

Being salt and light in the world

- Can we as Christians influence the world?
- Do we have the power to bring transformation or do can we look on as helpless bystanders?
- Are we “supposed” to bring transformation into the world – isn’t this world passing away?
- What is our role in society?

One night a motorist was run down by a train at a grade crossing. The old signal man in charge of the crossing had to appear in court. After a severe cross-examination, he was still unshaken. He said he had waved his lantern frantically, but all to no avail. The following day the superintendent of the line called him into his office. "You did wonderfully well yesterday, Tom," he said. "I was afraid at first that you might waver." "No, sir," replied Tom, "but I was afraid that old lawyer was going to ask me whether or not my lantern was lit!"

Matthew 5: 13 – 16 “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 underfoot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

1) You are the salt of the earth

- Salt is something that was commonly used in Jesus’ day.
- It is used to season food, preserves food and was used in the religious rites by Greeks, Romans, Hebrews and Christians.
- If we are the salt of the earth then we will do the work that God wants us to do without being noticed.
- You can’t see the salt that is sprinkled on the food but it works its way into the food, seasoning it and/or preserving it.
- Biltong – meat is salted and dried out. If it isn’t salted it will go rotten.
- Our work and influence for God in society largely goes unnoticed but our mere presence, as salt, has profound effects.
 - Salt brings out the taste in food making us desire more, so it is with us. We give people the taste of Jesus, the taste of life, the taste of hope, the taste of eternity.
 - Salt also causes thirst. If someone eats food with salt in it they need to drink water to quench their thirst. So our lives ought to be making the people of our society thirsty to drink from the living waters that Jesus promised.
 - Salt preserves food. The righteousness of our lives should act as the standard by which society measures its actions. The Word of God is the standard by which we measure our lives. We are the only Bible that most people will ever read.
- David H. Johnson writes: “Sodium is an extremely active element found naturally only in combined form; it always links itself to another element. Chlorine, on the other hand, is the poisonous gas that gives bleach its offensive odor. When sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride--common table salt--the substance we use to preserve meat and bring out its flavor. Love and truth can be like sodium and chlorine. Love without truth is flighty, sometimes blind, willing to combine with various doctrines. On the other hand, truth by itself can be offensive, sometimes even poisonous. Spoken without love, it can turn people away from the gospel. When truth and love are combined in an individual or a church, however, then we have what Jesus called "the salt of the earth," and we're able to preserve and bring out the beauty of our faith.”.
- Salt only works if it is fresh and different. Worldly Christians will never make a difference in the world.
 - If salt loses its saltiness i.e. if salt becomes insipid – tasteless – it is no longer good for anything. Who wants to eat for without salt in it?
- Mark 9: 49 “Everyone will be salted with fire.”
- How salty are our lives?
- How salty is our church?

2) You are the light of the world

- Light is also understood by all. We cannot live without it. It is necessary for life. Photosynthesis of plants takes place because of light. Through it they produce oxygen.
- Light allows us to see where we are going and what we are doing.
- Sight is the reflection of light off an object.
- The moon doesn't have its own light; it merely reflects the light of the sun.
We don't have our own light; we reflect the light of Christ.
 - John 8: 12 Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."
- Light makes our paths clear so that we won't stumble.
- Light illuminates obstacles in our way – in our lives. It shows us up for what we really are.
- Some people change their ways when they see the light, others only when they feel the heat.
- Light gives hope – the saying "a ray of hope"
- Light gives life.
- Light cannot be hidden in the darkness. For it not to be seen it has to be put out.

We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world when we live by the character and attitudes of Christ.

3) All praise goes to our Father in heaven

- The purpose of our lives being salt and light is to bring praise and honour to God.
- This comes primary before societal transformation.
- Salt and light that glorify God are referred to as our good deeds.
- What good deeds can we do to glorify God in our communities?
 - Preach the Gospel
 - Mark 16: 15 Jesus said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.
 - Care for the poor and needy
 - Proverbs 14:31 Whoever oppresses a poor man insults his Maker, but he who is generous to the needy honors him.
 - Care for widows and orphans
 - James 1: 27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.
 - Speak out for those who are oppressed.
 - Proverbs 31:8-9 Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the **poor** and **needy**."
 - Care for the homeless, the lonely, and those in prison
 - Matthew 25: 34 – 40 "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'
"Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?'
"The King will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.'

We need to be the salt and light of our communities in word and action.