

TEXT: 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Dear Friends in Christ,

Having a purpose in life and knowing what your purpose in life is, is very important! Sometimes after the children have left home all of a sudden mothers don't see their purpose in life any more. Their husbands still go to work every day as before. They continue to bring a pay check home to support the family even though the family is just the husband and wife now as it was when they first were married. But it's different with the wife. Her life revolved around the children, taking care of them, helping them with their homework, getting them to school activities, taking them to piano lessons, etc. But now the children are gone. What does she do now with all the time that she used on the children? What is her purpose?

Counselors call it **Empty Nest Syndrome**. Empty nest syndrome is "*a feeling of grief and loneliness parents or guardians may feel when their children leave home for the first time, such as to live on their own or to attend a college or university. Symptoms of empty nest syndrome can include depression, a sense of loss of purpose, feelings of rejection, or worry, stress, and anxiety over the child's welfare. Parents who experience empty nest syndrome often question whether or not they have prepared adequately for their child to live independently. Empty nest parents often face new challenges, such as establishing a new kind of relationship with their children, having to find other ways to occupy their free time, reconnecting with each other, and a lack of sympathy from people who believe that parents should be happy when their children leave home.*" (Wikipedia)

Empty Nesters are not the only ones who can and do lose a sense of purpose in life. The elderly do too, especially after their spouse has passed away. I remember an elderly lady in the Senior Citizen's home who once complained to me, "*Why does God let young people die. I'm old and I know my Savior. I'm ready to go to heaven. Why doesn't he take me to heaven and let that young person live? Why?*" That Grandma didn't see her purpose in life anymore, did she? How would you answer her, if she had said that to you?

In our text this morning (Matthew 5:13-16) Jesus reminds us, his followers, of what our purpose in this life is? It's a purpose we have when we are young and when we are old. It's a purpose we have when we are raising children and after the children have left home. It's a purpose all of us have as followers of Jesus whether we are single or married with or without children. Having a purpose in life is important. Jesus knows that. **This morning Jesus tells all followers of his what their purpose in life is. It's twofold: Jesus' followers' purpose is 1) salt, and secondly, 2) light.**

Jesus' Followers Are the Salt of the World.

What did Jesus mean when he told his disciples, "**You are the salt of the earth.**" Obviously, Jesus is speaking metaphorically here, isn't he? Peter, James and John weren't literally salt. They were human beings with flesh and blood like you and me. There is one person in the Bible that became a pillar of salt. Do you remember who that was? It was Lot's wife. She disobeyed God after he had warned Lot and his family not to look back at Sodom and Gomorrah when they were fleeing that burning city. Lot's wife disobeyed and became a pillar of salt as God had warned (Genesis 19:26).

Jesus was telling us about one of the purposes his followers have in the world. Salt was a preservative in Jesus' day. It was the only preservative the people had back then to keep food, especially meat, from spoiling. Christians also serve as a preservative in this corrupt and sinful world. God preserves the world on their account. Looking back at the time of Abraham again, remember that God would have let the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah stand if there had been only ten righteous people living there. But there weren't. So after sending the few righteous there were there away, God destroyed those cities. And throughout the Old Testament the Lord preserved Israel for the sake of his elect until he lost patience with his idolatrous nation by destroying their country.

Now God preserves our world so that his followers can serve him here. Their purpose and responsibility is to rescue other lost souls from destruction by bringing them the saving gospel of Christ. They are to "**teach them to obey all things that**

Jesus has commanded them.” (Mt. 28:20) Jesus’ followers are salt to their spouse, their children, their neighbors, their fellow citizens in the country and to the world. They are to counteract decay. When a child is corrected by its parent after a child tells what he learned in school that day and it’s something wrong that parent is salt. (Evolution/Creation) When an engaged young adult continues to go to church and Bible Class even when their fiancé does not that believer is salt. Followers of Christ act as salt when they use the Law to convict the world of sin. All those believers who were involved with the March for Life in Washington last week were salt, weren’t they. Their march was convicting our country of sin. Salt stings, doesn’t it! When we act as salt, we won’t always be appreciated, but it must be done. If we don’t carry out our purpose as salt it will not be possible to season with the gospel of salvation. One sign at the march the week before the March for Life, the protest march said, “If Mary had had an abortion, we wouldn’t have this mess as a nation.” Boy does our country need salt! With all the murder, sexual immorality, same sex marriage we see in our country today, outright rebellion against God and his Word only salt can preserve us.

Jesus, however, warns us, “**But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.**” There is a danger that we as believers will get swallowed up by the sinful culture around us and believe the lies of the devil instead. Then we are not salt any longer. If we do not witness to the truth of God’s Word we will be worthless, good for nothing. If a “believer” doesn’t carry out his purpose as salt he is most likely not a Christian at all.

2. Jesus’ Followers are the Light of the World.

Jesus further explains the purpose of believers’ lives in this way, “**You are the light of the world.**” I thought Jesus said **he** was the Light of the world. He did! He is! How can both be statements be true.

Jesus is the Light of the world. He came to overcome the darkness of sin, wickedness, ignorance and unbelief. This he did on the cross! You might say Jesus is like the sun and we are like the moon. Light comes from the sun. The sun shines with light of its own. The sun is a light-bearing source of light. The moon is not. We see the moon because the light of the sun reflects off of it. Likewise, we believers reflect the light of Christ, just as the moon reflects the light of the sun! That’s what Jesus was saying! You are the light of the world.

Light shines. That’s its nature. There is no such thing as light that does not shine. But light can be covered up so that no one can see it. Jesus tells us not to do that! **14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house."** With those words Jesus is telling us to live our Christian lives in such a way that the world may see the difference Christ makes in us. (Some examples: praying before we eat even at a restaurant or when friends are with us, going to church even when there is company at our house for the weekend, etc.)

Jesus tells us what will happen when we shine. “**16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.**” The world will be/may be able to see the difference Christ makes in our lives. Then unbelievers, who know what is right and what is wrong, will be compelled to glorify our heavenly Father for the good he works through us. It used to be that the world really respected us as a country. Why is it different now? Does it have to do with the fact that our country is no longer a Christian nation, but a secular nation? Does it have to do with our attitude as our nation, our attitude of pride? As a nation we no longer love others because he first loved us. No in pride and selfishness we no longer do anything to bring glory to God, but, like the Pharisee, we want the world to see us. “Look at us, look at how good we are, how powerful we are...we aren’t like other sinners!”

“You **ARE** (not, I *want you to be*) the light of the world!” We cannot cease to be light and remain Christian. Peter wrote by inspiration, “**Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.**” Are you shining? Or are you covering up your light?

So how would you have answered that elderly lady who asked me, “Why doesn’t God take me to heaven instead of that young person who was killed in that car accident. I’m ready to go home!” My answer was, “Because God still has a purpose for you in this world. You are salt and light. There is still someone whom God desire your light to shine on so that their soul will be preserved from eternal destruction. Who might that be?” Turned out her roommate was not a believer. Her face lit up when she realized that even at the age of 80 she had a purpose in life, to witness to her Savior wherever she was. She did! Amen.