

Marks

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources ■ Spiritual
Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

of Discipleship

March 14, 2021

Day 1: Matthew 5:13

'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 underfoot.'

In the Bible salt had different meaning and functions. It connoted loyalty and covenant; it was seasoning, used for purification and sign of relationship. Salt loses its saltiness not by some chemical miracle but by becoming impure. If it becomes mixed with other elements it loses its function and usefulness. The disciples (and all who call themselves Christian) are warned that they too will become useless if they deny their mission. God's will, will be done, and if the ones God has first chosen do not act as God wants, then others will be found to serve God.

Question: Matthew uses the term "earth" instead of world. Do you think he means to say something different by using earth instead of world?

Challenge: Look up the Bible references below and write down what salt was used for and what it meant.

Scripture: Leviticus 2:12-13, Ezekiel 43:24, Ezra 4:14, Numbers 19:19, II Kings 2:19-22, Job 6:6 and Colossians 4:5

Day 2: Matthew 5:14

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.'

The function of light is not to be seen but to allow other things to be seen clearly. We are not the ones to be seen but the ones to illuminate things around us so that what is real can be seen. Something made by people in the midst of a natural setting stands out from the surrounding area. An act of love can be seen and stands out in the midst of an environment of hate and death.

Question: Who is the 'you' Jesus is addressing?

Challenge: If you are in a community that has mostly man-made things notice the natural things around you. If you are surrounded by natural things notice the man-made things around you.

Scripture: Genesis 1:1-10

Day 3: Matthew 5:15-16

No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.'

Jesus, by using the images of salt, light and city has made it clear that God is not the private possession of a few initiates. God's Kingdom is open to all people and that message cannot be proclaimed if we hide our religion. The churches (and individual Christians) are not a secret society hiding our beliefs and shielding ourselves from the world, but a city set on a hill. Our life of faith is not hidden but open for all to see.

Question: Why would people who see our good works give glory to God?

Challenge: How would people know that you are a Christian? That you are a member of First Methodist?

Scripture: Romans 4:15-25

Day 4: Matthew 5:17

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.'

The purpose of the Law was to invoke faith, not replace it. The Law was not a charter of national privilege but a means by which the people of Israel could be the light to the gentiles and bring them to God. Jesus fulfilled the Law's purpose by being obedient. By Jesus' baptism, temptation, miracles, preaching and teaching, He took upon Himself Israel's destiny and mission. In Jesus the new covenant was revealed and fulfilled.

Question: What is the purpose of our laws today?

Challenge: As you know them, to what degree do our church rules invoke faith?

Scripture: Genesis 26:1-5, Galatians 3:1-11

Day 5: Matthew 5:18

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.'

Jesus became the light to the nations, the glory of Israel by dying for the sin of the world and rising again. Jesus demonstrated that sin had been dealt with on the cross. Jesus is the New Covenant, yet the New Covenant came from the same God who created life and who set in motion the plan of redemption. God had in mind a way to deal with sin - to punish it - by offering Himself as the punishment. The same God who could not allow sin to go unpunished was the only one who could punish it. Just as Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden because of sin, so sin, by the obedience of Christ, is cast out from creation.

Question: Is it all accomplished?

Challenge: What are a few things that you believe God wants us to do until the kingdom comes completely?

Scripture: Acts 1:1-11

Day 6: Matthew 5:19-20

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Jesus does not insist that the Law be done away with but that its place in the Christian faith be a proper place. It is still God speaking and so ought not to be ignored. Jesus fulfills the Law so that we don't need to look for some other kind of fulfillment.

Question: What do you think He means by our righteousness exceeding the Pharisees?

Challenge: What do you teach by the way you act in daily life?

Scripture: James 2:22-3:6