

SPRINKLE AND TWINKLE MATTHEW 5:13-16

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

On July 13, 2014 the Emory River Rats Association held a special day on Tennessee's Emory river...

There was a *watermelon seed spitting contest*, a *hula hoop contest*, even a *corn hole tournament*. But the big event was the annual [Belly Flop Championship](#).

Apparently, the River Rats take their belly-flopping seriously. The first place winner receives 100 bucks.

This year's grand prize goes to a young man named, [Max Stout](#). And what a fitting name for a champion belly flopper, *Max Stout!* For to make the biggest splash - to have the greatest impact - to leave behind a definite impression - a man needs *maximum stoutness*.

As a matter of fact, I think all Christians can look to the belly floppers on the Emory River for inspiration.

*Not that Jesus ever wants us to **flop** in our service, but He does command us to have an *impact!**

He wants us to leave behind *a definite impression and make a splash!* This is what this morning's text communicates... Jesus calls us to be **salt** and **light**.

We need to *shake and shine, permeate and radiate, sprinkle and twinkle!* Jesus wants us to move outside our comfort zone, and influence our world for Him.

In Iona, Scotland there's a chapel, and in the chapel there's a communion table, and on the communion table there's a chalice, and on the chalice are engraved the words, "**Friend, why are you here?**"

This is life's most crucial question, "*Why am I here? Now that I know God, why has He left me on Earth?*"

And in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus answers this question for those of us who are His followers. Our purpose is to be **salt** and **light** - *to sprinkle and twinkle!*

Jesus says, "**You are the salt of the earth...**"

And "**You are the light of the world...**"

Notice, Jesus doesn't say we *can* be salt and light, or *should be*, or *will be* - but we *are*. In Christ we've been transformed from clay to salt - from darkness to light.

We're told in Ephesians 5:8, "**You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.**"

The Holy Spirit lights a flame in the furnace of our hearts to make us light. He alters our spiritual composition to make us salt. We *are* **salt** and **light!**

Realize, in the Roman world nothing was as significant as these two commodities... **salt** and **light**!

Salt was extremely valuable. The Greeks called it "**theon**" which meant "*divine.*" Roman soldiers were paid with salt. The word "**salary**" means "*salt money.*"

Thus, a person "**not worth his salt**" is a person who really hasn't worked hard and earned his wages.

Salt is a preservative, which is why we're told in 2 Chronicles 13:5 that God's covenant with David was **a covenant of salt**. God's promises are *forever - like salt*.

Before the modern age of ice makers and refrigerators, nothing was as valuable as salt!

Light is also a significant commodity.

In Jesus' day, there were no electric lights. Lamps were fueled by costly oils. Wicks had to be trimmed. It required time and effort to maintain a source of light.

It was a major endeavor to cultivate the light.

Thus, it must've stunned and surprised the disciples when they heard Jesus refer to them as **salt and light**.

The group of disciples sitting on that grassy knoll in Galilee the day Jesus delivered His sermon, were a rag tag bunch of rejects - a motley crew of fishermen - a blue collar band of simple folk - yet Jesus told them they were the **salt of the earth** and **light of the world!**...

But didn't the light of the world shine from **Athens**, home of the philosophers?... Or **Rome**, home of the politicians and mighty men?... Or **Corinth**, the capitol of capital, the house of the rich and famous? Or even **Jerusalem**, the religious center of the world?

Didn't the light shine from Athens, and Rome, and Corinth, and Jerusalem? *Not in Jesus' estimation!*

It was a shocking statement for Jesus to refer to these simple, ordinary folk as **the light of the world** and as **the salt of the earth**. Jesus' own followers were the hope of mankind. They would make a lasting impact.

And let me stun you as well - if you're a disciple of Jesus *you too are the salt of earth* and *the light of the world!* You're God's means of changing the world.

Understand, when Jesus referred to His followers as salt and light He was drawing a contrast. If we're *salt and light*, the world without Jesus is suffering *decay and darkness...* **Salt** preserves - it arrests the decay.

Light illuminates - it drives out the darkness... A dark and rotting world desperately needs both salt and light.

I don't need to tell you how corrupt and dark this world is getting - just read the daily news. Vice and violence run rampant. This world is an evil place.

And the Bible says it's only going to get worse. 2 Timothy 3 tells us, "**In the last days... evil men and imposters will grow worse and worse...**" The human race has been infected by a deadly virus called sin.

Romans 1:21 says of our pagan world, "Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened." The world around us is a spiritual graveyard full of darkness and decay.

Many of our neighbors and co-workers have never lived in God's light. They've never experienced the life and love only Jesus can give! *This is why we're here!*

God wants to use us to grab their attention - *to make a splash!* We are salt to this *decaying world*, and light to this *darkened world!* Let's **sprinkle and twinkle.**

We're to have the same type of impact on our world as salt and light had on the ancient world of Jesus' day.

In antiquity salt had at least four functions...

It acted as a **preservative**. It added **seasoning**. It **stimulated** thirst. And it served as an **antiseptic**.

First, salt acted as a **preservative**.

Fishermen packed their catch in salt until it reached the market. Meat was stored in salt... Salt resists decay. It prolongs a food's freshness. And this is the effect a believer has on his or her peers! Your influence holds back the further deterioration of their lives...

It works like this... "A son's rebellion is kept from burning out-of-control because he recalls the faith of his praying parents... A person with a distorted view of Christianity is forced to change his mind by the caring compassion of a believing neighbor... A spouse sitting on the fence spiritually is encourage in the Lord by the faithfulness of

their mate... An employer tempted by dishonest profits, maintains his integrity because of the presence of an employee that stands for the truth..."

When we live our lives as followers of Jesus we are holding back the deterioration of a deteriorating world.

And if you think it's bad now, wait until we're gone!

2 Thessalonians 2:7 tells us, "The mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way."

The "*restrainer*" Paul mentions is the Holy Spirit at work in the Church. And the only reason the situation is not far worse in this world, is due to the influence of the Church. When Jesus returns to rapture His Church to heaven that's when all hell will break loose on Earth.

Today, it's the believer's love, our faith, our kindness, our stand for truth - that holds back the rising tide of evil, and maintains for men an opportunity to be saved!

Second, salt acts as a **seasoning**. It adds flavor.

I love grits, but grits are bland if you don't sprinkle a little salt on them. Vegetables taste better with salt. In fact, almost everything tastes better with a little salt.

Salt adds flavor and taste.

When my kids were small they'd lick the salt off the outside of a pretzel - *they loved the taste of salt.*

And this world we live in is as bland as grits without salt apart from Jesus and the joys of His kingdom.

Granted sin comes in many varieties, but after you've tasted a few brands of sin you realize it's the same ole same ole. After a while the world and its pleasures become tasteless, and boring, and drab.

That's why the people around us are looking for a little flavor - some spiritual salt - and we can provide it!

Only spiritual pleasures satisfy our deepest longings.

Cyprian was born in 200 AD to wealthy and cultured pagan parents. He grew up with all the world could offer. But one day he met a group of Christians.

Later he wrote this letter to a friend... "It's a bad world, Donatus, an incredibly bad world. But I've discovered in the midst of it, a quiet and good people who've learned the great secret of life. They've found a joy and wisdom which is a thousand times better than any of the pleasures of our sinful life. They're despised and persecuted, but they care not. They're masters of their souls. They've overcome the world. These people, Donatus, are Christians... and I am one of them."

It was Christians who convinced him to follow Christ.

In 1974 Christianity Today published a testimony of a Soviet prisoner named "Kozlov." This man had been thrown in the gulag for criminal activity. He writes...

"While prisoners like myself were cursing ourselves, the camp, the authorities - while we opened up our veins, or stomachs, or hanged ourselves - the Christians (with sentences of 25 years) didn't despair.

One could see Christ reflected in their faces. Their pure, upright life, deep faith and devotion to God, their gentleness and wonderful manliness became a shining

example of real life for thousands.” Kozlov too, became a Christian, and a leader among the Russian believers.

Your friends are so tired of the *"same ole same ole."*

They long for real joy - deep happiness - something worth living for - *hey, something worth dying for...*

We're the *spice* that can put *flavor* back in a person's life! Call us, **"Old Spice!"** Christianity is 2000 years old, but it brings newness to every generation of people.

Third, salt **stimulates** thirst!

Eat a bag of salty potato chips, or make a bowl of salty popcorn - and soon you'll be dying for a drink.

Likewise, as salt we're creating in others a thirst for Jesus. Our lives should be so attractive, so appealing, so winsome that others will be pressing us for our secret - *what makes you so different?* As Delilah asked Samson, **"What is the secret of your great strength?"**

It's been said, **"You are writing a Gospel, a chapter every day, by deeds that you do, by words that you say. Men read what you write, whether faithless or true. Say, what is the Gospel, according to YOU?"**

Are you creating in others a thirst for God?

Sheldon Van Alkon makes this observation, **"The best argument for Christianity are Christians, their joy, their certainty, their completeness, but the strongest argument against Christianity is also Christians - when they are somber and joyless, when they**

are self-righteous and smug... when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths."

Look at some Christians, and there's no joy, no power, no enthusiasm about life! You would think they had been *baptized in pickle juice* or *formaldehyde*...

Charles Spurgeon once said, "I commend cheerfulness to all who would win souls. There are more flies caught with honey than with vinegar."

We need to be creating a thirst for Christ, and the life He brings, by the attractiveness of our own lives.

And fourth, salt acts as an **antiseptic**.

I love the ocean for lots of reasons, but one is its therapeutic effect. Saltwater *heals cuts*, and *cleans out wounds*, and *soothes sore muscles*, and *revives skin*.

When we visit Israel, we always spend the night at the Dead Sea - a body of water loaded with salt. The Dead Sea is 33% salt - 10 times the ocean's saltiness.

And because of its salt, people from all over Europe vacation at the Dead Sea to soak in its spas. The saltwater helps arthritis and a host of other ailments.

Likewise, as salt, a Christian has a similar effect.

We bring healing to folks around us... Our kindness and caring sucks out harmful poisons. It heals the world's cuts. It cleans out wounds inflicted by sin.

As one man said of his Christian friend, "I felt more alive when I was around him." This is the awakening effect we should have on the lost world around us.

Yet, even though salt may be good for you, when you sprinkle salt on an open wound, it will *ouch!* Sting!

As salt and light we're *a blessing* to the world around us, but we're also *an irritant*. One's first exposure to salt or light can be a disturbing experience...

Imagine yourself asleep in a dark room - someone suddenly flips on the lights. The bright light is blinding.

And your reaction is to scream, or cover your head.

One author writes, "The glory of the Gospel is that when the Church is absolutely different from the world, she invariably attracts it. It's then that the world is made to listen to her message, though it may hate it at first." As salt and light we should avoid being deliberately offensive, but we can't be afraid to offend.

There's an initial recoil to both salt and light.

Too many Churches and Christians today are trying to be *sugar and spice*, rather than *salt and light*.

Salt is important, but so is light! A ray of God's light *drives out the darkness*, and *reveals His glorious truth*.

Our goal as beacons of light is to shatter this world's misconceptions about God. We need to expose the world's incorrect ways of approaching life. Light *confronts* the darkness - it doesn't *compromise* with it!

Light points out our pitfalls and perversions. It leads people out of confusion and despair into God's truth.

Once, a lady was asked what it was like to be a Christian. I love her reply. "It's like *being a pumpkin*."

God picks you out of the patch, brings you in, and washes off all the dirt. Then he cuts the top off and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, and fear, and guilt. Then He carves you a new smiling face, and puts His light inside of you to shine for all the world to see.” He makes Jack’o lanterns, and Jill’o lanterns, and Don’o lanterns, and Sue’o lanterns.

When our kids were small our house stayed littered with leggos! *You know what leggos are...* the little, plastic, indestructible, sharply-pointed building blocks.

And guess who’d stumble over the leggos? Dad!

It was always in the middle of the night. The house was pitch dark. I’d be walking down the hall, or through the living room, when suddenly a severe pain would ricochet through my body. I’d stepped right on a leggo!

This is the way people without Christ live their lives.

Their spiritual perception is pitch black! The spiritual leggos are lying on the ground, but they can't see the pitfalls... Our job as Christians is to turn on the light!

God wants us to shine His truth into their lives!

Author Lloyd Ogilvie says the average Christian suffers from what he calls "[reverse hypocrisy](#).”

He explains the term, “[This is not the hypocrisy of trying to be more than we are; it is the hypocrisy of trying to be less than we are. Hypocrites of the old order paraded their faith before men, while hypocrites of the new order deny their faith before men. We are so sensitive to being placed in a category, so aware of the criticism and](#)

ridicule of our contemporaries, that we refuse to talk about the central hope of our lives."

What a tragedy? Too many Christians today are hiding their candle - they're concealing their flame.

In Revelation 2-3 Jesus sees the Church as a seven-branch lamp stand, but in 2:5 He warns us, "I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place - unless you repent." In other words, if we fail to let our light shine, God will take away the opportunities.

If we're not an eager witness for Him, God will put us on the shelf and render us useless for His Kingdom.

Rather than let this dark and decaying world *influence us*, we need to be an *influence on this world*.

Did you hear about the dignified preacher who had a pet parrot? His parrot though, had a terribly foul mouth.

The previous owner cussed like a sailor. Thus, the parrot had picked up quite a string of four-letter words.

The pastor didn't want to do it, but he felt had no choice. He had just about decided to have the parrot put to sleep, when a lady in the church heard of his dilemma and proposed a last ditch remedy...

She too had a parrot, a female. And her parrot was an absolute saint! All it did night and day was sit on its perch and pray. This woman figured her girl's good influence would rub off on the pastor's bird. He agreed.

The next night the preacher arrived with his parrot, and placed him in the cage with the lady's parrot.

Immediately the foul-mouthed bird embarrassed the pastor. He turned and whispered, "Hi, Toots, how 'bout a big kiss?" But the lady was embarrassed all the more, when her female bird jumped off the perch, flapped her wings, and joyfully squawked, "Praise the Lord, my prayers have been answered!"

The *wholesome parrot* was supposed to influence the *wayward parrot*, but the reverse had taken place.

And too often the same problem occurs with us. We're salt and light - we're supposed to be the *influencer* - but instead we end up *being influenced!*

Jesus says salt that's lost its flavor - that's been neutralized. Salt that no longer has its saline properties, and has lost its impact, is to be thrown out.

Salt that no longer acts like salt is useless. Jesus labels it "*good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*" It becomes nothing but road salt.

Jesus also says, "*No man goes to the trouble of lighting a lamp only to hide it under a bushel basket.*"

A light is lit so it can shine! A city on a hill *sticks out* so the lost traveler can locate his way. A true believer will also desire to *stick out* for the cause of Christ.

It's said: "A man with a conviction must do one of two things: *change it or spread it.* If it is not true, he must give it up. If it is true, he must give it away. He must propagate it if it is true, or repudiate it if it is false."

And this applies to all believers. If you're a Christian you'll want to shine brightly for all the world to see!

Notice too, Jesus calls us *"the light of the world"* not *"the light of the church."* We need to get out among people who don't know Jesus, and let our light shine.

It's estimated that by the time a person has been a Christian for two years they've lost all meaningful relationships with people who aren't Christians.

All their friends are now Christians. They spend most of their time at church. And in a sense this is good, it's understandable, but it cuts down on our usefulness!

We're *the light of the world, the salt of the earth* - but for salt and light to do its job it has to be in contact with what it intends to impact and influence. We need to get involved in the PTA, or coach the Little League team.

Years ago I was criticized for letting my baseball coaching distract me from my church responsibilities.

I told my critic they were wrong. *Coaching those kids was a spiritual task.* At the ballpark I could *sprinkle salt* and *twinkle light* in a way I couldn't do on Sundays.

Keep in mind being salt and light is as much *what we do* as it is *what we say*. We need to live in such a way that the folks observing our lives will be confronted with the error of their ways without us even saying a word.

Notice verse 16, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may hear your good words..."* No! That's not what Jesus said. Read it again, *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works..."*

Once a new convert was asked who's preaching had been instrumental in his salvation? He said, *"It was no one's preaching, it was my grandma's practicing."*

Grandma's life and prayers had said it all! I've heard it put, "Preach the Gospel. Use words if necessary."

It reminds me of Jim. He was an ordinary Christian who decided to get involved with a family of Vietnamese refugees who had moved into his area.

This family had nothing, and Jim worked hard to find them *furnishings, and food, and friends*. He even tried to find Sun Lee a job... Jim wanted more than anything, to tell his friend about Jesus, but Sun Lee didn't know English and Jim didn't know Vietnamese.

After a few months Sun Lee had learned enough English for Jim to try to witness, but it was frustrating.

He was about to give up when Sun Lee blurted out, "Jim, is your God like you? If so, I want to know Him?"

Jim thought he hadn't been witnessing to his friend because he didn't speak Sun Lee's language, but the message had been coming through loud and clear!

Jim had been communicating the Gospel.

His light shined brightly through the life he lived!

Many of us want to know what we can do for Christ.

We're wanting a ministry so we can minister... but you already have a ministry - *you are salt and light!*

Wherever you are you can *sprinkle and twinkle*.

Mow your neighbor's lawn... visit someone in the hospital... write a letter to a prisoner... help a coworker catch up with his work... the needs abound. God can use us in a thousand ways to point people to Jesus!

In baseball when there's a runner on base a pitcher changes his wind-up. He uses a full wind-up when the bases are clear, but if there's a runner on, he startles the pitching rubber. It's allows him to keep the runner closer to the base. It's more difficult for him to steal.

This wind-up is called, “pitching from the stretch.”

Once I was coaching, when my pitcher forgot there was a runner on base. He was about to use his regular wind-up, when I yelled, “Mike, don't forget the stretch.”

I'll never forget, Mike stepped off the mound, took off his glove, and started stretching his arm! It was funny, but I guess both kinds of stretches are important.

Well, this Fall, I believe God wants us to stretch...

As a church we want to launch a few new outreach opportunities... Turn our focus *out* rather than *in*.

Next week we'll announce a meeting for those who want to help us plan, and mobilize for evangelism. As a church we can better use our numbers and resources to strategically spread the Gospel in our community.

A healthy church doesn't just *grow up* - it *moves out*. I think it's time for us to organize some new outreach.

But don't wait on the church! You can start today!

The reason we don't have the impact we desire is not for a lack of opportunity. Our problem is a lack of faith to seize the opportunities right in front of us.

This is why God wants to stretch our faith!

God wants to open our eyes to the needs around us, and the folks next to us we can reach with His love.

Nancy Jones died an elderly spinster, and when they went to engrave her tombstone they couldn't think of anything noteworthy to say. What had she done other than take care of herself, and mind her own business?

Finally, some creative people came up with a fitting epithet. It read, "**Here lies the bones, of Nancy Jones, for her life held no terrors. She lived an old maid. She died an old maid. No hits, no runs, no errors.**"

In other words, Nancy Jones lived her whole life and never got into the game. She never had a hit - never even made an error - *she lived but made no mark!*

Don't you want to make sure there's a trace that you've been here - that you played - that you counted?

We **are the salt of the earth**. We **are the light of the world**. But are we being *poured out and shining bright?*

Don't you want to sprinkle and twinkle?

Are we *permeating* the culture and the community around us with the truth and grace of God? Are we *radiating* the love and light that's found in Jesus?

The world we live in is dark and decaying. **Salt** will arrest the decay... **Light** will drive out the darkness...

What kind of a splash does your life make?

Are you leaving behind any ripples?

Remember the words of Jesus Christ... *You are the salt of the earth, and you are the light of the world!*