

Youth Sermon: "Salt, Light, and the City on a Hill"

Scripture Focus: *Matthew 5:13-16 (CSB)*

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."

Introduction

Today, we're diving into one of Jesus' most iconic teachings—three metaphors that describe who we are meant to be as His followers: **Salt, Light, and a City on a Hill**.

We'll spend the most time on salt because it's often misunderstood, but all three are key to understanding how we can live as true reflections of God's Kingdom.

1. Salt of the Earth

When Jesus says, *"You are the salt of the earth,"* His audience would have understood how valuable salt was. It wasn't just a seasoning like we think today—it was essential for life. It preserved food, brought healing, and added flavor. It was so valuable that it was traded like currency!

Salt in the Dead Sea

- The Dead Sea in Israel is about **36% salt**—crazy, right? That's so salty you can't sink in it!
 - The salt there has **healing properties**. If you have a scratch, it stings at first but then heals faster.
 - Salt from the Dead Sea was a precious commodity, so much that it was transported up rocky paths (like the Wadi Zohar) to be traded throughout the Roman Empire.
 - Think about it this way: if Jesus were speaking today, He might say, *"You are the diamonds of the world!"* That's how valuable and significant you are to God.
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What Does It Mean to Be Salt?

1. **Preserving Goodness** – Just like salt preserves food from going bad, we are called to stand up for what is good and righteous in the world.

2. **Healing Wounds** – Salt stings but heals. Sometimes sharing truth or stepping into someone’s pain feels uncomfortable, but it brings healing.
 3. **Adding Flavor** – Salt makes food taste better. Our presence should make life richer for those around us through love, joy, kindness, and truth.
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Real Talk

Many of us struggle to see our worth. We believe lies like, *“I’m not good enough. I’ve made too many mistakes. I’m worthless.”* But God looks at you and says, *“You are valuable. You are my diamond.”*

Yes, we sin, but Jesus' message isn't just about getting us out of hell—it's about inviting us into a life where we live to our full, God-given potential. That's the Gospel! You were created to bring value to the world.

2. Light of the World

Jesus also calls us the light of the world. Back then, people used small lamps filled with oil and a wick. The higher the lamp was placed, the more it could light up a room.

"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket."

Imagine lighting a lamp and then hiding it. That wouldn't make sense! Light is meant to shine, to reveal, to guide.

How Do We Shine Light?

- **Reveal God's Character:** Light isn't about being “right” or winning arguments. It's about showing God's love, mercy, and truth through your actions.
 - **Be Elevated:** Just like a lamp is placed high to shine further, when you live boldly for Jesus, you'll naturally stand out. Don't hide it.
 - **Bring Clarity:** Light helps others see. Your kindness, love, and patience help people experience God more clearly.
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A Challenge for Us

Being light isn't about telling people they're wrong. Convicting people of sin? That's the Holy Spirit's job, not ours. Saving people? That's Jesus' job. Holding the world together? That's God's job.

Our job is simply to shine by loving people like Jesus did.

- Be kind to that server who got your order wrong.
- Be patient with the classmate who annoys you.
- Be gracious with your family when they frustrate you.

Because here's the truth: the **right thing done the wrong way is still the wrong thing**. You can be correct in your beliefs but completely wrong in how you treat people.



3. A City on a Hill

A city on a hill cannot be hidden. When Jesus said this, He was probably pointing to a nearby city visible to everyone listening.

In the same way, our faith should be visible. When we love people well, when we live differently, people will notice. The way we treat others, even when it's hard, will make us stand out.

But remember, standing out isn't about *being better* than others. It's about living a life that reflects Jesus.



Real-Life Application

- **At School:** Who do you sit with? Who do you avoid? Being salt and light might look like sitting with someone who's alone or standing up for someone who's being mistreated.
 - **On Social Media:** Do you spread positivity or negativity? Use your words to build others up.
 - **At Home:** Do you honor your parents? Show patience with your siblings? Your family is your first mission field.
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Discussion Questions

1. What lies have you believed about your worth, and how can God's view of you as "salt" change that?

2. In what areas are you tempted to "hide your light"? How can you be bolder?
 3. How can you be a source of healing in your friendships or school this week?
 4. What's one way you can make God's love visible—like a city on a hill—this week?
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Challenge for the Week

- **Be Salt:** Do one thing this week that brings life or healing to someone—whether it's encouraging words, helping someone out, or standing up for someone in need.
 - **Be Light:** Find one way to make God's love visible. This could be through a post on social media, a kind act, or simply sharing why you live the way you do.
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Closing Prayer

"Lord, thank You for calling us to be salt and light in this world. Help us to remember that we are valuable, created with purpose, and designed to influence our world for Your glory. Give us courage to shine brightly and to live boldly, reflecting Your love in everything we do. Amen."

Final Thought

You are salt. You are light. You are a city on a hill. Not because of anything you've done, but because of who God has made you to be. So go out this week and live like it!
