

LESSON 5: THE SIMILITUDES

Matthew 5:13-16

I. INTRODUCTION: I

1. **2** Today we continue our study of the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher that ever lived...Jesus' sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7; cf. Lk. 6:20-38; 11 & 12).
2. Again, for reminder's sake (2 Pet. 1:12); let's be sure we have it clearly in our minds that:
 - A. Sermon answers questions naturally raised in response to Jesus' statement in Matt. 4:17.
 - B. **3** This sermon is all about what's going to happen to us when we change as we need to change in order to become suitable for citizenship in God's kingdom (Jn. 18:36; Lk. 17:20-21). The change Jesus describes is *internal*, but it is:******
 - ☛ **Radical!!**
 - ☛ **Total!!**
 - ☛ **Absolute!!**
 - ☛ **Enduring!! (all are described with present tense verbs!)**
 - C. **4** The sermon on the Mount reflects the central theme of the Bible: God wants a **special people** for Himself! (Ex. 6:7; 19:5-6; 1 Pet. 2:9-10). Hence, the sermon on the Mount describes the characteristics of God's *special* people (all spiritual in nature!):
 - ☛ **His people are going to go directly against the grain of popular culture.**
 - ☛ **His people will not ebb and flow with the tide of the majority opinion.**
 - ☛ **His people are not going to float downstream with the rest of society, but they will swim upstream against the current of what everyone else is thinking, saying, and doing.**
 - D. What Jesus has to say in this sermon is at the very core of **EVERY** teaching contained in NT.
 - E. And, importantly, the type of person Jesus is describing here is not some sort of "Super-Christian". He is describing what **EVERY** Christian **MUST** be. Neither is He describing a *smorgasbord* of characteristics/attitudes from which each of us are free to pick and choose only those that suit us. We must pick **ALL** or **NONE**.
 - F. **5** Now we turn our attention from the Beatitudes to the Similitudes (things we **must** be *similar* to, things we **must** be like).
 - (1) ****** In the Beatitudes we considered the character every Christian must possess.
 - ☛ "poor in spirit"
 - ☛ "mourn"
 - ☛ "meek"
 - ☛ "hunger and thirst for righteousness"
 - ☛ "merciful"
 - ☛ "pure in heart"
 - ☛ "peacemakers"
 - ☛ we'll be persecuted by the world "for righteousness sake"!
 - (2) ****** Now in the Similitudes, Jesus tells us things we **must** be like (salt & light).
 - (3) ****** Jesus is telling us it is not enough to possess the character traits of the Beatitudes, but that we **must** put that noble character to **work** in the world!

II. DISCUSSION:

1. **6** "Ye are the salt of the earth" (5:13).
 - A. ****** Jesus compares His true disciples to a very *ordinary* substance: **salt**.

- (1) There's nothing flashy about salt.
 - (2) Jesus' disciples are just ordinary people (**1 Cor. 1:26**: "For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.").
- B. Even though salt is ordinary and common, it is very essential and valuable commodity! Therefore, when we allow Christ to rule our lives, even though we are just 'common folks,' Christians provide a very needed and valuable service to this sin-sick world!
- C. Perhaps we can better understand how needed and valuable Christians are if we look at the number of important services salt provides. Salt...
- (1) **7 Necessary for life**: Even though common, salt is absolutely necessary for life.
 - ✓ When I worked on my M.S. degree I took one of the toughest courses in my entire academic career, a two semester, 10 credit hour course in physiology.
 - ✓ For nearly the first three weeks of the first semester the course revolved around the role of sodium (salt) in the body.
 - ✓ Salt is absolutely necessary for nerve impulse transmission, muscle contraction (including heart function), digestion, nutrient absorption, control and balance of blood volume and other body fluids, processing and removal of waste, etc.
 - ✓ When the salt "balance" in our bodies is out of whack we become sick and can die!

8"Without salt the body goes into convulsions, paralysis, death. Put blood cells in a salt-free fluid and they burst. Where it was scarce, salt was traded ounce for ounce with gold—for as the Roman statesman Cassiodorus observed, 'Some seek not gold, but there lives not a man who does not need salt.' Rome's major highway was the Via Salaria (Salt Road). Those 'worth their salt' were paid a salary. That word comes from *salarium*, money paid soldiers to buy salt. Throughout history, common salt has played an uncommonly large role. Rulers jealously preserved salt monopolies, decreeing death to salt smugglers, for control of the life-essential substance also gave control of the populace. **9**During the grim winter of Napoleon's retreat from Moscow, salt starvation decimated his troops, lowering resistance to disease. Epidemics spread. Wounds that might otherwise have healed became fatal. Thousands died. Homer dubbed it 'divine'; Plato hailed it as 'a substance dear to the gods.' Jews sealed covenants by exchanging salt. From the cells in our brains and bones to customs that spice our language and history, salt penetrates every aspect of our existence." ("Salt—The Essence of Life," *National Geographic*, Vol. 152, No. 3, September 1977).

******Those who allow Jesus to take control of their lives become like salt: important, valuable, essential! (**Rom. 8:29**: God predestined us "to be conformed to the image of His Son..."; **Eph. 4:24**: we are to "put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness"; **Gal. 2:20**: Paul had "crucified" his old self so that "Christ lives in me, and the life which I now live...I live by faith in the Son of God...").
 - (2) **10 Preserves from decay**: Salt is well-known for its preservative effects (e.g., salted meat). I recall from taking microbiology in college that once salt concentration reaches a critical level it halts the growth of microorganisms.
 - (a) However, to exert this preservative effect, salt must come into contact with what it is meant to preserve (**Matt. 9:10-13**: Jesus criticized for eating with sinners; **v. 13**: "For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.>").
 - (b) We too must make our presence felt in the world (can't be a monk!), while at the same time keeping our influence pure and holy (**Jn. 17:15-16**: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. I 6

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.”; 1 Jn. 2:15-17; Col. 3:5; 1 Cor. 5:10).

- (c) It is critical for us to not lose our “savour” because the world desperately needs our preserving influence! (Gen. 18:16-33; Prov. 14:34)
- (3) **** Produces its effect without fanfare:** Salt does its job in a very quiet and inconspicuous manner. It is not flashy like cinnamon or cayenne pepper!
 - (a) Thus, as Jesus’ disciples we must go about in a meek and humble manner (**Titus 3:1-2**: “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, 2 to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men.”).
 - (b) We don’t parade our discipleship around! That’s wrong! Matt. 23 It should show naturally, without fanfare! “Second-nature”! (**Matt. 6:1, 5, 16**: No charitable deeds, prayers, fasting to “be seen of men”; **Matt. 25:37ff**: “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry...thirsty...stranger ...naked...sick...in prison...’”; **1 Pet. 3:1-4**: “let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.”).
 - (c) **BTW**: We should encourage and praise one another (Phil. 2:25, 29-30; Acts 4:36; 11:23), but if we can’t be faithful without constant “stroking,” we’re not fit for the kingdom! (Isa. 53:3; Don’t worry that God won’t give you credit! Matt. 6:2)
- (4) **** Makes people thirsty:** Why does the concession stand put so much salt on the popcorn? To get us to buy more soda!
 - (a) Our lifestyle should be attractive to those searching for “the meaning of life”! (Phil. 4:6-7; peace of mind, stable home life, calmness in time of trouble, etc.).
 - (b) As one commentator said, “The disciple’s example of hungering and thirsting after righteousness should encourage the world to share their desire for the living water and the bread of life (John 4:13-14).” (John Smith, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 24).
 - (c) It is so tragic when we lose our “savour” and fail to attract others to Christ? we are “thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”
- (5) **** Serves as a stabilizing influence:** Salt is one of the most stable of all chemical substances. Perhaps you remember the formula:******

Acid + Base → Salt + Water

- (a) Acids (e.g., battery acid) and bases (lye) are highly corrosive and highly unstable.
- (b) But, when mixed together they produce two of the most stable (and necessary) substances in nature: salt and water.
- (c) For example, do you know that most active ingredients in medicines are in their “salt” form to provide stability?
- (d) As Christian we are to serve as a stabilizing influence to the world (**1 Cor. 13:4-5**: “Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; 5 does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil;”; **Matt. 5:9**: peacemakers; **Rom. 12:16**: “Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.”; **Phil. 2:3-4**: “Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. 4 Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”).

- (6) **** Serves as an irritant:** Even though salt has wonderful preserving and healing qualities, when it first begins its work it stings! Did you ever get sweat in your eye?
- (a) When a Christian is truly the “salt of the earth” many in the world will find us *irritating*, because we will be so different (**Rom. 12:2:** not “conformed to this world”; **1 Pet. 4:3-4:** will think us “strange,” since we “run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you.”).
 - (b) And we will not allow people to be comfortable in their sins (Not a “goody-two shoes” attitude; **Eph. 4:16:** “speaking the truth in love”; **Eph. 5:11:** “And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.”).
- (7) **** Presence or absence cannot be ignored:** Have you ever been forced to eat unsalted food? (My experience in Louisiana)
- (a) Ever tried to eat something that was too salty? (Pie in “Coal Miner’s Daughter”)
 - (b) The influence of disciples, good or bad, will not go unnoticed! (e.g., Barnabas, Acts 4:36 vs. Alexander the coppersmith, 2 Tim. 4:14)
- D. **II** Jesus also talked about worthless salt. When salt becomes contaminated it is one of the most worthless substances on earth, it can’t even be used for fertilizer. Thus, “*if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.*” (Matt. 5:13)
- (1) **** Contaminated salt is of no value whatsoever! Totally worthless!**
 - (2) Just as the corrupted disciple is of no value to the world or to the Lord. He’s only good “*to be trodden under foot of men*”! What a miserable epitaph!
 - (3) The phrase “*have lost his savour*” comes from one Greek word (*moraino*) meaning “to become foolish” (Vine). It’s the word from which we derive the English word “moron.” The implication should be obvious!
- “Useless, non-contributing Christians are a hindrance to the cause of the Lord. They will turn men away from the religion of Jesus and undermine the efforts of those who are pure and working. If they remain unchanged, they will be cast out and away from the Lord (Matt. 13:41-42).” (John Smith, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 25)
- (4) Thus, we need to constantly examine our “saltiness” and act accordingly (Phil. 1:27):
- 1 Pet. 1:13-16:** “*Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 14 as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; 15 but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 because it is written, ‘Be holy, for I am holy.’*”
- 1 Pet. 2:11-12:** “*Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*”
- 1 Pet. 3:4:** “*rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God.*”
- 2 Pet. 3:11:** “*Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,*”

2. **12** “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. *15* Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. *16* Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (5:14-16)

- A. ****** Jesus is the true light! (Jn. 8:12) And, as His disciples we must be “the light of the world.”
 B. As the moon reflects the light of the **sun**, we reflect the light of the **Son** when we are truly His disciples (Jn. 1:6-9). We must live/walk in the light to reflect the light!

Isa. 2:5: “O house of Jacob, come and let us walk in the light of the LORD.”

Eph. 5:8: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.”

1 Jn. 1:5-7: “This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. *6* If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. *7* But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

- C. **13** Let us also note some characteristics of light:

- (1) Removes darkness, makes things visible: Darkness is the absence of light. Darkness blinds (1 Jn. 2:11: “...walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”).
- (a) We’ve all stumbled around in a darkened room. We turn on the light to remove the darkness. If there is darkness we don’t know where we are going (Jn. 12:35: “...he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going.”).
 - (b) We need to have the darkness lifted to see! So we must work tirelessly to remove the darkness (Jn. 1:9: Jesus is “the true Light which gives light to every man...”; Matt. 28:18; Col. 3:17; Titus 2:6-8: “Likewise, exhort the young men to be sober-minded, *7* in all things showing yourself to be a pattern of good works; in doctrine showing integrity, reverence, incorruptibility, *8* sound speech that cannot be condemned, that one who is an opponent may be ashamed, having nothing evil to say of you.”).
 - (c) Why do we have headlights on our automobiles? So we can see and don’t run off the road or hit something (Psa. 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”).
 - (d) Satan is the prince of darkness, because he “blinds” people to the “light of the gospel” (2 Cor. 4:4). Thus, we have a grave responsibility to show people the light (Mk. 16:15), and to reflect the Light lest our hypocritical life turns people off (Phil. 2:15: “that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.”).
- (2) ****** Guides us: Walking in the light is parallel to “walking in the truth” (1 Jn. 1:7 vs. 2 Jn. 4; 3 Jn. 4: “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”). Jesus came to light the way (Lk. 1:79: “To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”).
- (a) But, we must hear Him (Matt. 17:5; Heb. 1:1-2; Heb. 3:6: “but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.”) as He speaks through our only guide, the illuminating word of God: Psa. 119:105: “Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.”

Prov. 6:23: *“For the commandment is a lamp, And the law a light; Reproofs of instruction are the way of life,”*

- (b) Without His word as our guide, we cannot make it through the darkness! (Jer. 10:23; Prov. 14:12; **3:5-7:** *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; 6 In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths. 7 Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the LORD and depart from evil. 8 It will be health to your flesh, And strength to your bones.”*).
- (c) We must guide ourselves and others with the Word! (Phil. 2:12; **Col. 2:8:** *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”*; therefore, Acts 17:11; 1 Pet. 4:11)
- (3) **** Essential for life:** Without the sun’s light all physical life will perish.
 - (a) Without the Son’s light all spiritual life will perish (**Jn. 1:4-5:** *“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.”*; **Jn. 8:12:** *“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”*).
 - (b) We have no hope of helping others find the “light of life” unless we are reflecting the “true light” (Jn. 1:9; **1 Thess. 5:5-8:** *“You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. 6 Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober. 7 For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk are drunk at night. 8 But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet the hope of salvation.”*).
- D. We cannot think for a moment that we can fade into the background! Jesus said we are to be *“a city set on a hill.”* ******

*“In antiquity, cities were built on hills for defensive purposes and at night were easily seen from the surrounding territory. To be ‘a city set on a hill,’ therefore, means to live a life that is visible to those around us. The Christian life was designed to be an obvious life (Phil. 2:15). Whenever it is concealed (by sin, reticence, shyness, etc.), Christ is denied an important avenue by which He attempts to reach the lost.” (K. L. Chumley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 91)*
- E. Jesus emphasizes the same point in v. 15: *“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.”*
 - (1) Why turn on a light then cover it up? It becomes useless.
 - (2) Why become a Christian if we don’t reflect Christ’s light to the world? We’re useless!
- F. When we’re tempted to conceal our faith (avoid persecution, vv. 10-12; or to live worldly lives), we need the necessary exhortation: *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.” (Matt. 5:16)*
 - (1) When Jesus was in the world He was the light; but now He’s counting on us to be the light.
 - (2) What an awesome privilege and responsibility!

*******“The Christian life is one of God’s primary evangelistic tools in the world, but to be effective it must be seen by the world. The adverb ‘so’ is important here; believers are to so live that when the lost come in contact with them, they are led to glorify the Father (6.1, 1 Pet. 2:12)” (K. L. Chumley, *The Gospel of Matthew*, p. 92)(CVT: cf. **2 Cor. 3:2:** *“...epistle...known and read by all men...”*)*

III. CONCLUSION: 14

1. How about you? Are you the “*salt of the earth*” and “*the light of the world*”?
2. Do others see Christ in you? Do people see you as...**
 - ☛ **Humble and selfless?**
 - ☛ **Sorrowful about sin?**
 - ☛ **Meek?**
 - ☛ **Deeply concerned your righteousness and the righteousness of others?**
 - ☛ **Rebuking sin, but loving the sinner?**
 - ☛ ****Disciplined, self-controlled?**
 - ☛ **Filled with God’s Word?**
 - ☛ **Gentle and compassionate?**
 - ☛ **Courageous, determined?**
 - ☛ **Reflecting the purity and righteousness of Christ?**
3. **15** Think of the grand compliment when Jesus calls us “*the salt of the earth*” and “*the light of the world*”! Are you living up to His expectations?

The World’s Bible

******Christ has no hands but our hands, To do His work today,
 He has no feet but our feet To lead men in His way;
 He has no tongue but our tongues To tell men how He died,
 He has no help but our help To bring them to His side.

******We are the only Bible The careless world will read,
 We are the sinner’s gospel, We are the scoffer’s creed;
 We are the Lord’s last message Given in deed and word,
 What if the type is crooked? What if the print is blurred?

******What if our hands are busy With other things than His?
 What if our feet are walking Where sins allurements is?
 What if our tongues are speaking Of things His life would spurn,
 How can we hope to help Him And welcome His return?

4. Invitation (Matt. 11:28-30)

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