

## Salt You Are...and Light

✠ **Preserve and shine** (vv.13-16)

✠ **Overflow righteousness** (vv.17-20)

In the name of Jesus Christ, our Master Teacher, dearly redeemed disciples of our Lord:

Imagine you had to drop out of the university for lack of money, but then came back at age 25 to teach mathematics. You formulated laws of gravity, made a telescope, discovered that the earth moves around the sun. Unfortunately, the church taught otherwise. So, at age 70, old and infirm, you're forced to travel in winter to Rome, face Inquisition torture, and renounce your views. Church men deny astronomy by quoting Acts 1:11, "Why are you men from Galilee standing here looking up into the sky?" According to the legend after Galileo recanted, he muttered, "But it moves after all" <sup>i</sup> – the earth around the sun.

A pastor was trying to explain the foolishness of evolution to a world-renowned physicist. She told him, "Pastor, you can't teach me anything about science. Just teach me about Jesus."

We need to be who we are, not like so many experts sounding off on social media. Hollywood claims authority on the environment, theology, government, but prove they don't have a clue, just a stage.

Jesus left the cities and universities to preach on a hillside overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Matthew 5-7 says our Lord was preaching to His disciples. Rather than pretending to be expert social engineers, Jesus tells us to be what He has called us to be. **Salt You Are... And Light.** As such...

✠ **Preserve and shine** (vv.13-16)

A thousand years before Christ, King David who enforced the law of Moses in Israel asked, ***"When the foundations are being torn down, what can the righteous do?"*** (Psalm 11:3 EHV) We grieve when Minnesota lawmakers codify the death of the innocent unborn up to the moment of birth – ignoring the science for personal preferences. We grieve for millions of Americans suffering trauma of their own choices, in desperate need of repentance. Those who are sorry, need assurance every sin is forgiven by God. Longing for the lost, Jesus promises: ***"Whoever comes to me I will never drive away."*** (John 6:37)

To His disciples, Jesus says, ***"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its flavor, how will it become salty again? Then it is no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people."*** (EHV) Salt as a preservative symbolizes purity, freedom from the corruption and guilt of sin. "Salty" Christians may be as unwelcome as salt on an open wound, but your presence, influence and prayers preserve society from the destruction of sin and God's judgment. Recall the repentant prayers of Ezra (9:6-15) and Daniel (9:1-19) for God's people Israel. Prayer changed the course of history.

One mother was surprised when her doctor said to salt her son's food to help his brain function. Saltwater conducts electricity better. Communication in society can be preserved when Christians ***"let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you know how you are to answer each person."*** (Colossians 4:6) Saltless Christians, like useless salt, are ***"no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled."*** Trying to be like your friends instead of Jesus, cursing and swearing as one of the crowd, brings shame. Folks walk all over the spineless as unworthy of respect.

A pastor trying not to offend anyone, ends up offending everyone. A Sunday School teacher told fellow workers, "I'd rather belong to a church that stands for something than one that stands for nothing." So true: *Stand for nothing; fall for everything.* Salty Christians ***"speak the truth in love."*** (Ephesians 4:15)

Don't hide. Our Lord Jesus says, ***"I am the light of the world"*** (John 8:12), and to His disciples, ***"You are the light of the world."*** ***"The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and on those dwelling in the region and the shadow of death a light has dawned."*** (Matthew 4:16) Jesus the ***"light"*** shines joy and peace into hearts and homes where Satan, the father of lies thought he had control. We need to stop arguing with each other and see the real enemy. ***"Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."*** (Ephesians 6:12) Only the ***sword of the Spirit*** which is the Word of God can defeat him and bring health and healing to hearts and homes.

***"In the same way let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven."*** As we reflect the light of Jesus, God shines His loving kindness into dark places of sadness, sin and unbelief. One pastor said, "We are encouraging our members to be the best neighbor their neighbor has ever had...building bridges. Then, Lord willing, that relationship may lead to invitations to a church they are excited about....We do our best to offer the best worship we can in a way that proclaims Jesus clearly,"<sup>ii</sup> ***"making God visible to others."***<sup>iii</sup>

### **✠ Overflow righteousness (vv.17-20)**

This must have shocked the crowd of disciples sitting at Jesus' feet. ***"Indeed, I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and experts in the law, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."*** Those were the most outwardly righteous church people of the day!

Still today, many church people continue to treat God's Word like a block of wood. They want to shave off the Fifth Commandment, ***"You shall not murder,"*** and replace it with their version of love – first for self, then for self, and then for more self. Cut out the Holy Spirit's warning: ***"No murderer has eternal life remaining in him."*** (1 John 3:15 EHV) One state official commented recently, "Minnesota Nice means paying for your neighbor's abortion." Human arrogance rebels against the Creator's love for life. But our own Pharisaical pride condemns others while we fail to ***"speak up for those who cannot speak. Speak for the rights of all those who are defenseless. Speak up, judge fairly, and defend the oppressed and needy."*** (Proverbs 31:8f) Can anyone get away with rebellious sin or cowardly silence?

Injustice on the street with handcuffs or in the womb with innocent pre-born babies – evil in God's sight. ***"So, 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 practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven."*** **Overflow righteousness** comes from Christ fulfilling God's law.

One mother was praying that she and her daughter would die in a car accident before they reached the clinic. Boyfriend and father insisted on termination. Later, the procedure done, the girl's father put down his paper long enough to say, "You're grounded. Go to your room." That family death was never mentioned again. Of course, the boyfriend disappeared. Years later, married with children of her own, the young woman was suffering shame she could not bury deep enough. Guilt was eating her from the inside out. Finally, she went to her pastor and confessed. Then he could tell her that sin too is forgiven.

We fail and fall short constantly. ***"But if we walk in the light, just as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."*** (1 John 1:7-9 EHV)

Jesus the Master Teacher is also our Substitute before God – in life and in death, by His perfect, imputed righteousness and full cleansing blood. Shine that light to all, dear disciples of Jesus. Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day* – 2/15. © 1997 by Robert J. Morgan. (Thomas Nelson, Inc.) [www.Laridian.com](http://www.Laridian.com) .

<sup>ii</sup> Pastor Jared Oldenburg, quoted in the WELS *Together* e-newsletter, 9/6/2011.

<sup>iii</sup> Prof. Em. E. R. Wendland noted that in the Old Testament, "glory" is generally followed by a verb, i.e., "give glory to God."