

DNA DISCUSSION GUIDE

SERMON ON THE MOUNT SERIES 2: THE WAY OF JESUS



WEEK 1: SALT OF THE EARTH, LIGHT OF THE WORLD

“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. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. 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.”

Matthew 5:13-16

DISCOVER

This week, we started a new mini-series called The Way of Jesus. This 10-week series will continue to explore the Sermon on the Mount as Jesus explains what it means to live the way we were created to live. This first passage is a transition between the Beatitudes and the next section of the sermon. The beatitudes are largely a vision of human flourishing that’s written for the individual to consider their personal character.

This week’s passage marks the beginning of a shift from personal character to what it looks like for people to live out Jesus’s vision for flourishing in real life. Over the following weeks, we’ll consider important topics like anger, lust, divorce, our words and retaliation to violence. In all, we’ll see some major themes and big picture values that Jesus holds and calls his people to embody.

Jesus begins this passage by saying, “you are the salt of the earth”. Similarly, later in the passage he tells his audience that they “are the light of the world”. In these two familiar phrases, Jesus reminds us that humans were made to bring real value to the world around them (salt) and to reveal the truth about God and his creation (light). We do this, Jesus says in verse 16, by letting “our light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.”

Jesus is teaching us that our good works (the way of Jesus), when lived out before others, will bring real value to the world and reveal God's character and plan for the world so that those who see our light will know and glorify God. We benefit from this personally because the more we follow Jesus, the more fully human we become. Our world benefits from our flourishing because we bring real value in the form of peacemaking, meekness, mercy and the rest.

NURTURE

1. When Jesus says, "you are the salt of the earth" he is, in a sense, restating the cultural mandate in Genesis 1. Humans were made to care for, protect and cultivate God's creation, a job that is still ours today. When we live out the Way of Jesus, we contribute not only to our own flourishing but to that of the world as well. We should, in short, bring real value to the world around us. How would this work? How does living the Way of Jesus bring real value to the world?
2. Later in the passage Jesus tells his listeners that they should "Let their light shine before men". This phrase protects against two opposite temptations that Christians face, to become too much like the world around them and to distance themselves from the world. Jesus tells us to "let your light shine" or to display through our lives the truth about who God is and his intention for the world, but to do it "before men", which requires proximity to and presence within the world. Which of these two mistakes are you most prone to make? Why and how does that play out?
3. Jesus makes it clear that letting our light shine is primarily about the lives we live, our "good works" as he calls them. Do you struggle with Jesus' words here? Does it seem counter to the gospel for you to be concerned with good works instead of faith and grace? Why would Jesus say this.
4. A result of us living out the way of Jesus before others is that they will "glorify your father in heaven". This phrase should protect us from the wrong-headed thinking that good works is all that matters. The only way that people could see our good works and connect them to God is if we tell them! But, it should remind us that if our talking precedes our living, then we are converting people only to a set of ideas and that's not the idea of Christianity at all. So, how do we make these connections for people? Have you had the opportunity to do this? How'd it go?

ACT

1. How can you add real value to your world this week?
2. What is an example of way that God has already provided for you to shine your light before men this week? How will make sure that you do so?
3. What good works has God asked you to do that you haven't been doing? How will you pursue these good works differently this week?
4. Is there a way that you can be prepared to bear witness to the truth about God this week in such a way that would give you an opportunity to connect it to your father in heaven? Make a plan to be prepared to do so.