

The Salt and the Light of the World

~Aaron Martin

“Ye are the salt of the earth: but 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. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 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. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt 5:13–16).

In the context of these verses, Jesus has just laid out the principles by which His kingdom would operate, and then it seems He turns to His small handful of disciples and says, “The whole world, wrecked by sin, is depending on you to see these principles lived out. Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world.” Sometimes the Mennonites are known for being “the quiet of the land.” Jesus did not say to His disciples, “I am ordaining you to be the quiet of the land.” rather, in Matthew 28:19,20 He says, “*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.*” As we come to know and understand these revolutionary, life-giving teachings of Christ, we have a compelling obligation to share these truths with the dying world we live in. What this world so badly needs is the simple gospel of Jesus Christ.

Shining our light should not seem like an insurmountable task. Neither should we feel like we have been a total failure all along. Shining our light and being the salt of the earth is a very simple task. If we are faithfully fulfilling God’s will right where God has called us, we are doing a good job of shining God’s light.

We all need to be reminded to take our job seriously. It is a simple job, but it is also a serious job. It is like putting gas in a car. It is not hard to pump gas into a car, but it is very important to do it. What good is a car if it can not go anywhere? That is what Jesus was trying to tell us here. What good is salt if you can not taste it? What good is a light if you can not see it? What good are the principles of My kingdom if they are not lived out? We must take our simple task very seriously because not only is God depending on us, but also the world is depending on us.

“Ye are the salt of the earth.” What does Jesus mean by this? What was so important about salt? In our day, salt no longer carries the significance that it did in Jesus’ day. The ancient world, however, relied heavily on salt. It was used to flavor food (Job 6:6). It was used in all of the Levitical offerings (Lev 2:13). It was linked with health, hospitality, purity, and durability. Ezekiel tells us that the Israelites rubbed their newborn children with salt (Eze 16:4). Because of its preserving quality, God said of His covenant with the Israelites, *“It is a covenant of salt forever”* (Num 18:19). Salt in biblical times was very, very important.

Why does Jesus say, “if the salt have lost his savour”? Does salt go bad? a prominent commentator had this to say regarding salt losing savor: “That this is possible in the land of Judea, we have proof from Mr. Maundrell, who, describing the Valley of Salt, speaks thus: ‘along, on one side of the

valley, toward Gibul, there is a small precipice about two men's lengths, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt; and, in this, you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, yet it had perfectly lost its savour: the inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof.' A preacher, or private Christian, who has lost the life of Christ, and the witness of His Spirit out of his soul, may be likened to this salt. He may have the sparks and glittering particles of true wisdom, but without its unction or comfort. Only that which is connected with the rock, the soul that is in union with Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, can preserve its savour, and be instrumental of good to others." What does Jesus say should be done with salt that has lost its usefulness? It is said that salt was stored in the temple to use for the sacrifices. When this salt "lost its savour," they would spread it in the walkways on rainy days to keep the people from slipping. What an interesting comparison. It is very important that we realize that we, too, could be thrown out because we have lost our usefulness to God. Have we become useless? If so, we must take Jesus' warning to heart.

From this research about salt, we clearly see what Jesus is saying to us. First of all we are very valuable to Christ. We also see that we can lose our value if we do not live out Christ's teachings. And finally, when we lose our value to Christ, He will cast us away.

Perhaps we can understand Jesus analogy of being like light better than we do the salt analogy. Many of the songs we sing reflect this: Ye are the Light of the World/Let the Lower Lights be Burning/Shine Your Light In the Valley For Me/Brighten the corner Where you are/Let the Gospel Light Shine Out/ Shine Where You are/Send the Light/ This Little Light of Mine.

What are ways that we can let our light shine? *"Do all things without murmurings and disputings: that ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain"* (Php 2:14-16). Living a life of Christian joy without murmuring and disputing is perhaps one of the greatest ways that the Christian contrasts with society. Have you ever watched people and noticed the sad and selfish expressions on their faces? Have you ever listened and heard the endless complaints, disputes, and law suits? Jesus told His disciples in John 13:35, *"By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."* Indeed, the joy and peace of a Christian is a light to the world.

Our separation from the world is another way we shine our lights. Sometimes we feel that our separation is a barrier that would hinder our light from shining, but instead, it is the light of truth for which souls in error are seeking. We live in a very evil society, but as we as Christians live out the biblical principles of the Word of God, we will attract the seeking soul. Our women have a light to shine that cannot go unnoticed: modest dress. Modest dress speaks volumes in a society that promotes sensual display. I Peter 3:1-4 tells of modesty that speaks louder than words. It is very important that a sister's actions are consistent with the testimony that her modest dress represents. another example of our separation that shines out to the world is our stand against TV, radio, and internet. Though many in the world would not give up these snares, they certainly understand why we draw the lines where we do. Simple living, nonresistance, high standards of moral purity—these

biblical principles and many more are the light that this world needs.

Brethren, we need to shine our light throughout the work week. We can easily slip into a pattern of living one way at church and another way at work. We can also get the idea that evangelism is a youth activity, an inner city trip planned by a committee. While these activities are not wrong, they do not take the place of the need for each one of us to be a witness for Christ wherever we go. We have many opportunities to give a word for Christ, share our testimony, or hand out a tract while on the job. Quality craftsmanship, honest business, keeping our word, willingness to go the second mile, singing as we work, accepting a loss without complaining—these and many more are ways that we are an “*epistle*” to the world, “*known and read of all men*” (2co 3:2). We should cultivate using the phrase, “Lord willing”, in making business plans. It is honorable to give God the glory when complimented for a quality job.

How can we let our lights shine? Let it shine on your face. The expression on your face tells a lot about it. Some years ago, I remember visiting with the elderly folks after a nursing home service and one of the older ladies asked me why everyone looked so sad. I was shocked. I had never thought about what we must look like while we were singing. But I knew she was right. I knew that I had been daydreaming and wondering how long the service would last while I mumbled along with the rest of the group. What a poor testimony I had been! It was a good reminder to me that people are watching and the expression on our faces speaks volumes.

Fellow brethren, our love for each other is a light that shines out to the world. The world around us knows that hatred, greed, rivalry, jealousy, and selfishness has wrecked our society: government, businesses, and families. They know that this should not be named in the church. Jesus said in John 13:35, “*By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.*” Our world craves love. can they find it in our churches? It is one thing to practice feet washing and the christian greeting at church, but is this love shown in everyday life?

“*And as we have “opportunity, let us do good unto all men*” (Gal. 6:10). Volunteering at service opportunities, holding the door for someone, fixing a mailbox for someone at 9:00 Saturday night, going to the jail for services with the inmates—these are opportunities that many of us have in our settings. God will give us plenty of opportunities to do good for others if we are willing to be used of Him.

We do not want the name of Jesus to be blasphemed by our lives. People are watching us to see if living for God does make us different. are we simply known as “the Mennonites that live down the road.” What are we known for? good cooking? hard work? shrewdness and frugality? devout religion? Or rather, do they see Christ shining through us? We have such a great potential to be a light to the world. remember that by the same token, if we do not shine our lights and we start living after the flesh, we also have great potential to give the world an “*occasion to blaspheme.*” King David was the man after God’s own heart. But David committed a sin. Nathan the prophet told him, “by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme.” You see, the brighter your light shines for God, the more shame you would bring to the name of God if you would fail Him. Stay true to God! Do not let sin mar your testimony.

In conclusion, let us notice why we want to shine our lights. We are shining our lights, not so the world sees us, but so the world sees our Father. How often do you walk into a room and take notice of the light bulbs? No, they usually go unnoticed especially if they are doing their job well. The light's job is to shine on something else, not itself. and that is what we want to do. We want to shine our lights brightly, unnoticed yet bringing glory to our Father in heaven.

~Seminole, AL
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