**Matthew 5:13-20 (ESV)**

[13] "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. [14] "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. [16] In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. [17] "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. [18] For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. [19] Therefore whoever relaxes 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 does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. [20] For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

**“Now Way To Hide Him”**

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, Amen. One of the favorite pastimes for Americans is to be a fan. We find this especially true every year on Super bowl Sunday. Parties form around the big screen TV while a select few sit at the stadium. Names of favorite players get rattled off as if they were a family member or friend. People even show off their team *s*pirit in ways that are silly or just over-the-top. Of course, few realize that being “a fan” is actually a shortened version of the word, “fanatical.”[[1]](#footnote-1) Such a label in our culture takes on a much darker meaning than with sports or celebrities. Most of the time, we hear “fanatic” used in a demeaning way towards those taking religion seriously. Christians are susceptible to such a label just as much as anyone else . Yet, just because good and bad are lumped together is no reason to shrink from the Gospel.

The Sermon on the Mount is a fanatical event in the life of Christ. Like Moses at Mount Sinai, Jesus takes the place of the Old Testament prophets. He establishes Himself to be greater than Moses, but the savior and God’s Son! Any who hear His Word are to recognize their relationship to Him is inseparable. No one can just be a fan of Jesus. Those who believe in His Word are His disciples. There are two distinct features for those baptized into the Name of Christ. We are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. The Son of God did not need humanity, but sinful humanity certainly needed God’s Son. Only Jesus’ Word brought the full revelation of the Father’s love. Only His life would serve as the sacrifice for sinners. Likewise, His Church neither needs the world, but the world desperately needs the Church. There is no way to hide Christ for He is our life and salvation.

Over the years, many a battle has been fought on the topic of “Ministry and Mission.” What is Missions without the true Ministry of God’s Word? What is the Ministry without true mission to the world? Christ denies neither. The Word of the Gospel is to go to the ends of the earth. When Jesus says to His disciples, “You are the salt of the earth…” It is because they were hearing His Word. Without the savior no disciple can preserve in the Faith. St. Paul made that decisive remark in the Epistle reading, “Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.” The enduring nature of Christ’s Church never came from a manmade community, hierarchy, wealth, or prestige. It was built on the preaching of Jesus’ Word that abides forever. The warning for the disciples of salt losing its taste is frankly to lose the Gospel, to leave Jesus for some other word made up by men. It could be in false delusions over the Law as if works justify before God or with indulgence over the fantasies of men that deny the sinful nature of man. The disciples being salt of the earth meant preserving Jesus’ Word for the sake of this World.

The Church has had to make a faithful confession of Christ in every age as it fights to hold on to Jesus as Lord and Savior. However, in 1968 the World Council of Churches representing hundreds of denominations from many countries proposed a new slogan, “The world sets the agenda for the church.” Such a saying places the baptized beneath the world’s demands, almost a passive position. This rejects Jesus promise that “You are salt of the earth.” Confidence in the Gospel will never come from approval by the world. We want this applause from men, but the answer comes from the One Man who has given us His Word as God our Savior. As Dr. Scaer writes from our Fort Wayne Seminary,

“As presumptuous as it sounds, we Christians are the reason God preserves the world… Because of us, the world continues on its course, so that as many as possible can believe in Christ and be saved… We cannot run away. In Christ, God has given each of us a special responsibility to the world” (In Christ 61).

If the Gospel now means to just give people whatever they want, sinful humanity will never want Jesus as savior or success. The church will be useless in a culture that it conforms to for safety. Matter a fact, the culture will trample over the church by its own agenda. Instead, we can trust in God’s Son alone against all sin, death, and the devil. We can say like the Psalmist, “I will delight in your statutes; I will not forget your word” (Psalm 119:16). As insignificant as salt may appear on food, the baptized are blessed to preserve what Jesus says in a sinful World as His gracious gift of salvation.

Where salt is about making something last in life. Jesus’ second description of light reveals how His love enters the darkness. Again He said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world.” Jesus came as the light in the darkness. Those who believed would be reflections of His light in their lives. It is impossible to miss the glory of Christ’s Church. Everything in this city rests upon the savior’s suffering and death on mount Calvary. Jesus received the full judgment of humanity. The ministry of the Word had a mission and it was one of undying service to all people. This righteousness given by faith in Jesus lives to save. It brightens lives to live for others. More than casting out wickedness, the disciples of Christ went out of their way in acts of mercy that no one else would do. Such service did not come from their “natural” love for people, but in how God needlessly loved them by His sacrifice. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed the saving acts of God would reflect upon His redeemed saying, “Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.”

Just as Christ’s ministry was to remain true to His Word. His mission shined upon the lives of those in darkness. Much goes towards organizations today within and outside the church. Yet, Christ never mentions money in our text as if service just comes from the hands of others. What matters more to the savior is the life of a baptized person in this world. Jesus said, “Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.” During the reformation our Lutheran Fathers burst open this service of love by all because God’s sacrifice was for all. They wrote, “All men, whatever their calling, ought to seek perfection, that is, growth in the fear of God, in faith, in the love of their neighbor, and similar spiritual virtues” (Tappert 275:37). This was not about adding to works, but making the life we already have align with the light of Christ’s mercy made right by the cross. Where Christ serves those around us by His perfect sacrifice in the Sacrament, our lives brighten to serve those in this dark world. Of course, the purpose is more than humanitarian. It helps people see how the Father has saved and loves sinful humanity by His Son. There is no way to hide Him for Jesus is our life and salvation. Amen. Now may the peace of God which passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

1. http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/fan [↑](#footnote-ref-1)