

THE VITALITY OF KINGDOM LIFE

Intro: Sometimes it's easy to believe that the world is going to the dogs! We look around and see ongoing degradation in our society--media events become bolder in their portrayal of sinful things, homes are crumbling by the scores, constantly being reminded of government waste and corruption. And all of that can be very depressing... and very defeating.

It is easy for a Christian to be intimidated by that scenario, that is, unless he listens carefully to the words of the Lord in Mt. 5. In the beatitudes Jesus teaches how our attitudes can elicit divine favor. But now he moves further to show how righteousness can impact the world around us for good! Mt. 5:13-16.

In this section we see two figures used to describe God's people: salt, light! We see a declaration, an explanation and an application of the message to our lives!

FIRST THE DECLARATIONS--YE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH; THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

In these two propositions Jesus is also saying something about the world!

It is hopelessly corrupt. The world into which Jesus came is accurately described by Paul in Rom. 1-2. It was a world rampant with idolatry, ingratitude, family breakup, sexual perversion and greed. How about these words of Rom. 1: Sounds like 20th century America does it not? We face the same kind of world. It is hopelessly confused. Do you ever really stop and listen to what people are saying about morality, about religion? Cf. the young man who basically said, "I think that being honest is all that matters. There are faults with all religions, and none of them matter really very much as long as you live with integrity". "Even religious people offer the same kind of non-sensible gobbledygook when they say banal things like, "It does matter what you believe, as long as you live right!" Well, folks pray tell me how you can live the right things while you believe the wrong things?!! We have lost our moral bearings and as Chesterton once said, "The problem with people who lose faith in God's word is not that they don't believe in anything, its that they believe in everything!"

Jesus' challenge to us answers the corruption and confusion of this world!

We are salt! Cf. grandfather's smoke house.

Through our lives we can stay and even reverse the process that leads us to national or even world destruction!

But the salt must still be salty! Actually salt cannot quit being salty. If it is salt, it is salty! The point is, salt may be so corrupted by other things that when its salt is used up it appears to be salt without flavor! Such salt is good for nothing but to be thrown into the streets and trodden under foot. And so it is with us! We must maintain our distinctiveness morally.

We cannot be content to just stay three steps behind the world so that we seem moral! We must stay with the world of God even if the gap between us in the world grows wider and wider.

We are the only Bible the careless world will read...

Only if we live without compromise will we be of real use to God! 2 Tim. 2:21

We are the light of the world. Just as salt answer to corruption so light answer to darkness. Those who live without the illumination of God's word are like people groping in the dark. Jn. 12:46; 8:12 As Christians we can be that light to our world!

A city set on a hill cannot be hid. That calls attention to the inevitability of our influence. Just as light drive out darkness, so truth will drive out error wherever it is preached.

But what if we deliberately withhold the truth from our neighbors and friends? No one lights a candle and put it under a bushel!

Don't be afraid to hold back any needed truth from those around you. Say it graciously, use wisdom; but please tell people the truth. It is their only hope of heaven!

So, Let your light shine! Be busy doing the things God has commanded of us: Teaching the truth, helping the needy, restoring the erring, loving our neighbors. And here's what will happen: Others will see and God will be glorified! Cf. Phil. 2:12-16.

Conclusion: You can do something in this world for good! Edmund Burke once observed, "Society is a pact between the living, the dead, and the great unborn". Here we stand between those vast groups. Our future and our children's future is bound up in the lives of us, the living! The future of our family is in our hands! The future of our country is in our hands! The future of the souls of those we care about is in our hands! May God help us to let our light shine brighter and let our lifestyle be saltier!