

Matthew 5:13-16

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 5 No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Today's Scripture demonstrates the concept of your effectiveness as a follower of Jesus and the quality of your performance. By his reference to salt, Jesus indicates that a lack of devotion is worthless. Jesus emphasizes in various lessons the necessity of discipleship and devotion. Today's focus is on letting your light shine. We do not come to worship because we are supposed to, or because we might feel guilty when we don't, or we might be afraid of the consequences. We come to worship because of our love, appreciation, and gratitude to God for the gift of love and grace. When we come to terms with who God is and what God has done for us, as well as where we are in relationship with God, then we can't help but admire and appreciate God's gift of love and grace.

I was not always a preacher and there are times in my life when I did not behave like a Christian. One example of a time when I was silly but mean is when I was a young teenager. We had this upstairs bedroom window that faced northwest. So, the evening sun shined through the window in the summertime. My brother Paul got the bright idea of taking the large mirror off of the dresser and holding it in the window in order to aim the reflection in the eyes of the neighborhood kids on their bicycles. They would get hit with this sudden beam of reflected sunlight. He thought it was funny. He ran to find me and could not contain his excitement. Then he took the mirror and blinded a kid on a bicycle and we laughed as the kid wobbled and almost wrecked. I became his accomplice. It wasn't long after that I became the sole perpetrator trying to get a neighborhood boy to wreck his bicycle just so I could laugh at him. Needless to say, I was being mean and I confess I still think it was funny. I was letting the light shine but that is not what Jesus is talking about.

I want you to notice that when Jesus says to let your light shine, he is not talking about lip service. It is not about talking a good talk. Jesus specifically teaches that we are to let our lights shine so others can **see** our good works and give glory to God. We wonder why churches are dying and a multitude is lost in contemporary society. One reason is that many, if not most, people say that they believe but are complacent in their actions. Others hear the talk but they don't see faith put forward into action. They hear Christian proclamations without seeing Christian behavior. The perceived hypocrisy is a trigger for disbelief.

I was at work a long time ago and made a mistake. I don't remember what the mistake was, but I remember the conversation my boss had with me. I had made a promise to my boss that I would do better. He said to me "Don't tell me; show me." In other words, he didn't want to hear about any excuses or promises, he wanted to see results. He wanted see a change in my performance. We can carry that lesson forward to repentance, the Lord wants to hear your confession but also see that you have changed.

I was reading The Secret Place devotional recently and came across a story that was very similar to my own life experience. One evening I was out walking and up ahead of me, next to the road, was a reflection. The bright light caught my attention. At first, I thought it was a piece of metal. But as I walked up to it, I noticed it was a mud puddle. Leading into the road was a gravel driveway where a rut had formed due to the traffic from the wheels of cars. In the distance it reflected the sunlight of the evening sun. As it was low in the sky, it reflected a bright light. As I walked closer to it, I discovered that this bright reflection was coming from a mud puddle. When I stopped and looked down on it, I noticed its unique characteristics. The mud was yucky, dirty water. But then I noticed the amazing and pristine clarity of the reflected still image of the sky. I was amazed at how something so messy could provide such a clear and precise reflection. The beauty of the story is that this can serve as a metaphor for our relationship with Lord. The Lord took a messy person like me to reflect the light of the world.

Thank you, Lord Jesus, for showing me the way out of the mess of my life to your glory and greatness. Help me, Lord Jesus, to be your light for those in darkness so I can help to guide them to be children of your light. When you perform acts of kindness, you are the hands and feet of Jesus. Do not be afraid to ask someone to volunteer to assist you in your missions, it is a blessing for you and them too. When you do outreach, it is a blessing. It is not a duty or obligation. It is not a moment for recognition. It is not so that you can feel good about yourself. It is a calling, an honor and a privilege to give back to the one that has given the most. God has given the most in the relationship. There is no way that we can pay back in kind. It is an honor, privilege, and joy to make a contribution to God's glory. It is something to look forward to. So, look for opportunities to serve the Lord. You are a witness. You can give your testimony by letting your light shine through your actions. You can be a living witness by being an example for others to see. Be a model of Christ by reflecting the light so that others may see your ministry and give glory to God.