

Matthew 5, 13-20 Salt and Light 8th Feb 2026

Let us pray: Lord may we be enlightened by your word and by the power of your Spirit may we have the mind of Christ and grow as his disciples. Amen

Has anyone read any of Michelle Obama's books? I enjoyed her first book *Becoming*, a couple of years ago she another one *The Light we Carry*. I haven't read it yet, but in it she apparently reflects on her challenges, especially her time as first lady, and I quote, *how we can respond positively to change and challenges and use our power and shine our light, illuminating the richness and potential of the world around us, discovering deep truths and pathways for progress*. I'm sure she has some great insights and reflections. As Christians, the light we carry is the light of Christ and we are called to shine that light brightly in the world...

I want you to imagine that you are one of Jesus' disciples – of course that is what you are if you follow him - but let's step back in time and imagine you have recently met Jesus and he has called you to follow him. You've heard that perhaps this man is the Messiah, maybe you witnessed or heard about his baptism and the voice of God declaring Jesus to be his son; you sense his authority and listening to him discover he is the greatest teacher you have ever met. You follow him up a mountain (Mat ch. 5 pew bibles p785) and sit at his feet and as he talks, you hang off his every word; 'Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth', 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they will be filled', 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God'....

And then he says to you his followers – his disciples....

You are the salt of the earth

You are the light of the world!!

Woah, we are following Jesus as the light of the world who has come into our darkness, and now he says that we are? He can't really mean me, can he?

Jesus has just been sharing what we call 'the beatitudes' – so putting it in context I think he is saying that those people who live out the beatitudes are the salt of the earth and light of the world. The ones who are humble, meek, who thirst after doing what is right, the peacemakers – those who seek to live like Christ. If that is you, – then you are salt and light – called to give the world a 'taste' and a 'glimpse' of who Christ is.

How 'light' and 'salty' are you? Sounds like a packet of chips – for me the best ones are the plain salt...but they've got to be nice and fresh, crisp and salty; stale chips are not so good, are they?

What does it look like to be the ‘salt of the earth?’ Salt had many functions and was highly valued in the ancient world. It was even used sometimes to pay the Roman soldiers, apparently that is where the saying “he is not worth his salt” comes from. Even today you may hear someone being described as ‘the salt of the earth’, usually meaning they are people of genuine, good character.

Salt can cleanse and purify but it seems the main meaning behind Jesus’ words here are in relation to it as a seasoning agent...able to bring out flavour. I am married to someone who was a chef, who very much believes in adding salt to bring out flavour. I always know if I haven’t added enough when he asks for the salt grinder!

Jesus wants us to bring his flavour to the world – give the world a ‘taste’ of who he is. There are plenty of ‘distasteful’ and unsavoury things and attitudes in the world, so we need to bring in the flavour of Christ. We are to be distinct in the world – to stand out as Christians. To think of others before self in this ‘it’s all about me’ environment. Instead of being greedy and building our own empires we should be meek, pure in heart, hungry for righteousness, generous and caring, forgiving, and loving. We should not be ‘bland’ and just blend into society...we should be ‘salty’ and stand out. Gil Cann, author of *Red Alert*. says this; *I believe God’s vision of a healthy church is where every member is living an astonishing life, in stark and winsome contrast to the people around them.* By an astonishing life I believe he meant a life lived imitating Jesus. A life living out the beatitudes and the fruits of the spirit. As I read through the bible in one year, I am currently up to all the laws in Leviticus...laws God gave to his people so that they would stand out morally different to the nations around them, they were called to be holy as God is holy.

Sometimes our Christlike attitude may not be a flavour that others like – our salt may cause them to sting a little – like the sea water on a cut. Jesus did not say we are the ‘sugar’ of the earth – no, we should not ‘sugar-coat’ the gospel message – we are the ‘salt’ of the earth.

We are to speak the truth of the gospel and not just be silent or agree when we see things that are unjust or immoral. We pray that the sting someone feels may produce repentance, cleansing, transformation and new life.

Jesus also warns about losing our ‘saltiness’ – because then we are useless to his cause – *no longer good for anything*, he says very bluntly! You may think it impossible for salt to lose its saltiness as it is apparently one of the most stable compounds in the world. But talking to a geologist about this, she said she had once been presented with old salt and fresh salt and although the old was still salty it had lost its shine and was lacking.

I then found in a commentary (that I can't find again!) a description of salt in Judea. But I have this quote. Apparently...

To lose taste is possible in the land of Judea, A Mr Maundrell writes..."Along, on one side of the valley of salt, toward Gibul, there is a small precipice about two men's lengths, occasioned by the continual taking away of the salt; and, in this, you may see how the veins of it lie. I broke a piece of it, of which that part that was exposed to the rain, sun, and air, though it had the sparks and particles of salt, Yet It Had Perfectly Lost Its Savour: the inner part, which was connected to the rock, retained its savour, as I found by proof. (he goes on to say) A preacher, or private Christian, who has lost the life of Christ, and the witness of his Spirit, out of his soul, may be likened to this salt. He may have the sparks and glittering particles of true wisdom, but without its unction or comfort. Only that which is connected with the rock, the soul that is in union with Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit, can preserve its savour, and be instrumental of good to others.

This makes a great metaphor, we need to stay connected to the rock, our Lord and Saviour; God is repeatedly referred to as our rock in the bible. From psalm 18 we read, *The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.* Or from Isaiah 26:4, *Trust in the Lord forever, for the Lord, the Lord is the rock eternal.* Is your hope and trust in the Lord, our rock and redeemer? We will keep salty by investing in our relationship with Christ; reading the bible, praying, coming to Church, and living our Christian lives in the community. We do not want to become useless to the Lord, good for nothing!

Jesus then says that we are also the 'light of the world'. In John's gospel Jesus declares that he is the 'light of the world' but here he tells his disciples that they also are the 'light of the world'. And as I said – if you are a follower of Jesus then that includes you. Is that how you see yourself? –someone full of the light of Christ.

At baptism we speak of the light of Christ coming into the believer's life and often a candle is given as a symbol. Christ enters our lives when we acknowledge him as our Lord and Saviour. Christ *is* the light, and we are to reflect his light.

Jesus says we are to shine his light like a city on a hill, or like a lamp on a lampstand. We are not to hide it. Being a Christian is not like being in a secret society. It is not enough to have private, personal, holiness; we must expose our light publicly that all may see. We need to be unapologetic Christians – as Paul would say we should 'not be ashamed of the gospel'.

We are to shine brightly so that when someone is feeling lost and insecure, or in a bit of a fog, they may see Jesus' light and the hope that he brings – we are to show them the way. Like a torch or a light house. Think of yourself being like a light house – what a difference you can bring into someone's life.

There is so much darkness in the world today – we just need to turn on the TV – and we will see it not just in the news (murders, bush fires, floods, wars, refugees) but also in the reality TV shows, think of Love Island or Bachelor in Paradise – pure porn on TV!; there is darkness in the form of selfishness, sexual immorality, social injustice, racism, power, hatred, violence and on it goes. Darkness is also seen in poverty, disease, mental illness – so much depression and anxiety, social and family dysfunction.

We are called to shine Christ's light in this dark world. People need his light. We need to show them that there is a different way to live that brings hope and joy instead of despair and sorrow. As Christians we should be easily visible – giving hope and direction to people struggling in this dark and often scary world. We can bring Jesus' love, peace, comfort, compassion as we seek to live lives that reflect Jesus and live out the beatitudes. Think of someone you know who could benefit with some of the light of Christ in their lives...someone, lonely, ill, depressed and give them a ring or visit or send them an encouraging note with scripture verse.

As we live our holy Christlike lives, we must remember that our good deeds, as Jesus says, are so that people will see them and give glory to our Father in heaven. We are to point others to God not to ourselves. Not 'look at me' or 'look at moi' as Kath would say to Kim, (from the ABC comedy Kath and Kim) but 'look to Him'.

The purpose of our lives as Christians is to glorify God. So, let your 'light so shine" before all people.

I recently referred to a couple of songs from the musical Godspell, you might recognise this one too...

You are the light of the world,

You are the light of the world!

but if that light is under a bushel,

It's lost something kind of crucial,

You've got to stay bright to be the light of the world!

You've got to *stay* bright to be the light of the world. It doesn't mean we have to be 'bright and jolly' all the time, we are not immune to suffering and we have to be genuine, but we can still shine Christ's light in the way we journey through our suffering. And we can't just turn the light on and off like a light switch when we feel like it. Unfortunately, some Christians think it is ok just to shine while they are in Church and they extinguish the light when they leave! We will be more than useless if people see us at Church on a Sunday and then acting unchristian the rest of the week. Then we will rightly be called hypocrites and not help the cause of the gospel at all!!

Jesus calls us to shine his light at all times, wherever we are. So:

Let your light shine as a husband or wife, mother or father, daughter or son, grandfather or grandmother, brother or sister, or friend.

Let your light shine at your workplace or social, volunteer or sport clubs.

Let your light shine in your neighbourhood.

Let your light shine in the supermarket and at the coffee shop.

We are called to give the world a 'taste and glimpse' of Christ. So I ask again, how light and salty are you?

To keep fresh and crisp and bright we need to draw near to Jesus and keep connected to the rock, filled with the Holy Spirit.

The light we carry is not our own light, but the light of Christ. Let it shine!

Let's pray; Father God, thank you for sending Jesus to bring light into the darkness of this world. Thank you for filling us with your light. Forgive us when we fail to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world'. Help us to live our lives more and more like you that we will shine brightly and bring your hope to a world that so desperately needs to be filled with your light and life. In Jesus name. Amen.