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Teaching: Carlon Tschetter
Series: The Sermon on the Mount
Message: Salt & Light, Part 2

Transcribed Message
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Matthew 5:13-16

I don't know if it's a guy thing or not. I don't want to limit it to that, but I love a good flashlight. I don't know how many ladies here love a good flashlight, but I love a good flashlight. When I go to our second home in Mustang (which is the Lowe's store) especially this time of year as I'm walking along those aisles and they've got those temporary displays. One of those temporary displays is always those really cool flashlight things. It's all I can do to walk by and not grab one and put my name on it and put it under the tree and get another gift of a flashlight for Christmas this year. I just did a quick survey of our home. There's four of them in the garage. There's three of them in the kitchen. There's two in the back closet. There's one by the bedstead. There's one in each vehicle. There's a drawer with a whole bunch of little ones for the grandkids. So we're in pretty good shape when it comes to flashlights. And the reason is because Jesus said to us go into all the world to be a flashlight. There's some liberty with that but He did say that, didn't He?

We're turning again this morning to Matthew chapter 5 and in Matthew chapter 5 verses 13 through 16 Jesus says to us you and I are to be the salt of the earth and we are to be the light of the world. I appreciated many of you turning in your assignment. Some of you still have that to do yet before you get your final grade for the year, but you've got on your outline there a whole bunch of ideas that people turned in last week for how it is that we can be salt. That is a great start. You need to review those. You need to pray over those. You need to think about those at a later time because right now we're in Matthew 5 and we're going to see God's call in our life is that we be a light in the world. We're to be a light in the world and we're to live out daily the gospel before a watching world. That is our privilege and our calling.

So we go from the Beatitudes in the first 12 verses to the similitudes in verses 13 to 16. As we do that, I remind you of three things. We go from character to calling. We

go from character to calling. Verses 1 to 12 is all about character. This is a snapshot, a picture. This is what a follower of Christ looks like. It is so plain and simple in the way Jesus said it before us. Then we go to calling. You can't really get to the calling apart from the character. The character needs to be there first. You can't make a difference, you can't make an impact, you cannot be the influence that God has called you to be apart from the character of Christ being built into your life. So we begin there.

Secondly, we noted the contrast between the world's response to us in verses 10 through 12 and then our response to the world and that is in verses 13 to 16. When we look at what Jesus does in these two metaphors and says we're salt and we're light, we know that in Jesus's statement in these verses there's two presuppositions at work about our world. The first thing that Jesus says about our world is that there is a state of decay. That's the picture of salt. That's why we're called to be salt. Why are we called to be salt? Why are we called to savor? Why are we called to create thirst? Why are we called to be a preservative? The very things that salt does. Why is all that necessary? It is all necessary because the world that we live in is not getting better and better. The world we live in is in a state of decay. So we're called to be salt.

Secondly, in this picture we look at this morning, we see that the world is in darkness. So there's decay and there is darkness. We're called to be light. There is a great statement in Isaiah. You're familiar with it, especially this season of the year. We read: "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. Those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them the light has shown." What a great statement that is looking forward to the coming of the Messiah.

Thirdly, what do these verses say? They talk about identity and purpose. They talk about identity and purpose. I didn't mention this last week but there is in the word order in this text before us a sense of the emphatic and that simply means that when Jesus says you're the salt of the earth, He is literally saying you're the only salt of the earth. You're the light of the world. You're the only light of the world. So He's emphasizing the fact that it's on us. He is not here anymore. He's here obviously in the person of the Holy Spirit living within us, but Jesus the man, the incarnate Son of God was ascended to heaven and He left us the task of the responsibility to be salt and to be light. The question we should regularly be asking is how can we be more effective in

this? Maybe the negative way to ask that is why is it that we aren't more effective than we are? I've got to tell you. One of the things I appreciate about the elders of Covenant is they're not afraid to ask these questions and to press into these questions regularly. We spend a good bit of time thinking and praying about how is it that we can be more effective as a church in the body of Christ. Why is it that we are not more effective than we are? Those are good questions that we ought to be asking ourselves regularly because Jesus identifies our very purpose and identity as being salt and light. Frankly, if we're not being salt and light then we ought to be asking ourselves why not. Why are we not doing the very thing that He has called us to do by way of our identity and purpose?

So let's look at this matter of it's all about illumination. I want you to see four things this morning about this metaphor of light and we're going to start off by just talking about the source of light. We recognize right away that the source of light is not us. God has not laid on us the responsibility of being the source of light because God is the one who is going to be that light. We reflect the light. All the way through Scripture, one of the overriding themes of the Bible is that God is light. Open your Bible to the very first page. Genesis chapter 1 verse 1: In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and the earth was without form and void, and darkness covered the face of the deep. And God said let there be light. You start off right in the very first sentences of the book. Then you know what happens? You go to the end of your Bible and you get to Revelation chapter 22. There is no night but there's no sun and there's no moon and there are no stars. Why not? Because it says the Lord God shall be their light. So from Genesis to Revelation, God is the source of light. We need to understand that. Psalm 36:9 says in Your light, God, we see light. 1 John 1 – God is light. In Him is no darkness at all. Jesus said that he was the light. In one of the seven great I Am statements, Jesus said I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

Thirdly, the Word of God is a source of light. Psalm 119:105 – God, Your Word is a lamp to my feet and Your Word is a light to my path. There can be no doubt as to the source of the light. We are like the moon. We reflect the light from the Son. We

reflect the light from the Son, don't we? Just as the moon reflects the light from the sun, so we reflect the light from the Son.

The purpose of light. Let's look at this just as we did last week with the idea of salt. We are to be the light of the world. If salt influences, if salt permeates, and in one sense salt kind of works quietly. It can work invisibly, behind the scenes. Light is going to be different. Light illuminates. What does light do better than anything else? It shines. It illuminates. It's very visible.

Two things it seems to me at least happen when Jesus says you're the light of the world. We can be sure that there are at least two things he has in mind and the first one is that light reveals things as they really are. Light reveals things as they really are. The darkness is literally driven back by the turning on of the light. The darkness has to go away when the light is turned on. It disappears in the face of the light that is shining. Jesus uses the picture here of the city, a city set up on a hill. He said just like a city set up on a hill for safety and protection purposes. The light of that city can be seen from miles away. The city set on a hill, Jesus says, can be seen. So here light reveals what otherwise would not be seen. In John chapter 3 and verse 19, Jesus said it in this way: "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light." The decay of our world, the darkness of our world. Not only are those the statements behind these metaphors, but Jesus actually says people enjoy that. They want to stay in the darkness because their works were evil. Everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light. He says furthermore in Ephesians chapter 5 where He talks about this matter of life and the shining of light. Verse 8: "For at one time you were darkness but now you are the light of the world. Walk as children of light for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true." One of the things that light does is it obviously reveals.

Again I don't want to talk about this every week, but it just reminds me of the cultural setting in which we find ourselves and how things come to light. Things that people do in darkness. The things that people never intend to be brought into the light. They love the darkness where it's hidden and nobody sees. They can literally live a double life. There's something about the revealing of light that brings all of this to the forefront. That's what light does. It does it very well, doesn't it?

The second thing that it does is it gives guidance. Light gives guidance. It gives direction. It shows us the way, doesn't it? I can remember very well when our four children were young and you'd be sleeping in the middle of the night in a dead sleep. A voice would call out from the middle of the night and want somebody to come. So you would get up and you'd meet a doorjamb and maybe run into a wall and your little toe would hook the end of the bed in the midst of the darkness. How much easier to reach over and grab a flashlight? It's always there. You could hand that flashlight to your wife so that she can then see where to go. I kind of got to the point where I could still lay there and find that light button and direct Bonnie right out of the door right down the hall because you knew ultimately they wanted their mom anyway, so you were doing a good deed. That's what light does, doesn't it? Light not only reveals but light illuminates. It takes us right back to the verse we've already talked about Psalm 119:105 – Thy Word is a lamp to my feet. Isn't this a picture of the darkness of our world? Your Bible is literally like a light. It's like a flashlight. You and I have no idea how to navigate the world that we live in apart from this book. Not in the way God wants us to. Not with the foolishness that is part of our world and a part of our day. Who would've thought that this week an Anglican minister in England would ask the Christians of England to pray that four-year-old Prince William would turn to same-sex marriage or to same-sex relationships so that he could shine a light on the injustices of those who would teach otherwise? I mean it's a crazy world that we live in. how do you know how to live in this world without yielding to the foolishness of this world? The only way you know is the Word is a lamp to your feet and it's a light to your path. If you don't know what's in that book, then that's a flashlight that's operating without batteries. Jesus says to us your Word is a lamp to our feet. The only way you're going to live in this world is if you have the guidance of the Word.

Then what happens? Look at the results in verse 16. We know what Jesus says is the result of living in this way. People don't take their light and put it under a basket. No, they put it on the stand and it gives light to all the house. Verse 16 in the same way: Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. So there's two things that come out of this picture of our being light in the world. The first one is this matter of good works. There are good

works that people are to see. They're going to see your good works. This word is the word *kalos*. You know it's the idea of good, of something that is attractive. It's good in that it is beautiful. It's good in that it is giving people a picture that is pleasing. This is what Jesus communicates to us. You live in this way and the result is they're going to see your good works.

In this context, what are those good works? Don't let me down now. In this context, what are those words? It starts with a B. Beatitudes. The Beatitudes. He just went from a snapshot of the life of Christ. The Beatitudes are translated into our lives by the power and the working of the Holy Spirit. So that people see somebody who is poor in spirit and there's a humbleness of heart. They see somebody who literally is mourning over sin in our world. They're broken over sin in their world and in their life. There are people that they're seeing who are filled with the spirit of mercy. They are ones who are pursuing and going after righteousness. They're meek. They're strength under control. They're pure in heart. They're peacemakers. All of those things that Jesus has said. That's what you and I are to be within our home, within the settings of work, within entertainment, recreation, wherever God has us. That's the picture that's being painted.

Listen to what Paul said in Philippians chapter 2 because he speaks to the same thing. He starts off with this: Do all things without grumbling or disputing. What would that be in your life? That would be a good work. What if people would look at us and see somebody who generally is not a grumbler and is not a complainer and is not a disputer? That is attractive. That is pleasing. That is something that is good. But then he goes on to say this: That you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life. There it is. They're going to see your good works and they're going to glorify your Father who is in heaven.

That is the second thing. They're going to glorify God. They're going to see this picture that they don't generally see. They're going to be watching somebody who behaves and acts and talks differently than most people that they encounter. 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 9: But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who

called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people but now you are God's people. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh which waged war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable so that when they speak against you as evildoers they may see your good works and glorify God in the day of visitation." It's the Beatitudes over to the similitudes that Peter is talking about. Let your behavior be such that you live a life that is attractive before the world, that is pleasing, is beautiful. When you do that, they're going to see your good works and they're going to be drawn, to understand what it is that makes you the kind of person that you are. I love the way He says that they will glorify your Father. This picture of intimacy. This relationship. We've been adopted by our Father. We're His children, and He's in heaven which speaks to the majesty of our heavenly Father.

Just as there was a danger in salt losing its saltiness, just as we saw last week the danger of salt no longer being effective, there's a danger here. Look at the danger. What is it that can happen to the light? What can happen to the light? Jesus describes it. It is this light is being covered up. It is the taking of the flashlight and setting it down on the table. It is doing you no good at all. It's whatever means of light that you have, you throw a blanket over it and nobody really benefits by the light that it's trying to give out. So it can be covered. I think it was a story that I read that Martin Lloyd Jones shared. Martin Lloyd Jones was a pastor in England in the 20th century. He was writing about a guy in his church who had attended there for a long time. On one particular Sunday, a coworker of his, not knowing that he went to church, showed up and they met each other at church. They were very excited. Neither one of them knew that the other one went to church and so they were excited. They were connecting and they were going to go tell Dr. Jones that that they had they met each other at church that morning. So they come to the doctor telling the story we've worked together for five years and here we are. We didn't even know the other person went to church. Dr. Jones, instead of sharing their enthusiasm, said either one of you or both of you need to get saved. If you have worked together for five years in close quarters and neither one of you knew the other one was a Christian, then one of you needs to get saved. In fact, maybe both

of you do because that's not the way it's supposed to happen. We are to be a light that people would understand there's something distinctive, there's something different. There's something going on in this person's life that isn't like the guy in the cubicle over there. There's a difference here. So it can be covered up.

How does that happen? How does the light get covered up? What would be a practical explanation for how this happens? Last week, we talked about salt losing its saltiness by assimilation. The salt just gets so mixed in and contaminated by the things of the world that there really isn't a distinction. There really isn't a difference. That certainly carries over here, but the word that I put here for us this morning may be more to the point I think for many of us and it is the word isolation. The word isolation. We can lose our effectiveness by assimilation to where we either deliberately want to mix in so much with the world that there's no difference between us and them, or it is just something that overtakes us. But here I think Jesus would say to us oftentimes the light is not seen because the light is isolated in a way that it can't be seen. We get into our holy huddle and we like it so much here that we want to do everything that is a part of our life here or with people from here. That is a wonderful thing. It is a wonderful thing to have a body, a family, a group of believers to share life with, to mix with them, to enjoy their company and their fellowship. But it can't be to the exclusion of everybody and everything else. It can't be that we become rabbit hole Christians, as Rebecca Pippert used to say, in which we stick our head up out of the hole and see if anybody's looking. If they're looking we go back down and we jump back up and we run to another hole and we spend all of our time in isolation from the world.

There's the danger of assimilation of becoming like the world, but there's also a danger of isolation that we have no contact with anyone of the world. There was a study that said when you become a believer in the United States, within a year or 18 months you don't even know any other unsaved people. Your world just becomes made up of only people who are like you and like me. You can look right on that list on your outline and as you look at the list I would just point out that the very first thing that you can do to be light is get to know your neighbors name. I don't want to make you feel bad, but if you have lived where you have lived for more than a month and you don't know anybody's name around you, you're not going to be salt and light. You and I ought to

know every neighbor's name around us for multiple houses and across the street around us. How can we possibly be salt and light when we have no idea who the people are around us that God has strategically placed right in our neighborhood? It's a great time of year to do the practical stuff that we just heard you talk about. Make up some baked goods to take over to somebody and introduce yourself. I like to write my name down because my name is kinda weird anyway. I like to literally write my name down when we meet a new neighbor and say this is who I am. This is who Bonnie is and this is our phone number. If there's ever anything we can do call us, because if you don't give them your name on a card they'll never remember it just like you and I forget. Do practical things like that because here's the deal. God's call on our life is to be a light in the world and we're to live out the gospel every day with intentionality. I hope that as we move into this special season in which you can take one of those invite cards and write your name and number on the back of it and do two things at once with a deal of baked goods. Do three and you can go introduce yourself to a neighbor and say hey we would love to have you come on December 17 and be a part of a special morning of music.

What do we take away? There's one primary way to get out into the world and be light. It's hugely impactful. It's very straightforward. It's relatively easy and it costs nothing in terms of financial investment. Do you know what it is? It's as simple as you and I being transformed by the gospel. That is what Jesus is talking about in Matthew 5:1 to 16. He is talking about our being transformed by the gospel. The gospel so changes our life, our destiny, our future that we want to see in our life the very Beatitudes that Jesus described as being His life. We want to be people who understand that our very identity and purpose for being here is to be salt and light. If we're not being salt and light then what in the world are we doing? That's the mission that God has given to us. The mission is right there before us.

Do you know what the mission is? It's okay to come here. It's okay to grow here. It's okay to be encouraged here, but the whole idea is to go from here and to go out into a world that needs to see good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. This came across my desk this week. I thought it was great. I close with this. It was a little ad for a new magazine that just came out, talking about the very things we're talking about this morning: "Imagine the family that lives to the right of your house. Now the one to the

left. Throw the family across the street in there too. Let's change locations. Think of the people you work with – the ones that you like and the ones that may be more challenging. Picture the barista at the coffee shop, the guys who you play poker with, the ladies that you shop with. In a nutshell, this is to be the sphere of influence in your mission field. Our Father sent His Son and now He sends us. Once we start thinking of ourselves as sent, we view those around us differently. You were sent into that office. You were sent into that neighborhood. You were sent into that poker game (as long as you're not gambling). You were sent to be the light. You were sent to be the hope bearer, the good news proclaimer. Please do not get a megaphone and put on a large cardboard sign and strap it to your body. That is not being a light and people will want to hit you with their car. Be the encourager, the truth teller, the need filler, the companion to the mourner. Be salt and be light."

Let's pray. Father God, what an incredible calling and privilege You've given to us as Your people. You've entrusted to us the very treasure of the gospel, that treasure that is within our lives by means of Your Holy Spirit. Lord, it is the light that this world so desperately needs. Lord, before me this morning are hundreds of people who are to be salt and light everywhere through this neighborhood, in this community, in this city, in these businesses, and all of these other places that You called us to be a part of. Father, cause us to not lose our saltiness. Don't allow us to cover over the light of the gospel, but let us live with great power for Your glory. We pray in Jesus's name, Amen.