chance, a chance of getting to heaven. But it's not a 1 in a 1,000,000 chance, our chance is Jesus, and it's not so much a chance, but an assurance. Jesus has said, "I am that chance, I have picked you up, I have taken you to the end, I have made you the salt and light of the earth, I have made you alive when you were dead. Because of me and my righteousness you will have eternal life. In light of all this, how can we not live as the salt of the earth, and the light of the world. Amen.

The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen!