

**You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.** This is not what you need to be, not what you need to work for, not what you can earn. This is what you are. What Jesus declares you to be in Him. Okay here's some bad news to the world. You are not special. No you are not. But only as His child. It's more than you could've ever hoped for.

**You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.** We must take note exactly what Jesus is saying right before this, it's the beatitudes you heard last week. **Blessed are you when you are persecuted for my names' sake. Rejoice and be glad for so they persecuted the prophets before you.**

Today's Gospel is in view of persecution. As you see all that comes upon you, the struggles against your sinful flesh, the assaults of this world and evil works.

**You are blessed. Rejoice. Be glad. You are Salt. Light.** Salt, precious, as valuable as gold in the ancient world, a preservative from decay; salt here is referring to the priest, as they would salt, join salt to the sacrifices. As you're joined to His sacrifice and bear His name. Joined to His death, resurrection, it's yours.

**You are the light of the world.** The city is Zion, a city where God and man dwell, as it was there **the city on a hill**, Jerusalem where the light of the temple, now in the flesh shines. You are like the moon that reflects, shines in the night, reflecting the son. Shine the light in the darkness of this dark, cold world. It shines in your life and as He says, you are given the privilege of good works to shine in others lives.

**You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world.** You are the reason the earth still spins, the sun still rises. Your presence here, along with the good works even for you yet unperformed, hold back the destructive angels and evil. In the eyes of your neighbors, friends, strangers you may be insignificant, unimportant, but the face of your angels are always toward your Father in heaven.

In light of such cosmic significance, look at you. You know there's something wrong in the world, not only out there but also there's something wrong in here (your head, heart). Consider as a little example that sinful snooze button. The night before you decide its best, a good idea for what you need to do, to get up, set the alarm at 6, and then the next morning another part of you said that was a bad idea. This battle to do what we know we ought to do; not do what we know that we shouldn't. This battle in every single person, every single day.

That snooze button you hit when you can always do devotions another day, you put off doing kind things because you need to take care of you first. The snooze button, you put off your prayers, your duty, your love for others. God help us.

Then Jesus will talk about pastors, teachers teaching His Word, as all the Old Testament is not just about Him, but can only find its meaning in Him, is fulfilled in Him. He then says remarkable words that should shake everyone to their core.

**Unless your righteousness exceeds the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.** Now there is 2 kinds of righteousness. The righteousness of Christ, and righteousness of man, good works that God blesses. Consider the righteousness of man, your good works in Him. You should be

ashamed. Now, the Pharisees were bad people, plot against Jesus, challenge His authority, blasphemy God. Yes.

You must also understand how they worked to love God, love neighbor far greater than you, and put you to shame. They never hit the snooze button, never missed church, planned their life around it, did not let a day go by without reading God's word, could recite 150 psalms by heart; gave 10% to church; spent their days in how to love God, do good works for others. You'd want a young pharisee to date your daughter because you know she'd be safe.

Your Lord is condemning not only their good deeds but also yours. You must do good works in love, yet they earn you nothing, how can you then be prideful, or think you can merit God's favor, or see yourself good because of you. Jesus is sounding the alarm not to trust any of your efforts.

But there is another kind of righteousness. Righteousness of Christ, His keeping the law; His perfection -that's our only hope. When I was a kid there was two ways to get out of the dinner table, to be finished. The first way to eat all of your food. You know when you're a kid you're looking at the chicken, meatloaf, vegetables, everything. You kind of move it around so it looks like you ate some of it. Force a few bits down. You sit there and can't leave the table until you're finished. But we found out that there was another way to be finished with dinner; with our kindest most humble voice to ask mom, 'could I be done' and every once in a while she would say 'yes, you can be done, yes you can go.' There's still food on the plate and yet dinner is declared over. With the righteousness of Christ there are two ways to be righteous you can either keep the law or the Lord can say you are done. It sounds like this **it is finished**. It sounds like this **I forgive you all your sins**. It sounds like this, I give you the kingdom of heaven.

**You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.** You confess, to a dark, cold, dying, evil world with no hope. Standing not only for mercy, kindness, generosity; that the world might notice in some way your good works and Christian virtue; Confess, take a stand, show love holding to His mortality, His truth. You still know the third commandment matters. You know the difference between boys and girls; the value of honest labor; and that the past is full not just of criminals and violence but also with heroes inspired by God to do great and good things in faith who have left behind for us a glorious heritage both religious and secular of which though it is imperfect we are not ashamed.

In the midst of these chaotic, evil times; God choose for you in these days, to be here, to act in love, be in the fight, to be a voice, to be joined, salted always to His sacrifice, to be His light. **You are salt and a light.** You're the reason the earth still spins, the sun still rises. This is what you are to do to enter the kingdom of heaven, for His righteousness, for a righteousness to enter heaven. You are to do: nothing. It's grace. You have a righteousness that far exceeds all men except one, the God man who gives you His righteousness. You are what He declares you to be. He made you so. You are. You are holy. He made it so. You are His.