
THE BLESSED LIFE

Part 3 - Blessed to be a Blessing

The events making the news, particularly over the past week or two, may have made many of us sigh, shake our heads or even lament about the state of this world we are living in. Terrible things going on 'out there' but also right here in our community. Many of us have probably heard or maybe even said things like 'What is going on?' and 'It just seems to be getting worse!' or maybe even, 'What is wrong with these people?'

In today's passage from the Sermon on the Mount I believe God, by His Word and His spirit, will gently challenge this kind of thinking and response. But I also believe He'll encourage us and make us excited if we really listen... as He sends us out again into that same community and into that same world that we might sometimes feel despair about.

Context

I think we all want to live fully and freely and obedient to what He says practically - in our homes, in our work, into our community. We all want what we know to change what we do and how we do it. But... there's that knowing-doing gap Pastor John also spoke about. How do we really live like Jesus calls us to live in Brisbane in 2024?

Matthew 5: 13-20 (NIV)

"You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world"

You are salt. You are light. It's not 'try to be' or 'act like' or 'become' salt and light. If we have accepted Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, we are salt and light. Dietrich Bonhoeffer makes the point that we are salt and light by virtue of what Jesus has done and His subsequent call on our lives. We don't HAVE salt. Or light. He says we ARE salt and light. What Brisbane needs is us, salty and shiny, full of courage and freedom and His love.

Salt

- + Preserves
- + Fertilises
- + Flavours
- + Causes thirst

Now think about each of those characteristics some more. YOU are the salt of the earth. YOU are the salt of the Brisbane. YOU are the salt of your workplace/school/family. WE are the salt of our community as we head into it together.

*“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.”*

Salt enhances and affects what it gets added to. But salt needs to stay salty. It needs to stay different to whatever it is sprinkled on or added to, if it is going to change anything or be useful.

Light

And you are light. If you have accepted Jesus as our Saviour and Lord, you are light. A couple of things about this metaphor:

- + Illuminates
- + Overcomes Darkness
- + Gives Direction

YOU are the light of the world. YOU are the light of Brisbane. YOU are the light of your workplace/school/family. WE are the light in our community as we head into it together.

*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.*

Light needs to be visible and exposed in order to change anything or to be useful to its surroundings.

"Poor world, it is dark, and gropes in midnight. It cannot get light unless it receives it through us! Hear this, you ordinary men and women; you are the light of the world. If you burn dimly, dim is the world's light and dense its darkness. Christ never contemplated the possibility of secret Christians whose virtues would never be displayed..."

Charles Spurgeon, The Light of the World, 1873 (www.spurgeon.org)

Taking it deeper

So what does all this mean - practically?

- + We are essential.
- + We preserve and protect.
- + We make things better.

Given these truths, I want to go back to what I started with... can you see that the response to what is going on in the news, in our community and world should not be surprise, nor blame, nor hopelessness. But rather "where is the church?" and maybe better, "Lord, here I am". We don't blame meat for spoiling if it is left unpreserved with salt. We don't blame a room for being dark if no light has been switched on.

To say that sin is the problem is only partially true... because ALL of us are sinning. But when Kingdom people move out into the community, we preserve, we flavour, we fertilise, we illuminate, we lead. Conversely, when kingdom people are NOT involved and active in society (entertainment, media, politics, medicine, education, etc) - or if we live out our faith in a hidden way - what do we expect to happen? What happens when salt is removed from meat and light is removed from a room?

Kingdom people are drawn to go and make change to the state of the world rather than to criticise it - to be that flavour, that contrast, that illumination. Your presence is like a prophetic declaration!

Finally, three things are essential for us to really take on board if we're going to take Jesus' words seriously and make Kingdom impact.

- + **Context:** Salt and Light are most effective and valuable when they get into places where they contrast sharply with their context.

- + **Contact:** Jesus never came to take His disciples out of the world... but rather to take the world out of His disciples. We need to get involved in all spheres of society in order to influence, in order to preserve, flavour and illuminate. Like salt being rubbed into meat, and light that spills into rooms all over the city.
- + **Contrast:** The quality of the salt and light is also really important in the text. So, what does losing our saltiness or stopping our light shining look like? As we go out, we have to resist the temptation to be the same as the environment we move into. We have to stay pure and 'set apart' while we are out there - to war against the urge within us to conform and compromise and 'be safe'.

"Holy worldliness" ... In, but not of!

And so we go!

Citizens of the Kingdom but we are also citizens of Brisbane! We need faith to truly believe who He is and who He says we are! And daily decisions to abide, be disciplined, be filled. Every day we need His Kingdom and presence to break into our lives and then, we need to just get out there and be.

Get salty, get bright by receiving His fulfilment and His filling today in faith – then get out of the shaker, shine out in the darkness.

**You + Community Need + GOD = Supernatural possibilities
as we go Into our Community Together**