

SALT + LIGHT | PART TWO

MATTHEW 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

INTRODUCTION

A. During *World War II* –

1. The Nazis blitzed London with night-time bombing-raids from the English sky.
2. During these bombing attacks, British volunteers known as *Air Raid Wardens* sounded the alarm and organized city-wide “*Blackouts*,” calling all Londoners to turn-off and extinguish all lights.
3. THE REASON – A single, small, unprotected light – such as a flashlight, a cigarette lighter, or even a gap in blackout curtains – could be seen by bomber pilots 1-2 miles away – *and the brighter the lights, the further these lights could be seen from the night-time skies.*
4. In those dark places, *light shines and pierces through the darkness* – even the tiniest lights were bright enough to be seen by others.

B. In the *Sermon on the Mount* –

1. In the *Beatitudes*, Jesus described the CHARACTER of God's Kingdom citizens in the world. In the *Similitudes*, Jesus described the INFLUENCE of God's Kingdom ambassadors in the world.

2. Jesus taught us HOW to be in the world.

a. FIRST – “You are the salt of the earth.”

Like salt, the Church should –

- Promote life and well-being – bring God's life to those who are spiritually lifeless.
- Purify from rot and preserve from decay.
- Promote thirst – bring people to their awareness for God's living water.
- Enhance life – display the full and satisfied life in and through Jesus the Messiah-King.

b. THEN – “You are the light of the world.”

i. *Like light*, light shines and pierces through the darkness in our dark world – and even the tiniest lights are bright enough to influence and make an impact in this world.

ii. **J.C. Ryle** – True Christians *are to be in the world like light*. Now it is the property of light to be utterly distinct from darkness. The least spark in a dark room can be seen at once. Of all things created light is the most useful. It fertilizes. It guides. It cheers. It was the first thing called into being. Without it the world would

be a gloomy blank. Are we true Christians? Then behold again our position and its responsibilities! ¹

DARK WORLD

5:14 ... the world.

A. In the *Similitudes*, Jesus taught His disciples about being INFLUENCES as the *salt* of “the earth” and the *light* of “the world.”

B. “The earth ... the world” is where Jesus’ disciples are on mission as ambassadors of King Jesus and the Kingdom of God.

C. The Bible describes “the world” as a dark place.

1. The world is a *spiritually* dark place.

a. In **John 12:31**, Jesus called Satan “the ruler of this world,” and this world is under his shaping and enslaving influence.

b. **Ephesians 6:12** refers to “this dark world” ^{NLT} – “this present darkness.” ^{ESV}

c. In **2 Corinthians 4:4**, the Bible tells us, “Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t

¹ Ryle, J. C. *Expository Thoughts on Matthew*. New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1860. Print.

understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.” ^{NLT}

2. The world is a *morally* dark place.

a. In **1 John 2:16-17**, the Bible tells us, “The world offers only a craving for physical pleasure, a craving for everything we see, and pride in our achievements and possessions. These are not from the Father, but are from this world. And this world is fading away, along with everything that people crave.” ^{NLT}

b. **Galatians 1:4** describes the world as “this present evil age.”

3. The people of this world are *spiritually dark* existing in *spiritual darkness*.

a. **Isaiah 9:2** describes people “walking in darkness” and “dwelling in deep darkness” in the world.

b. In **John 3:19-20**, the Bible says, “And the judgment is based on this fact: God’s light came into the world, but people loved the darkness more than the light, for their actions were evil. All who do evil hate the light and refuse to go near it for fear their sins will be exposed.” ^{NLT}

D. The people in the world need Jesus.

BRIGHT LIGHTS

5:14¹⁴ “You are the light of the world.

A. God is light, and He is the source of true light.

1. 1 John 1:5 – God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ^{NLT}

2. God commanded forth “*light*” in the CREATION.

Genesis 1:1-4 – In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.

Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. ^{NLT}

3. God commanded forth “*light*” in the NEW CREATION.

2 Corinthians 4:4-6 – Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God.

... God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ. ^{NLT}

4. God will be the source of “light” in the RENEWED CREATION.

a. Revelation 21:23-24 – [The New Jerusalem] has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. The nations will walk in its light... ^{NLT}

b. Revelation 22:5 – There will be no night there—no need for lamps or sun—for the Lord God will shine on them. ^{NLT}

B. In the OLD TESTAMENT, God desired Israel to shine as His bright light in the world.

1. Isaiah 49:6 – I will make you a light to the Gentiles, and you will bring my salvation to the ends of the earth. ^{NLT}

2. Israel, however, failed in this mission.

3. THEN – Christ the True Israel came to the world to be what Israel failed to be.

C. In THE GOSPELS, God the Son came as Jesus the Messiah who shines as the true light in the world.

1. Jesus is the *true light*.

a. Jesus *claimed to be the light of the world*.

i. In **John 8:12** and **John 9:5**, Jesus testified, “I AM the light of the world.”

ii. In **John 1:9**, the Scriptures call Jesus “the true light.”

b. He is *the radiance* of God's glory.

Hebrews 1:3 – The Son radiates God's own glory and expresses the very character of God... ^{NLT}

2. Jesus the Light came to *reveal God* to us.

a. John 1:18 – No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father's side—he has revealed him.
^{NLT}

b. John 1:14 tells us that God the Son became human, and in Jesus we see the outshining of God's glory in visible form – “full of grace and truth.”

This declaration about Jesus is connected to the revelation of God in **Exodus 34:6-7** –

The LORD—the LORD is a compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger and *abounding in faithful love and truth*, maintaining faithful love to a thousand generations, forgiving iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But he will not leave the guilty unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' iniquity on the children and grandchildren to the third and fourth generation. ^{CSB}

3. Jesus the Light came to *bring us out of spiritual darkness*.

John 12:46 – I have come as a light to shine in this dark world, so that all who put their trust in me will no longer remain in the dark.
NLT

4. Jesus the Light came to *makes us children of the light*.

John 12:36 – “Put your trust in the light while there is still time; then you will become children of the light.” NLT

5. Jesus the Light came to *bring us God’s eternal life*.

a. John 1:9 – The one who is the true light, who gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. NLT

b. John 8:12 – “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.” NLT

D. In the NEW TESTAMENT, Jesus calls His disciples to shine as God’s bright light in the world.

1. Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.”

a. God rescued us out of spiritual darkness.

1 Peter 2:9 – God ... called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light. NLT

b. God transformed us into people who are light.

i. Ephesians 5:8 – Once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. ^{NLT}

ii. 1 Thessalonians 5:5 – You are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. ^{NLT}

c. God calls us to daily live in His light.

Ephesians 5:8-9 – Live as people of light! For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. ^{NLT}

2. Like Jesus, the Church is to be a bright light *illuminating* the Gospel-truth about God and *shining* the Gospel-path for people to God in this dark world.

3. *Our brightness is connected to our closeness to Jesus.*

a. Like the relationship between the moon and the sun, we are the REFLECTION of the S-o-n – Jesus the true Light in the world.

b. The moon shines in the night-time sky but is not the source of light; instead, it reflects the light of the sun.

c. Becoming more like Jesus, the brighter we shine for Jesus in this dark world.

i. 2 Corinthians 3:18 – We all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

ii. WARNING – An eclipse is *when the earth gets between the sun and the moon*. Likewise, worldliness will darken your witness for Christ the Light to others.

5:14¹⁴ *A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*

A. The point of this statement is to be *clearly visible and seen* – Jesus refers to a city on a hill that is *in plain view and cannot be missed*.

1. Bible scholars suggest that Jesus may have had *Tzfat (Safed)* in mind when He spoke about “*a city set on a hill*” that “*cannot be hidden.*”

2. *Tzfat (Safed)* is Israel’s highest city. It is situated 3,000 feet above sea level, and it is visible from the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee, especially from Tiberias.

3. *Tzfat (Safed)* could not be hidden, especially during the night when its residents lit-up house-lamps, cooking fires, and outdoor fire-pits.

B. LIKEWISE – Jesus’ disciples should be **CLEARLY VISIBLE AND SEEN** by others, *not* hidden and unnoticed.

1. We should be living our daily life in Christ in *public*.

2. CONTRAST – Many people did believe in him, however, including some of the Jewish leaders. But they wouldn't admit it for fear that the Pharisees would expel them from the synagogue. For they loved human praise more than the praise of God. (John 12:42-43, NLT).

a. The religious leaders, Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, were among these fearful “secret” disciples – until they came out in public as Jesus' followers at the foot of the cross of Christ – **John 19:38-39.**

b. Pride and fear should not hold us back from being public disciples of Jesus the Messiah-King.

5:15¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

A. The purpose of turning on the light in a dark place is not to hide the light under a bucket, but to let it shine and light-up the room.

B. Likewise, our witness for Christ is to shine bright before others, not kept in hiding and in secret.

C. Jesus empowers us with God's power to be His lights in this dark and hostile world by God's Spirit.

1. Acts 1:8 – “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” NLT

2. God does this so we would be effective, public witnesses – one who testifies – of Christ in the world – not hidden and unseen.

5:16 ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

A. “Let your light shine before others...”

1. We shine – by our *holiness*.

Philippians 2:15 – Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.

2. We shine – by our *faithful devotion to the Gospel of life*.

Philippians 2:15-16 – ... shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people. Hold firmly to the word of life...

3. We shine – by our *Christ-likeness*.

Ephesians 5:8-9 – Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true) ...

4. We shine – by our “*good works*.”

a. These are the beautiful, noble, and visible deeds that reflect God’s character.

i. God saved us for good works.

Ephesians 2:8-10 – God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. ^{NLT}

ii. God calls us to be zealous for good works.

aa. Titus 2:13-14 – Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ ... gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

bb. Titus 2:7 – Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works...

b. “Good works” are the outshining of those described in the Beatitudes—

- Those who are *poor in spirit* care for the poor.
- Those who *mourn* care for the broken-hearted.
- Those who are *meek* care for the marginalized and neglected.
- Those who *hunger and thirst for righteousness* bring the Gospel to those who are without God.
- Those who are *merciful* extend God's kindness and forgiveness to those who need mercy.

- Those who are *pure in heart* display genuine love and care to others.
- Those who are *peacemakers* seek to spread the Gospel of peace to those who need to be reconciled to God, as well as God's shalom to those who need to be reconciled to each other.
- Those who are *persecuted* remain loyal to and continue with King Jesus in the world.

c. “Good works” are spiritual fruit, and these are the result of us *abiding in – remaining in union with – Christ*.

i. **John 15:4-5** – “Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful unless you remain in me.

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.” ^{NLT}

ii. JESUS IS THE VINE – LIFE-SOURCE – WHO PRODUCES THE FRUIT, AND WE ARE THE BRANCHES THAT PRESENT THE FRUIT. THERE IS NO GENUINE FRUIT-BEARING WITHOUT JESUS.

B. “...and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

1. This is the overarching aim of the Christian life.

a. **1 Corinthians 10:31** – Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.

b. Galatians 1:24 – They glorified God because of me.

2. May people glorify God on account of us.

John Stott – ... as the disciples of Jesus, we are not to conceal the truth we know or the truth of what we are. We are not to pretend to be other than we are, but be willing for our Christianity to be visible to all. ‘Flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him.’⁵ Rather are we to be ourselves, our true Christian selves, openly living the life described in the beatitudes, and not ashamed of Christ. Then people will see us and our good works, and seeing us will glorify God. For they will inevitably recognize that it is by the grace of God we are what we are, that *our* light is *his* light, and that our works are his works done in us and through us. So it is the light they will praise, not the lamp which bears it; it is our Father in heaven whom they will glorify, not the children he has begotten and who exhibit a certain family likeness. Even those who revile us may not be able to help glorifying God for the very righteousness on account of which they persecute us.²

⁵ Bonhoeffer, p. 106.

² Stott, John R. W., and John R. W. Stott. *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter-Culture*. Leicester; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1985. Print. The Bible Speaks Today.