

Sermon on the Mount - Part 4

by David Servant

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living a life of holiness and obedience to God, and warns against becoming unsalty or losing one's salvation.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-16, Matthew 25:31-46, John 15:1-2, Romans 6:1-2

Topics: "Christian Living", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

This sermon delves into the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the importance of being the salt of the earth and the light of the world as followers of Christ. It highlights the need to maintain one's saltiness and shine brightly in a dark world, impacting others through good works and righteousness. The message warns against becoming 'unsalty' and losing one's effectiveness, stressing the ongoing need for repentance and growth in bearing fruit for God.

Transcript

Welcome to our program once again, and thank you so much for joining me. I'm sitting here in an absolutely gorgeous spot on top of Mount Arbel in Israel, near the Sea of Galilee. And I'm just thinking how lovely it would have been to have sat somewhere on one of these mountains around Galilee and heard Jesus give that most famous sermon of his, the Sermon on the Mount.

And that's one reason we've come here to Galilee, just to kind of get a sense of what it was like to sit there. Although Jesus is not here, it's been 2,000 years since he gave that sermon, we have his words recorded, thankfully, and we can look at them in light of the rest of scripture and what we know about the historical context and interpret them to apply them to our own lives. We're not doing this just for the purpose of learning, no, no, no, no, no.

Every one of these verses, every sentence that Christ spoke was meant to have an impact on the lives of his listeners, and of course, an impact on everyone who's read them ever since. And so let's pray today that his words will have the impact upon us that they were meant to have, that they have the same impact upon us that they had upon the people who listened to them the very first time they were spoken from the very lips of our Lord Jesus Christ. We've progressed somewhat through the introduction of the sermon, looking at what are commonly called the Beatitudes.

As I mentioned to you in previous programs, this is a sermon that has numerous recurring themes, and one of those recurring themes is that you see right from the start, is how can I know that I'm going to heaven? In the Beatitudes, those are the blessed people. If you're characterized by the characteristics that Jesus has identified, the blessed, well then you can have assurance that you're going to heaven because, well, two of the promises to those who are blessed is that ... Actually, it's one promise to two different characteristics. Those who are poor in spirit and those who are persecuted, both of the promises there is theirs is the kingdom of heaven, but we also have the promise that we'll be comforted, that we'll be satisfied, we'll receive mercy, we'll see God and we'll be called the sons of God as well.

These are all essentially future blessings and they just describe the fact that if you're blessed you're going to heaven. The indication that you're going to heaven is that God is working within you right now. We're in God's kingdom.

God is in us, those of us who have believed in Jesus, that is, the Lord Jesus and repented of our sins and are following him. We're in his kingdom right now. The kingdom of heaven is right in our midst.

The king is living inside of us right now and so we don't have to wait for heaven for all these things. We haven't seen God's face, but boy, I've seen the work of God in my life and the lives of others who have believed in him. I've seen the work of his Holy Spirit in my life and in the lives of my brothers and sisters.

They're gentle, they're merciful, they hunger and thirst for righteousness. The trouble in so many churches today is we've got a mixture of sheep and goats and we've got a category of people who have truly been born again and they're on fire for God. Then we've got all these people who think they're born again and they're just religious.

They're not righteous. The sheep are often scratching their heads and wondering, what is wrong with these other people? How come they're not on fire for me, like I am? Sometimes the goats will come up to the new lambs and they'll say to them, oh, that zeal of yours, that you're so excited now, that's the way I was, that wears off, so just cool your jets a little bit. Those are goats speaking.

They might have been sheep at one time, but they're not sheep now because Jesus is describing to us the characteristics of the sheep. If you say, well, that describes how I was at one time and now I'm not that way, well then you're not among the blessed any longer. In fact, Jesus is going to shortly say that after these beatitudes, he admonishes his followers.

He says, you are the salt of the earth. So he says, in a sense, essentially he says, stay salty. Don't lose your saltiness.

He says, you are the light of the world, so let your light shine so men can see your good works and you'll glorify your father who is in heaven. Now I know that there's so many people who are persuaded that if you've once been saved, well, nothing could ever change your spiritual status in that regard. I encourage you, although that's commonly believed, I encourage you to take a look at what scripture says that would contradict that, and there's quite a bit.

We're going to see lots of that right in here. Again, Jesus never said, blessed are you who were poor in spirit. He didn't say blessed are you who were gentle, who were peacemakers, who one time in the past did hunger and thirst for righteousness.

He never said that. It's always in the present tense. It's something that the Holy Spirit has been doing and is continuing to do in your life.

Verse number nine of Matthew chapter five, blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. Well, I discussed this a little bit last time. How are we peacemakers? Number one, we've made our peace with God ourselves, but this is an active thing.

We are making peace currently, and so that means we're helping other people, first of all, to make peace with God. That is the most important person you can relate to, and so that's where it all starts. Once you've made peace with God, then we're helping people as best we can to make peace one with another.

I'm in a land right now of Israel that there's constant turmoil, constant conflict. There's a war going on right now in another section of Israel, right as I'm sitting here. This land where the prince of peace has come, and for the most part, he's being ignored by the majority of people that live here in Israel.

He longs to see peace, but peace will never come to the Middle East between Israeli and Arab until they repent of their sins and are born again and believe in Jesus Christ. While I've been in Israel, I've visited at least one Christian congregation here that consists of Jews as well as Arabs and Palestinians who all believe in Jesus, and guess what? They all love each other. They've made their peace with God, and because they've been reconciled to God, now they've been reconciled one with another, Jew and Gentile.

It's an absolutely marvelous thing, and it happens all over the world whenever people repent and are born again. There's no hope for peace in this land until people recognize that Jesus is the prince of peace. Every other political initiative is a nice try at best and might be temporary, but it doesn't change people's hearts.

When they get tired of the bloodshed, they say, well, let's stop fighting for a while, and it lasts for a while, but it just fires up again. Well, again, here's another indication of God's grace in your life. Do you find that you are a peacemaker? Have you made peace with God, number one? Number two, are you helping others to make their peace? Again, we can't force people to make peace.

That's a decision of their own will. Then the last beatitude, verse number 10 of Matthew chapter five, blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Here's another question to ask yourself as we evaluate whether we're among the blessed.

Am I being persecuted? Again, I didn't say blessed are you when men hate you for no reason at all, but rather blessed are you when men persecute you for the sake of righteousness. That is, because you're doing what's right, you stand as light in the darkness of this world, and you're going to stand out. People are going to know that here's a person who doesn't tell lies, here's a person who doesn't laugh at dirty jokes, here's a person who doesn't indulge in pornography, here's a person who is generous and shares what God gives them, and so on and so forth.

They're going to slander you. They're going to make fun of you. Even sometimes the members of your own household could become, as Christ told us, your worst enemies, because as you follow Christ, you're going to shine as light in darkness.

Blessed are you when men persecute you for the sake of righteousness. That's a good sign, hallelujah. That's a sign that you're among the blessed, you're on the way to heaven.

But Jesus also one time said, not right here, but he said, woe to you when all men speak well of you, because that's how they spoke about the false prophets. If everybody likes you, if nobody doesn't like you because of your lifestyle, well then you need to question whether you're among the blessed, whether you are heading to heaven, because Jesus plainly said it right here, you can't escape it. He told us, on this one he went even further, and I think I know why he went further, because it's hard to believe that you're blessed when people hate you for doing the right thing.

When I'm persecuted, my natural reaction is not to leap for joy and say, oh praise God, isn't it great to be hated? I have to think about it, I got to remember what Jesus says right here, and so I think that's why he emphasized this one so much. Blessed are you, he says, when men revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Next time you're persecuted, you just need to remember what the Lord said right there, and rejoice and be glad. There's no doubt that there were people in Christ's audience that day already who were experiencing the kind of persecution he's talking about. They're not killing all of us, that happens in some countries of the world, but at bare bones minimum, they're slandering us, they're saying things against us.

What I found is the people who slander me the most are the people in the churches. Again, I said to you on the earlier part of this broadcast, that's the trouble in the church today. We got mixtures of sheep and goats, and the sheep are the on fire people who love Jesus with all their heart and are out obeying him and doing his will, and the goats, they're just religious, but they're not righteous, and they'll slander the sheep.

Oftentimes there's church splits because the sheep and the goats, they just don't stay together so well, because there's a group of people who love God, there's a group of people who are just religious, and they persecute them, they slander them, they say all kinds of evil against them falsely. I know of church settings where the only sheep in the whole church was the pastor, absolutely, and of course, that only lasts for a short while. When the goats get their way, out he goes, and they'll find themselves a new pastor who's a full-blooded goat to lead them all straight to hell.

Ask yourself the question as we close this segment of our broadcast, am I among the sheep or am I among the goats? If you're not being persecuted, if nobody's talking about you behind your back, if you're not hearing that the rumors are being spread and so forth, well then, there's a very good chance, well, Jesus said it, it's not a very good chance, you're not among the blessed. Blessed woe to you when all men speak well of you, but blessed are you when men persecute you and revile you for the sake of righteousness. This again shows that the blessed are doing righteousness, right? They wouldn't be persecuted for it unless they were doing it, and so one of the characteristics of the blessed, again, they're doing what's right, they're characterized by holiness.

This is not salvation by works, this is salvation by grace that leads to good works. We'll be right back after this short side trip. Well, I'm here at the Dead Sea, 1,200 feet below sea level.

This is the lowest point on the face of the earth. It's dead because water flows into it, but nothing can flow out, and so the salt content here is just incredible. It's eight times saltier than the ocean, and it gives you an incredible sense of buoyancy here.

It's just almost impossible, whoa, not to float here, but it's also a very slimy feeling. When you come out, you feel like, you know, you can't get dried off, and you stand out in the sun for a long time, and still you have this stuff on you. I guess two good things you can say about the Dead Sea, nothing's alive in it.

That means you don't have to worry about shark attacks, and secondly, you don't have to worry about drowning because it's very difficult to even get under the water. Really, they shouldn't call it the Dead Sea right now because I'm in it, and I'm alive. Okay, welcome back.

Let's continue our study through the Sermon on the Mount. We're making progress through Matthew chapter five, and now we come to verse number 13. We're just past the Beatitudes, and Jesus says, read along with me if you would, please, you are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Notice, first of all, that Jesus did not say to his disciples who climbed the mountain to listen to him that day, you need to become the salt of the earth, or be salty. So often times when this passage is read, and there's a sermon given on it, the congregants are admonished in such a way like this. The pastor or the preacher says, now Jesus said that we should be the salt of the earth.

Well, already you've made a mistake. Jesus did not say that we should be the salt of the earth, he said you are the salt of the earth. Why? Because you already have mourned for your sins, you already have repented, you already have been born again, the Holy Spirit's working in you, the fruit of the Spirit is beginning to manifest in your life, and so you're different than the world by the grace of almighty God, you are blessed.

And so that's why he didn't say, you need to become the salt, no, no, you are the salt of the earth, and his warning is about becoming unsalty. How about that? Now, that stands in contradiction to those who would tell us that once you had an experience with God, nothing could ever reverse that experience with God, if you're once been born again, then you're safe and secure in the grace of God, and there's nothing you could possibly do that would ever change that relationship. Well, not according to what Jesus said, he said that to his disciples, you can become unsalty.

And now listen to this, what did he say? He said if you become unsalty, you're worthless, you're good for nothing, just like salt that has become unsalty, he says it's not good for anything, it's not good, how did he say it? Let me read it again here. He said, it's good for nothing anymore except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. Well, that's a pretty serious warning there about, you know, becoming unsalty.

Stop and think for a moment what it would mean to become unsalty and what it means to be salty. Well, I think we can safely say that to be salty is to be like God wants you to be, to be holy, to be righteous, to be obedient. That's what it means to be salty.

And how are we the salt of the earth? Well, in Christ's day, you know, they didn't think of salt so much as a, you know, a seasoning that they would sprinkle from a salt shaker on their food. Primarily salt was used as it is used in many developing countries of the world today. They rub it on meat to preserve the meat, to keep it from, you know, going rotten and getting all corrupt.

And so, you know, Jesus is saying, you are what's preserving this earth. You're keeping this earth from going completely rotten and corrupt, you know, because let's face it, the places where there's nobody

serving Jesus, that's the worst places in this world to live, absolutely, because sin abounds. And I've traveled in, I'd say, 40 to 50 countries and preached the gospel, and that's what I've found all over the world.

You know, the places where they're serving Christ, well, you just have a better feeling there. There's less crime, less corruption, you know, less of everything that's bad. So wherever the believers are, well, we're preserving the earth.

In one sense, we could say we're keeping it from going completely corrupt and rotten. We are preserving it, actually, from the wrath of God falling, in that sense as well, okay? So Jesus says, you are the salt of the earth, you're keeping it from going rotten, now stay that way. If you don't stay that way, then like salt that has become unsalty, well, you're absolutely good for nothing, okay? And so, my dear friends, that is a warning.

And again, I say this in contradiction to the many voices today that are telling us, if you're once saved, you're always saved, you have nothing to fear. Well, wait a second. Paul said, in a number of his epistles, he said, don't be deceived, fornicators, adulterers, homosexuals, thieves, the covenants, and so forth, you know, the swindlers, they will not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Well, that means if you're a born-again believer in Christ, and then you become an adulterer, you know, again, I'm not going to try to draw any fine lines here and say, well, how many times do you have to commit adultery to become an adulterer, and I know you can repent of adultery and so on, but I'm going to say it this way. If you are a born-again believer in Christ, and then you go back into sin, let's say you become an adulterer, and you live in adultery, and you die in that state, you have no promise of heaven. You were salt that became unsalty, you're good for nothing any longer.

And I say that boldly in contradiction to the false assurance that is being pandered from so many pulpits, telling everybody, well, it's all by the grace of God, and so, therefore, what you've got, you can never lose, otherwise, it's of works. That's utter nonsense. The grace that God has shown us in the gospel of Christ is not a grace that gives us a license to sin.

In fact, Paul addresses that question quite clearly a couple of times in his letter to the Romans. He said, you know, because of grace, you know, shall we continue in sin? And he says, are you out of your mind? You know, that's not the grace that God's offering us at all. The grace that God is offering us is an opportunity to repent.

And be born again, and to be among the blessed people, to have the work of the Holy Spirit in us. But God did not take away our free will when we were, you know, born again. He didn't make us holy robots.

Are you kidding me? No. You know that. Every day, you have an opportunity.

You have choices before you. You can do the right thing, or you can do the wrong thing. And so, those who walk after the Spirit will live, but if you are walking after the flesh, you must die, Paul warned.

That's another warning to believers in Christ. He was writing to believers, and he warned them, don't get off the narrow path. And again, if you don't believe me, I just challenge you, stick with me here.

And as we continue through this series, we're going to see time and time again where that principle applies to what Jesus said. He said it again, you know, in the very next verses. You are the light of the

world.

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Now notice he didn't say you need to be the light of the world, or consider becoming the light of the world. He said you are the light of the world.

That is, you're already shining. God's glory is already being reflected in you. But again, it's not just up to God.

You have a part that you play in this. And that's why he tells them in the next verse, he said, nor do men light a lamp and put it under the peck measure, but on the lampstand. And it gives light to all who are in the house.

Therefore, listen now, let your light shine before men. See, you have something to do about it. Yeah, it's the work of God in you, but you have something to do with letting your light shine.

Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and therefore you will glorify your God who is in heaven. You know, Jesus gave this sermon, and these words we're reading right here, when he first gave them, he was sitting on a mountain very close to where I'm sitting. It could have been this very mountain.

I kind of doubt that, but one of these other mountains on this side is probably where Jesus said these words. And he talked about a city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Last evening, we came up to take a look at the sunset from this very hill, and we saw what we didn't see before were many lights on the hills of the Golan Heights across the Sea of Galilee.

If you look across there right now, you'd never know there's a city over there. It just looks like a top of a hill. It looks like a barren mountain.

But when the sun goes down, the stars come out, wow, all kinds of lights begin to shine over on those hillsides, and you begin to see there's cities, there's villages over there that people are living there, and it's no way they can be hidden. And I think this is a great example spoken by Jesus at that very time when they were somewhere around here, and everybody had probably noticed that phenomenon. There were certain villages, cities on tops of hills from the distance.

Now you can't see them. But when the lights go down in the darkness, that's when you begin to see their lights shining. And so Jesus is telling us, be like that city.

Again, it's not said in so many words here, but I'm just saying, I'm sitting right now along the Sea of Galilee, and I know there's all kinds of villages out there and towns that I can't see right now, but it can't be hidden. When the darkness comes, that's when the light shines. And so they didn't have electricity back in Christ's day, but they had oil lamps and so on, and you'd be able to see windows of houses lighting up from a distance, and fires, cooking fires and so forth, and all of those things congregated in one area.

You can't hide those types of cities. Let your light shine. In the darkness of the world, let people see your good works.

Okay. So now it's time to ask ourselves this very important question. Is Jesus describing me? Am I the salt of the earth? Am I in some way preserving this world from going completely rotten? What bare bones minimum, you ought to be able to say, yes, I'm doing that in my own life, that my life was going rotten, I

repented, his grace is working in me.

But you ought to be able to go further and say, I'm influencing other people, and my salt, I'm salting other places. Things are better in this world because I'm caring for the poor, I'm visiting the sick, and I'm spreading the gospel, and my life is characterized by good deeds. People can see the difference.

I'm influencing them. So ask yourself that question. Am I one of these hermit Christians? Just me and the Lord? Well, I'd say you're not a Christian at all if you're a hermit Christian.

Then secondly, am I shining like a light in darkness? That is, can people see me when they look at all the darkness of the world? Do I stand out as being one who is shining in a dark place? Can people tell that something's happened to me? Am I like that city set on a hill? Well, if you can say yes to those things, then that should fill you with joy today, that truly God's grace is working in you. So then all that's left is to maintain or increase your saltiness and your shining light. I believe that God who begins a good work in us as he completes it on the day of Christ Jesus, I believe as we cooperate with the vine dresser and he prunes from us, as Christ promised, the things that are not pleasing to him, the things that hinder our growth and our producing of fruit, then we produce more fruit.

Jesus said, that very thing, he said, abide in the vine and as you produce much fruit, you'll prove yourself to be one of my disciples. True disciples are bearing fruit and they're bearing fruit that is increasing, praise God. So here's another question to ask, have I regressed a little bit? Was I a little more on fire last year, a little more fruitful last year than I was this year? Well, if you can say yes to that, danger, danger, danger, yellow warning signs, you're not going in the right direction.

You need to repent and get back on the right direction and there's times, sure, our hearts can become a little bit hardened by things that happen, we can become a little bit cold. The cure for that is to read stuff like what we're reading right here and to get us to reexamine ourselves and to think about where we're at. So are you making progress? Is your light getting brighter? Is your salt getting saltier? If it is, well rejoice, the Holy Spirit's working in you.

Hey, thank you so very much for joining us on this broadcast. We'll be right back here the next time as we work our way through Jesus' sermon on the mount. God bless you.

Hey, there's a whole lot more happening through the ministry of Heaven's Family than just this teaching broadcast. Heaven's Family consists of three divisions. The first of which is Shepherd Serve and through the ministry of Shepherd Serve, we are literally equipping thousands of hungry pastors around the world with vital biblical truth every single year.

We do that in two ways. First of all, by pastors conferences. They're happening almost every single month somewhere in the world and secondly, through the translation and publication and distribution of a 500-page equipping manual called the Disciple Making Minister.

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Through the ministry of I Was Hungry, we are meeting the very pressing needs of Christ followers around this world in very poor nations. We're helping widows, orphans, lepers, refugees, victims of disasters. You can read all of our current projects at IWasHungry.org. You can make a real difference.

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Thanks so much. God bless you.

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