

For it is easier for a camel  
to go through a needle's eye,  
than for a rich man to enter into  
the kingdom of God.

And they that heard  
said, Who then can be saved?  
And he said, *r* The things  
which are impossible with men  
are possible with God.

Then Pē'tēr said,  
Lord, follow me, and followed the  
Lord. And he said unto  
him, What wilt thou do?  
And he said, I will follow  
thee, whithersoever thou  
wilt. And he said, Verily I  
say unto thee, thou shalt  
be with me in the house.

# LENT & EASTER

DEVOTIONAL & STUDY MATERIAL

24 February 2021

## "Salt and Light"



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**RED**  
**WHEN**  
**JESUS**  
**SPEAKS**

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# LENT & EASTER

24 February 2021

## "Salt and Light"

### Scripture

Read Matthew 5:13-16

Open your mind and heart as you read the passage of Scripture aloud and then again quietly to yourself. Listen for God's word to you.

## Observation

### *The Salt of The Earth*

Salt was greatly valued in the 1<sup>st</sup> century for several reasons.

- It was associated with purity - perhaps because of its glistening colour. The Romans said it came from the sun and the sea which were considered to be the purest things on earth. Jesus uses the illustration of salt to illustrate that whilst the Christ-follower is in the world, he or she must maintain the standards of Christ, for example, honesty, behaviour, thoughts etc.
- It is a preservative. It prevents corruption. So a Christ-follower must have high standards and be a good influence on society.
- It adds flavour to food. Christianity needs to radiate joy to the world and restore its flavour. Christ-followers should not be sad people but should be a joyful influence on the people around them.

If a Christ-follower does not fulfil these attributes as the salt of the earth they are not fulfilling their God-given purpose and may well discourage others from investigating God and the church.

### *The Light of The World*

Jesus described himself as 'the light of the world.' So when he uses the same words to describe those who follow him he demands that they should be the same as him. His Jewish listeners would be familiar with the expression. They referred to Jerusalem as the light to the Gentiles. But they knew that this light was lit by God. In the same way, Jesus is not demanding those who follow him to shine their own light but to reflect his light. This light comes from the presence of Jesus in each Christian's heart.

- Light needs to be seen. A lamp in the first century was like a gravy boat with a wick. It was not easy to light and so when the householder left their home they would remove the lamp from the lamp stand and put it safely under a clay jar where it could burn during his absence without causing harm. Jesus is saying our Christian faith should be seen by the church and the world in the way we treat people, live our lives, use words.
- Light is a guide. It must show the way to others Christ-followers should be prepared to stand up for what is right and open the door for others who are not as courageous to support them.
- It can be a warning of danger ahead. Christ-followers should speak out when they become aware of others doing the wrong thing. This is not an easy thing to do, but it is better to speak out to prevent tragedy than to live with 'If only ...' When a Christ-follower issues such a warning it should not be done in anger, criticism or condemnation, but in love for the warning to have effect.

**RED**  
**WHEN**  
**JESUS**  
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## Shining For God

There are two words in Greek which signify good. The one means good in quality. The other adds beauty, attractiveness and a winsome quality to goodness. The word Matthew used here is the latter. A Christ-follower who is good will be gentle and kind with the added quality of an attractive charm about their goodness. In this way they will point to God and give him all the glory.

### **Icebreaker:**

When you go out for a meal do you order a starter (ie savoury/salty) or a dessert (ie sweet)? Why do you prefer the one above the other? (Or perhaps you like both!)

### **Application**

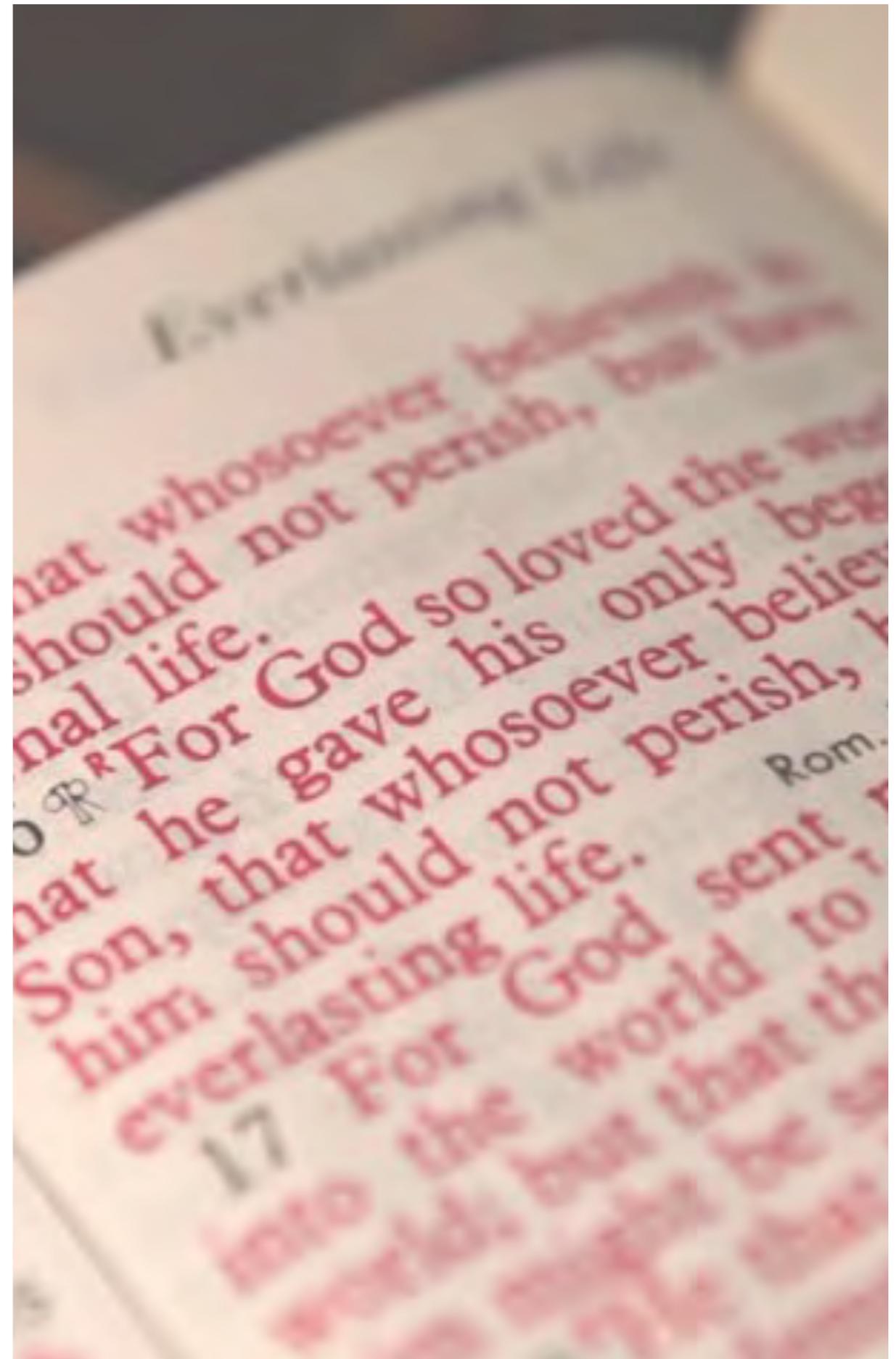
- Who would you describe as 'the salt of the earth'? What qualities do they possess that make you use these words to describe them?
- Look at the three qualities of salt. As a Christ-follower which of them do you think you demonstrate most clearly to the world? Help each other in this if people struggle to answer the question.
- How can you become saltier in the other areas in your circle of family, friends and colleagues?
- How does Jesus' light shine through you?
- What does it feel like?
- What effect does it have on those around you?
- How would you like to shine more brightly for God at this time?
- How can the group help you with the struggles you have mentioned during this session?

### **Prayer**

Pray for one another in regard to the issues that have been raised during your discussion time, and in regard to other needs of the group.

### **Service**

Look out for opportunities where you can be salt and/or light this week. Even if you are locked down at home, how can you shine for those who are with you or for those with whom you are in contact? What is Jesus saying to you in this regard? Spend some time asking him to show you how if you are not sure.



# Additional notes for the background of Matthew 5:17-21

## RED – WHEN JESUS SPEAKS

### Teaching about the Law - 3.3.2021

Jesus broke the Jewish Law again and again. He healed on the Sabbath, He did not observe Jewish

rituals and in the end He was tried and crucified for this lack of observance. Yet He always spoke of it with

respect. In fact, He said, it is so sacred that not even a 'jot' (which looked like an apostrophe) would pass away.

The Jews used the term 'The Law' in different ways:

- The Ten Commandments
- The first five books of the Bible - Genesis to Deuteronomy
- The Law and the Prophets which is the whole of their Scripture (ie the Old Testament)
- The Oral or the Scribal Law.

The latter was most common in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The Old Testament itself contains broad principles which needed to be interpreted by people under God's guidance. However over the centuries the Jews began to consider these principles were not enough. As a result the Scribes came into being and they broke down the God-given principles into thousands of rules and regulations. So as they examined the Commandment to keep the Sabbath holy they decided no one should work on the Sabbath. But what was work? Was it lifting a child? Carrying a pen? Wearing a brooch? The Law became legalistic, full of petty rules and regulations which, to the minds of the Scribes and Pharisees, constituted true religion and true service of God.



Jesus was not speaking about these endless rules and regulations when He said the Law would not pass away. This was the kind of Law that He condemned.

Jesus said He came to fulfill the Law - God's Law - to bring about its real meaning. The Ten Commandments are the heart of the Law, and the crux of the Law is reverence and respect. Respect for God and His name; for God's day; for parents, life, property, personality, for the truth and the good name of someone else; and finally respect for one's own self. People should never be mastered by wrong desires. All law is based on these things.

This reverence and respect is what Jesus came to fulfill. He came to show humanity what such

reverence for God and respect for one another looked like. Neither meant obeying endless petty rules and regulations, but living with mercy and love. He gave instructions to shape people's lives around the positive commandment to love. And it is this which can never pass away.

Jesus taught that there is a continuation from the past to the present. People need to build on the past in the present to move forward into the future. Jesus continues that being a Christian is not easy. Those who follow Him need to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. It was their goal to satisfy the demands of the Law and they often believed they accomplished this. But the goal of the one who follows Christ is to love and love is never complete - there is always more to give. There is no limit in time or eternity to the offering anyone can give in love. Jesus spoke, not of the law of God but of the love of God, for, as Paul later wrote: we love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19).

### Bibliography

<https://www.studyLight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/matthew-5.html>