

JJ<sup>1</sup>

Have you ever had a friend that acted one way when it was just the two of you or you and your closest friends, but as soon as you got in public, they seemed like an entirely different person? You liked the person you hung out with, but barely recognized the person out in public or around the “in” crowd.

Where friends who act one way and then another in different settings leaves a sour taste in our mouths, God says something far worse happens in our relationship with him and our impact on the world when we forget to be who we are. As we continue in **THE SAVIOR'S SERMON** it is important for us to remember that Jesus' sermon isn't about what could be or should be. His sermon is all about present reality. It's all about what is and who you are through faith in him. Today Jesus tells us, **BE WHO YOU ARE!**

“You are the salt of the earth,” Jesus says. What is the primary use of salt, both now and historically? While your doctor may think that seasoning food is the primary use you have for salt after he sees your blood labs, it isn't the primary use. The chief use of salt is to preserve. That's what it does best. When Jesus calls us “the salt of the earth,” he's telling us that he uses us to preserve this world.

Jesus also says that we are “the light of the world.” While neither you nor I don't glow in the dark, we do shine as God's children. Our shining is like the relationship between the sun and the moon. The moon has light only because it reflects the sun's light. You and I don't have light of our own, but we reflect God the Son's light in our lives and by sharing his Word.

As the salt and light of the world, Jesus says this is who you are, right now. But you didn't get that way on your own. Jesus fulfilled the law to make you what you are today—salt & light. He had to do this because we are all lawbreakers. Jesus says, “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.”

Jesus' use of “least” and “great” here seems to be parallel to Jesus' use of “first” and “last.” To be a lawbreaker, even of a law that seems insignificant to us, makes us least, makes us lost. To cling to the lies of the devil as truth is bad enough, but to teach those lies to others is heaping sin onto sin. Later in Jesus' sermon he tells us that God's standard is perfection (Mt. 5:48). If you don't want to be least, you must be first and to be first you have to

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<sup>1</sup> JJ is the acronym for *Jesus Juve*, which is Latin for “Jesus Help”. It is a short prayer used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the beginning of their work.

be perfect. Jesus' says: "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."

Jesus leaves us without any hope in ourselves. Jesus squashes any idea that we can keep the law all on our own, let alone do it perfectly. And that's why he said he came. "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy them but to fulfill them. Amen I tell you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not even the smallest letter, or even part of a letter, will in any way pass away from the Law until everything is fulfilled."

Every moment of his life, Jesus consciously kept every command perfectly. Not once did he complain when his parents asked him to pick up his things. Not once did he get in an fight with his brothers and sisters. Not once did he say something mean to make himself feel better. Not once was he lazy in his schoolwork. Not once did he cheat anyone in time or money. He was always respectful. He never once said a bad word. He never once had thoughts of hatred towards someone, even those who beat him and nailed him to a cross. He never once looked at or thought of a woman in an impure way. He faithfully worshiped the Lord every day of his life.

Payed his taxes—offered every sacrifice that was required of him and fulfilled every prophecy that was ever spoken of him in the Old Testament. Finally, he offered himself as *the* sacrifice for all sin.

Jesus came to be The Salt and The Light all so that he could fulfill the law and make his perfection our own! Jesus also came to fulfill every gospel promise of the Old Testament, all so that he could also make us salt and his lights in the



world. God preserved you when he salted your heart with his forgiveness at your baptism. It was then that he shined the light of his love into your heart for the first time, chasing away the darkness of unbelief and setting you free for a new life of service to him. As Peter says in our second lesson, "... you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, the people who are God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the

praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt. 2:9).

Ah, but there's a problem we all struggle with. We imagine that now God has made us salt, we don't have to live like salt...now that God has made us light, we can just hide that light away. Every day we are tempted to do this. We constantly craft different ways of hiding our light under baskets. Maybe you hide yourself

away in your home or office, so you don't have to deal with sin. Maybe you keep your mouth shut at work or school when God plops an opportunity on your lap to speak the truth of God's Word. How often don't we look more like Peter in the courtyard of Caiaphas, than young Stephen? How often don't we look like Peter calling down curses on himself to trick people into thinking he didn't belong to Jesus, rather than Stephen who boldly spoke the truth of God's Word to those who didn't want to hear it and lost his life doing it?

Then on the other hand, the devil tempts us to imagine that since God has salted us with his forgiveness that we can use his forgiveness to go on sinning, instead of using his forgiveness to live holy lives in the world and preserve the world. To do this would only add to the spiritual decay of this world. To live our lives this way is to lose our saltiness and be "no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled..." We'd be fools! That's literally what Jesus' words "loses its flavor" says the the Greek!

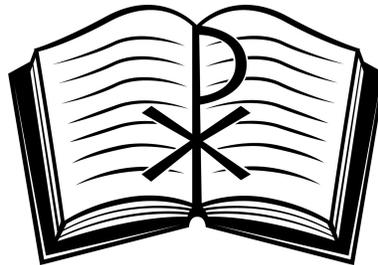
Salt losing its flavor is a foolish thing. It doesn't happen. But we're more foolish than that idea when we decide to not be what we are—the salt of the earth. The same is true of a lamp. No one is foolish enough to light a lamp and then cover it up with a basket. But we're more foolish than that when we decide we want to

hide who we are—the light of the world. Lord, forgive us for such foolishness!!!

Thank God that is was for the likes of you and me—fools that we are—that Jesus came into this world to fulfill all things *for* us! Friends, recognizing what Christ has done for you and made you to be, instead of being fools, **Be Who You Are!**

Friends, be salt and preserve the earth! That's what salt does best and that is what God has made you to be. Preserve this world by living lives of kindness and love. As Peter says, "Live an honorable

life among the Gentiles so that even though they slander you as evildoers, when they observe your noble deeds, they may glorify God on the day he visits us" (1 Pt. 2:12). Let all that you do be done to the glory of God and the good of your neighbor.



And while being salt is sometimes called the quiet work of a Christian, Jesus also calls us to be "the light of the world." While being salt preserves the world *now* from facing a destruction worse than the Flood, being the light of the world preserves for eternity. It involves both living a holy life and also bringing people to The Light through God's Word. As Paul says in his letter to the Philippians, "... you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..." (Phil. 2:15-16).

It's been said, "Nothing is more useful than sun and salt." And how true that is, even of you. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. This is who and what you are through faith in Jesus, your Savior. Friends, this is what God in his forgiving love has made you to be, so **Be Who You Are!** Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> SDG is an acronym for *Soli Deo Gloria*, which is Latin for "To God Alone Be The Glory". This is a statement of humility used by many ministers and sacred musicians at the end of their work to let themselves and others know that it isn't about getting glory for themselves, but about giving all glory to God.

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