

Sunday, November 18, 2018

The last time I preached, I did a two-part sermon on the Beatitudes, which are those declarations of blessedness in Matthew 5:3-12 regarding the people of God. As you'll recall, this is what kicks off what is commonly referred to as the "Sermon on the Mount," which is one of the most amazing sermons you'll ever read, straight from the mouth of our Savior when He walked the earth. I have been spending a lot of time in the Sermon on the Mount, and my intention is to talk a little bit more about it today, and possibly work my way through it in future sermons.

Last time, I mentioned that the book of Matthew presents Jesus Christ as the King, and this sermon describes the citizens of His Kingdom. At this point in Matthew, we have Jesus beginning His public ministry up north in Galilee, and He starts it like this:

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:17)

That is fleshed out a little bit down in verse 23:

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Matthew 4:23)

Note that His public ministry consisted of three main things – teaching, preaching the gospel, and healing. The next several chapters show examples of Him doing those three things, as He establishes His authority as the King of kings. Chapters 5-7 contain the Sermon on the Mount, which is an example of preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and where the people were astonished at His doctrine because He taught as one having authority. Chapters 8-9 contain a representative sample of miracles, including many healings, to confirm His divine authority. In Matthew, chapter 12 is where we first see details of Him teaching in a synagogue, where He teaches them a lesson about the sovereign mercy of God and establishes His authority over the Sabbath, thereby sending the Pharisees into a fit of rage where they hold a council on how to destroy Him. We know that Jesus preached many more sermons than the Sermon on the Mount, He healed many more people than we read about, and He performed many more miracles. John tells us this:

"And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen." (John 21:25)

So, Matthew does not provide an exhaustive list of things that Jesus said and did. But he did carefully choose those things that he did include, to fulfill his purpose. This is the context in which we find the Sermon on the Mount. The King is here, He's telling you the good news of His kingdom, and He's telling it to you with authority. He's telling you what kind of people are citizens of His kingdom, and what kind of people are not citizens of His kingdom. He's telling you the requirements and expectations for entrance and continuance in His kingdom. And He's telling you that this kingdom is entirely different than anything you're going to find anywhere else on earth.

A high-level summary of the Sermon on the Mount might look something like this:

1. Our essential characteristics (what we are) – vv. 5:3-12
2. Our function in the world – vv. 5:13-16
3. Our relationship to the law – vv. 5:17-48
4. Our religious life – vv. 6:1-18
5. Our mundane life – vv. 6:19-34
6. Our relationship to other people – vv. 7:1-12
7. Being doers and not hearers only – vv. 7:13-27

Last time, I focused on the essential characteristics of the people of God, which are in Matthew 5:3-12, and are commonly known as the “Beatitudes.” To recap, His people (and only His people) are:

- **Poor in spirit** – they know they are spiritually bankrupt and that they must rely on God for all things; they know they can't save themselves. Theirs is the kingdom of God.
- **Mournful** – they mourn for their sins because they've offended God. They shall be comforted.
- **Meek** – they quietly and willingly submit to the will of God and are not preoccupied with “self.” They shall inherit the earth.
- **Hungering and thirsting after righteousness** – they need righteousness and are desperate to get it. They know the only righteousness that will satisfy is Christ's righteousness. They shall be filled.
- **Merciful** – they pity and have compassion on those who are in a wretched, suffering condition and act to try to help relieve that suffering, while uncompromisingly upholding justice, holiness, righteousness, and truth. They shall obtain mercy.
- **Pure in heart** – they have a new, sincere, clean heart (i.e., a new nature) supernaturally implanted by God. They shall see God.
- **Peacemakers** – they tell people the only way to find true, lasting peace. They shall be called the children of God.

- **Persecuted for righteousness' sake** – they are persecuted for the cause of Christ, and they willingly submit to and rejoice at that persecution. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Great is your reward in heaven.

Today, I intend to focus on the next section of the Sermon on the Mount:

“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.” (Matthew 5:13-16)

What we see here is a description of our function in the world. Those people who have the characteristics described in the Beatitudes have a certain influence in the world, and it is described here using the metaphors of salt and light. So, I'd like to begin by looking at these two things, salt and light.

We may take salt a little bit for granted nowadays because it is so ubiquitous, but throughout history, it has been a very valuable commodity. The history of it is quite fascinating. It was one of the essential items in the ancient world that was transported across different trade routes. For example, the Via Salaria (the “Salt Route”) in ancient Rome. Salt was so valuable that Roman soldiers were paid in part by salt. In fact, the word “salary” comes from the Latin word for salt (along with words like “salad” and “sauce”). The phrase “not worth his salt” comes from a Roman soldier having part of his pay docked for not doing his job. Why was it so valuable? It was used to flavor food, for medicinal purposes, for religious activities, to preserve food in an era where there was no refrigeration (it either kills bacteria or it creates an environment where bacteria can't thrive), etc. Salt is essential for life – when common table salt dissolves, it breaks down into its constituent parts, sodium and chloride, both of which are necessary for us to survive. Salt can also have a destructive effect – too much salt will kill you, and sowing the earth with salt will keep anything from growing in that soil for quite some time.

There is a lot of scriptural support behind what I've just said about salt. In Luke 14:34, Jesus declares that “Salt is good.” This means that salt is useful, beneficial, precious, or excellent.

Salt was used to pay salaries. We read in Ezra 4:14 that “because we have maintenance from the king's palace...” The word for “maintenance” is “to eat salt.” About that word, Gill says, “salaries were annexed, by which they were supported, and which they had from the king's

exchequer; or, 'salt', as in the original, some places of honour and trust formerly being paid in salt; hence, as Pliny observes, such honours and rewards were called 'salaries.'"

Salt was used for seasoning food. In Job 6:6, we read: "Can that which is unsavoury be eaten without salt?" Salt makes food more flavorful. And Isaiah 30:24: "The oxen likewise and the young asses that ear the ground shall eat clean provender." This not only flavors the food, but provides a necessity for animal life (similar to how farmers provide "salt licks" for livestock).

We find salt being used in association with healing in 2 Kings 2:19-22, when God healed the waters by way of Elisha casting salt into the spring. And apparently it was a common medical practice to "salt" the skin of a newborn baby, as we see in Ezekiel 16:4.

Salt was used in the offerings under the Mosaic law, and we read about a "covenant of salt." Offering up salt with the offerings had a practical reason – remember that the priests and Levites ate from these offerings, and salt would make the food savory and keep it from putrefaction. But, as we know, these offerings were highly symbolic. As salt is used for flavoring and as a preservative, it is a fitting symbol to signify the savoriness of God and His promises and doctrines, and the everlasting, enduring, and perpetual nature of His sacrifice, His faithfulness, and His covenant. On the flip side, it may symbolize our desire to consecrate our lives to the Lord, and offer ourselves up as a living sacrifice:

"And every oblation of thy meat offering shalt thou season with salt; neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meat offering: with all thine offerings thou shalt offer salt." (Leviticus 2:13)

"Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, *even* to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt?" (2 Chronicles 13:5)

Salt is also associated with destruction. When Abimelech was fighting against the city of Shechem in Judges 9:45, he "slew the people that was therein, and beat down the city, and sowed it with salt." In other words, he turned it into a desolate, worthless heap.

Along these same lines, salt is a reminder of the wrath of God, as when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, leaving desolation behind. You'll recall that Lot's wife became "a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26), and even today, that whole area of the world is covered with salt. In the scripture, we see references to the "Salt Sea" and the "Valley of Salt." Today, we call that the "Dead Sea" and in the Valley of Salt sits a 5 mile long, 3 mile wide, 742 foot tall hill called "Mount Sodom" which is made 80% of salt. God threatens the same to those who would forsake His covenant and live wickedly:

**“[And that] the whole land thereof [is] brimstone, and salt, [and] burning, [that] it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:”
(Deuteronomy 29:23)**

“He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground; A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.” (Psalm 107:33-34)

So, we see salt as a thing of value being used for seasoning, preservation, healing, medicinal purposes, offerings, covenants, and to destroy and make desolate. In the text we’re looking at out of Matthew 5, I believe that salt could mean all these things (and more). We’re a thing of value that God uses to perform a work in this earth. We season the earth with the savory doctrines of the covenant of grace. We preserve and retard the corruption of the earth. We provide the antidote to this sin-sick world and show the only way for proper healing. God uses us to destroy the wicked manner of life of some people, saving them. And God will use our testimony to condemn others to everlasting destruction. Truly, “To the one *we are* the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life.” (2 Corinthians 2:16).

Moving on to “light,” the Bible begins talking about light, and the Bible ends talking about light, with hundreds and hundreds of verses about light in between.

“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness [was] upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that [it was] good: and God divided the light from the darkness. And God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And the evening and the morning were the first day.” (Genesis 1:1-5)

“And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.” (Revelation 22:5)

Light is one of the most common metaphors used throughout the scripture as a symbol for understanding, wisdom, goodness, virtue, life, righteousness, truth, guidance, joy, holiness, etc. On the flip side, darkness symbolizes evil, death, sin, blindness, ignorance, filthiness, confusion, heaviness, sorrow, lies, etc. Light illuminates, exposes, reveals, and purifies. I’m sure you can all think of multiple example verses off the top of your head (for example, “thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” – Psalm 119:105. Or, “Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!” – Isaiah 5:20).

Going back to our text in Matthew 5, it says that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. That is our function in the world – we are to be as salt and light. If we have the characteristics described in the Beatitudes, then we will influence the world as salt and light. This is not something that we have to attain to – this is something that will just be. He says, “Ye are the salt of the earth” and, “Ye are the light of the world.” He doesn’t say, “I’d like to you to please try to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.” He tells us that this is what we are. And ONLY we are salt and light. We are talking exclusively about redeemed people here – God’s elect. Nobody else is salt and light. If you are poor in spirit, if you mourn for your sins, if you are meek, if you hunger and thirst after righteousness, etc., then you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, whether you intend to be or not. You affect the world around you by your words and your actions. This is important. Remember who you are. You are the redeemed of God, so act like it! “Walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2:12).

The Lord Jesus is also saying something very important here about the condition of the world. If we are salt and light, then that presupposes that the world is in a state where salt and light are necessary. He is telling us that the world is insipid, diseased, corrupt, and dark. This is a statement on the total depravity of mankind. At the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden, corruption and darkness entered this world, and we know it will only get worse:

“But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived.” (2 Timothy 3:13)

This generation fancies itself to be the most enlightened of all generations, but for all their self-congratulatory talk, they haven’t succeeded in doing one thing to help their spiritual state. There’s a vast amount of knowledge, technology, innovation and information out there, but instead of helping, humans have become even more wicked and perverse. The more the world boasts of its great knowledge, the more confusion and darkness abounds – people can’t even figure out if they’re male or female anymore! With all our intelligence, we have only invented strange new ways to be evil. Yes, the world likes to think it has great “enlightenment,” but it is walking in gross darkness in the most important things, like sin, righteousness, depravity, heaven, hell, the love and mercy of God, and the hatred and wrath of God. Look, human beings are conceived in sin, and all their inventions won’t change that. And soon, there will be only one solution, and that will be for God to destroy this world. He did it once by water, and He will do it again with a fiery holocaust the likes of which we can’t even conceive:

“For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was,

being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.” (2 Peter 3:5-7)

So, this is the situation that we find ourselves in. A corrupt, dark world, only becoming more corrupt and more dark, racing towards inevitable destruction by an angry God. And in the middle of all of that, here stand the people of God, the salt of the earth, and the light of the world.

Don't join the world, my friends. We are to be separate. Salt is separate and distinct from the thing that is salted. Light is separate and distinct from the thing that is illuminated. If you look around at the sad state of affairs in the so-called “churches” of this earth, you'll see that they are so far from influencing the world for good, that they have been influenced BY the world. The world dictates what they believe and preach. It's popular to fornicate, so the churches say it's OK. It's popular to say that homosexuality is good, so the churches say it's OK. It's popular to divorce and remarry, so the churches say it's OK. We can't forsake the standards of God and take on the sin and the philosophies and the morals of the world. It's a very real danger.

Jesus says in John 17 that “these are in the world...they are not of the world.” In other words, we live in the world side by side with our fellow human beings, but we are not part of them. We're not going to go hide in a monastery or otherwise try to isolate ourselves. We are in the world, but we are distinct. We are separate. We don't and must not participate in their rebellion against God. And that's the way it will be until the Lord comes: “Let both (i.e., wheat and tares) grow together until the harvest.” (Matthew 13:30).

“Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean [thing]; and I will receive you, And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” (2 Corinthians 6:17-18)

It is significant that our text today falls immediately on the heels of describing the persecution that we can expect to receive from worldlings. You may remember this from last time:

“Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when [men] shall revile you, and persecute [you], and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great [is] your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”
(Matthew 5:10-12)

It is as much as to say, “Even though you can expect to receive persecutions, don’t forget that you still have a function in this world. You are salt and light. You have a job to do in influencing the world around you.” You can’t go hide because you’re persecuted. You can’t let the persecution alter your duty. It is a given that you’re going to be persecuted – “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.” (2 Timothy 3:12). But there will also be people who believe, and you’re supposed to “endure all things for the elect’s sakes” (2 Timothy 2:10). Here’s what our function is:

“But ye [are] a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.” (1 Peter 2:9)

“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.” (Philippians 2:14-16)

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now [are ye] light in the Lord: walk as children of light: (For the fruit of the Spirit [is] in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove [them]. For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret. But all things that are reprovèd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light. Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.” (Ephesians 5:8-14)

We (and we alone) are the salt and the light. Nobody else has anything useful or worthwhile to say about the condition of the world. Nobody else can show forth the praises of Him who called us out of darkness. Nobody else can hold forth the word of life. Nobody else can walk as children of light. Nobody else can reprove the unfruitful works of darkness. By the decree of God, the world is dependent on us (i.e., believers) to maintain and defend gospel truth, and to live our lives accordingly. They are dependent on us to be salt and light. There is no alternative.

Salt flavors. Life on this earth is utterly insipid and tasteless without the savory gospel and doctrines of grace that His people preach. False, lukewarm doctrine doesn’t flavor. Meaningless platitudes don’t flavor. This is especially so when one is on their sick- or death-bed. Without God, you have no hope, no expectation of anything other than misery.

Salt retards corruption. Think of humanity as a disease-ridden, rotting carcass, lurching forward to certain destruction, and our very existence on earth slows that down. We act as a preserving agent. Just by being here, we benefit the world around us (like the unbelieving spouse is sanctified by the believer in 1 Corinthians 7). The people on this earth would be far more corrupt and vile if the people of God weren't in their midst. And they would have been destroyed long ago. You all remember the story of Abraham talking to God about the destruction of Sodom: "And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked?" (Genesis 18:23). He asked God if He would destroy that wicked place if 50 righteous souls were there. Then 45. Then 40, 30, 20, and finally 10: "And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy [it] for ten's sake." (Genesis 18:32).

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." (2 Peter 3:9)

Salt destroys and makes desolate. The day of judgment will come, and part of our function is to salt the ungodly such that they are without excuse when that day comes, and they enter eternal destruction. Remember that Noah saved his house, and he condemned the world:

"By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith." (Hebrews 11:7)

"The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." (2 Peter 2:9)

Light exposes darkness. Light manifests the truth about what a thing really is. Light doesn't just expose it, but it explains the reason for it. It says that the problem is with the very nature of humans – we are corrupt. By nature, we hate God, and we love sin. And nothing will be right until that is dealt with. And for those who will see it, light also exposes the path out of the darkness. The Lord calls His people out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9), but most of the world gets enraged at the light. They love their sin too much:

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to

the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.” (John 3:18-21)

John tells us that “God is light” (1 John 1:5). And Jesus tells us that He is the “light of the world” (John 8:12 and 9:5). Obviously, the source of the light (truth, wisdom, understanding, etc.) is God. We are reflectors of that light. We didn’t come up with the light – we are shining forth the light of God. It’s not something that was meant to be hidden. Rather, it must be conspicuous. God uses us to send His light to the world:

“For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to [give] the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6)

How are we salt and light? I said earlier that it is our words and our actions. Sometimes this is a silent, hidden influence – as when salt gets rubbed into the food, and then imperceptibly does its thing as it permeates through (and note that it doesn’t take very much salt to make a difference). Sometimes this is a more open thing – as a light shining from a city on a hill. I’ll repeat what I said earlier: whether you like it or not, or whether you intend to or not, you have an influence on the people around you. You are an ambassador for the King, so make sure you are representing Him.

We have an influence with our words. Our speech should be truthful, spiritual, wholesome, uncompromising, direct, clear, healing, valuable, effectual, never bringing a reproach on Christ. It should not be filthy or vindictive or deceptive. It should have a purifying and preserving effect that prevents corruption, and not be speech that encourages corruption. That does not mean we’re not going to offend – if we’re going to tell the truth, we’re going to offend. If we’re going to shine a light on the darkness that men love, they’re going to be offended. But the offense should come because of the truth, not because we have sinned while telling the truth. “Speaking the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15) means the motivation is love. If the motivation is human hatred or vindictiveness, that is sin.

“Let your speech [be] always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” (Colossians 4:6)

To be the light of the world includes telling people about the true nature of God. Remember, God is light. We must speak the truth about the nature of God, and about His revealed word. We must declare the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). But we can’t just say it; we have to live it. We speak the truth, but we must also live our lives accordingly day by day.

“I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called.” (Ephesians 4:1)

“For ye were sometimes darkness, but now [are ye] light in the Lord: walk as children of light.” (Ephesians 5:8)

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7)

For us to walk in the light is to live a holy life. It's to obey God. It's to live according to His principles. It's to live in such a way that we don't encourage or enable other people in their sin, and that our very existence exposes the corruption of the world by way of contrast.

So the influence that we have is by our words and by our behavior. What God has implanted in us supernaturally (as described in the Beatitudes) will direct our speech and our actions. But we also have some warnings here:

“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... 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.” (Matthew 5:13-15)

Non-salty salt provides no value whatsoever, and nothing can take the place of salt. Light that doesn't shine is useless. So the question is, have you lost your savor? And are you hiding the light? If so, you've become absolutely worthless when it comes to influencing the world, and you have brought a reproach on Christ.

When you've lost some of your savor and hidden some light, generally speaking, it's because you want to be “of the world” to one degree or another. You've forgotten Paul's and Peter's admonitions to “be not conformed to the world” (Romans 12:2) and to be “as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance” (1 Peter 1:14). It means you aren't living right – you're living like a worldling.

This church is known for street preaching - you might participate in that and think that that makes you salt and light, but then you live the rest of your life like the devil. If so, you're playing the fool (to “lose your savor” comes from a verb meaning to be dull, sluggish, stupid or foolish). You may make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof. You may lie, cheat, and steal. You may indulge your idleness, slothfulness, gluttony, or drunkenness. You may seek vengeance, lose control of your spirit, bear grudges, treasure up wrath and envy in your hearts. You may otherwise participate in the works of the flesh. You may purposefully hide

the light because you fear persecution, or desire to be accepted, or don't want to rock the boat, or don't want to offend a particular person, or fear a loss of your reputation. You may have lost your zeal for Christ and are more interested in pursuing other things.

If this is you, you have disgraced the Lord Jesus Christ. Any good that you've done by preaching on the streets has been undone by the fact that you have become just like the world. You are in the process of losing your saltiness and hiding the light, if you haven't already lost it completely, and if you haven't already snuffed it out.

God has put each of us into positions where we have to deal with fallen mankind every day (whether it be work, or school, or some other interaction). How you carry yourself there in some ways is even more important than our street preaching ministry. You can't go into these situations, join in with their sins, and then claim to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I'm not saying to start going around like an annoying, sanctimonious prude, and I'm not saying that we have the ability to become sinless; but I am talking about a general bent and course of life. If you make it a practice to indulge in and excuse your sins, you are just like the rest of the world. You are just another worldling. If we're going to operate as salt and light, we cannot be like the world!

So that's the warning. Please take it to heart. Please examine yourselves. The general principle is that if your main concern in life is to glorify God, then you'll do the right thing. If you are really in possession of those Beatitude characteristics, then you'll do the right thing. The whole purpose of all of this is to glorify God. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." (Matthew 5:16). It's not for you to show off how holy and pious you are – it's to glorify your Father.

"Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by [your] good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation." (1 Peter 2:12)

Westboro Baptist Church is one of the biggest pariahs on earth – people certainly speak against us as evildoers. But those who have to do with us can't quite understand what they're dealing with. It's a little bit enigmatic to them. They behold our good works (words and actions); they see that we're different than the other people around us. That doesn't mean they like it, but they can't deny it. And God will visit – there will be a day of visitation. And it will either be in mercy or wrath. Some are swayed by our good works which they shall behold, and God's mercy will be glorified. Some are hardened but will have no excuse because they had the good works right in front of them, and God's wrath will be glorified. I love you. Amen.