

## *Salt and Light*

(Preached @ Footscray Baptist Church by Cheryl Williams, February 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023 - Matt 5:13-20)

Salt  
Light  
Like a city on a hill

That's who you are!

Jesus is part way through the sermon on the mount. He has begun with some comforting words as he has outlined the blessings and now, he moves on to some statements about who his followers are.

Now I don't know much about salt. I don't use it in my cooking nor do I add it to food, in fact I had to search for a salt container to bring in for the children's talk. I do remember as a kid there was a salt factory in Geelong and if you drove past parts of the bay you could see huge piles of salt. I know that part of Ghandi's protest and long walk was about salt, salt tax. I know from my time in share houses that salt was very effective in removing red wine stains at parties. I know it draws out the liquid of vegetables from my chutney making. I know from several bouts of dental surgery that it helps the healing process, having had to drink warm salty water for a few days after such surgery. Too much is not so good for your heart or blood pressure.

Salt in Roman times was used to pay people – I guess that it was as useful as money back then – it would flavour and more importantly preserve food.

So salt adds a bit of zest, preserves, heals, cleans and a small amount can make a difference. In earlier times it was also a currency. Jesus says you are the salt of the earth.

Lighthouses do a great job – they shed light onto the water helping ships navigate and avoid any rocks, it guides. They just stand still and strong shining. I know a lamp beside the bed makes it easier to find my way in the night, it enables me to read more easily, the fine newspaper print is a bit clearer and like salt you only need a bit to make a difference. A little torch light can light up a much bigger space.

So, light gives clarity, enables sight, guides, takes away fear and makes a big difference in the dark. Jesus says you are the light of the world and no-one hides light under a table, they let it shine.

Such light is like a city on a hill. Many years ago my mum and I were visiting her aunt in the eastern suburbs – mum was reading the map and I was driving. As any good daughter would do I followed her directions exactly, even though they didn't feel right. Then I saw the city skyline to which we were heading and said that I thought we were going the wrong way, we should have been heading away from the city. Turns out she had the Melways upside down. The city skyline served as a navigation point, it

reorientated me. I guess seen from a distance a city skyline or a city on a hill can give reassurance and a sense of hope.

Jesus' image of salt, light and like a city on a hill, give us some clues as to who we are as his followers. We are people who will add zest to people's lives, to make a difference to them, to bring some joy. We are a people who will preserve that which is good in the world. We are a people who will offer healing and comfort to people. We are a people who will clean up the mess left by others. We are a people who will shed light and clarity for others as we listen and offer a perspective. We are a people who help people see, will guide them until they can find their own way. We are a people who will do all we can to dispel the darkness in their lives and our own, who will do all we can to take away their fear. We are like the city on the hill that helps reorientate people, that is a beacon of hope and a source of reassurance.

And how will we do and be this, by living out the law of God, the law as laid out in the beatitudes and given to Isaiah. Isaiah writes that our light shall rise in the darkness when we loosen the bonds of injustice, let the oppressed go free, share our food with the hungry, bring the homeless into our houses, cover the naked, stop pointing the finger at others and satisfy the needs of the afflicted (Isaiah 58:6-10). This is how, those Jesus said would be blessed, will know such blessings.

Do we have the hope, courage and confidence to be salt in the world adding joy, to be light in the darkness, to be beacons of hope in our world.<sup>1</sup> Let us not remove the salt or hide our light. Let us remember it only takes a little bit of salt or light that will make a world of difference, that will lead to others seeing God's light and the joy of living in God's way.

'Being the salt of the earth isn't about being something great and wonderful on our own; no, it's about being the ones who bring out the great and wonderful things of God's kingdom to others.'<sup>2</sup>

'In order for the light to be seen, we must be willing to go where the darkness exists, to engage and walk through it, so that, in time, the light can overcome it. Annie Dillard writes "You do not have to sit outside in the dark. If, however, you want to look at the stars, you will find that darkness is necessary."<sup>3</sup>

May you leave this place knowing you are salt and light and have the opportunity to make a big difference in our world. Let your light shine. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> Ideas here taken from 'At the Edge of the Enclosure' by Suzanne Guthrie [www.edgeofenclosure.org](http://www.edgeofenclosure.org)

<sup>2</sup> From 'Salty Luminescence' by Rev Dr. Christopher Thomas, 2014

<sup>3</sup> From 'Feasting on the Word – Year A', Matthew 5:13-20, Pastoral Perspective by Charles James Cook p.336