

February 5, 2023

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³“You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Parent in heaven.

Christians are not here to merely season or preserve the world from decay. The followers of Jesus Christ are sent on a mission to stimulate growth in the parts of the world that are barren, and to be mixed into the manure piles of the world so that God can use that fertilizer to bring new, virtuous life. But if those same followers are not committed to the radically countercultural message of Jesus Christ, they lose their “saltiness,” which is the unique witness to the power of the gospel that brings the kingdom of God to the messes of the world, stimulating life and growth. If we lose our “saltiness,” we are “no longer good for anything” and cannot be the agents of change that Jesus intended for his followers to be (Matt. 5:13). If the agricultural use of salt makes barren soil easier to till, facilitates the absorption of other vital nutrients by plants, and maintains and enhances the fertilizing capacity of manure, then

Jesus is calling us to something extraordinary and countercultural. If we are truly supposed to be salt in the agricultural sense, that means we are supposed to get messy and go where nothing is growing right now. Instead of going where things are bright, new, and exciting, we have a call to explore opportunities that will probably not make sense in the eyes of “normal” people.

In the face of these questions and criticisms, being salt and light for the good of the world sets us free to love our neighbors and not feel like we’re missing out or “not living up to our potential.” When we realize we are fertilizer, we measure our value by the growth of others, not by our comfort or vocational success. Moreover, we also recognize that we need to be scattered where the soil most needs fertilizing. We need to be in close relationships with people who do not know or believe the gospel so that new life in Christ might grow where there is now only barren soil.

The call of the salty is the call to move toward the broken so that they may meet God and be set free to become who God wants them to be. As salt, we are intended to bring life and flourishing out of decaying manure piles and arid soil where nothing grows—spheres of society that are dead, barren, or rotting because Christians are not there. Wherever the world is not the way God in his goodness intended it to be, that is where Christians should be encouraging and training one another to go. The good news is that we don’t have to go that far to find opportunities to be salt.

No matter where God sprinkles us, grace gives us the means and love gives us the motive to live salty lives consistent with Jesus’ teaching for the benefit of others and the glory of God.