



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
Matthew 5.13-20 | January 10, 2021  
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our series Out With the Old. In this study, we turn from Jesus' third-person announcements of good news ("Blessed are the...") to second-person pronouncements of who his disciples are ("You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world...").

II. Connecting with One Another

What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, "salt of the earth"? What about "light of the world"? "A city on a hill cannot be hidden"?

How have you heard these phrases used?

What do you think they mean? Is that how you heard them used?

III. Study the Text

a. Let's start by rereading last week's text, **Matthew 5.1-12**.

How have Jesus' words altered your perspective of "blessing" this past week?

b. Continue reading Jesus' words in **Matthew 5.13**.

Jesus' words here are *indicative* (a statement of fact), not *imperative* (a command to be or do something). Why didn't Jesus tell us to *be* "the salt of the earth"?

How can we *already* be salt? What do you think Jesus meant by this? Why describe His followers as salt?

c. Salt had at least 5 different uses in the ancient world:

- Adds flavor to food (**Job 6.6, Colossians 4.6**)
- As a preservative (**Numbers 18.19, 2nd Chronicles 13.5, Ezra 4.4**)
- As a purifying agent added to sacrifices (**Exodus 30.35, Leviticus 2.13, Ezekiel 16.4, 2nd Kings 2.21**)
- Healing to wounds (but not without pain!)
- Creation of thirst

What do each of these uses imply about the earth *without* the involvement of Christians? How should each of these uses inspire our behavior in the world?



How, then, could you increasingly live into your “saltiness”?

- d. Some scholars have noted that much of the salt in the first century, perhaps from around the Dead Sea, was not salt at all (though it looked and seemed to be so). In this case, then, it would fulfill none of the purposes listed above.

How does that help you understand Jesus’ statement about the “salt losing its saltiness”?

- e. To be sure, though, Jesus does not compare “true salt” with “fake salt.” He says his followers can lose their purpose in the world. How could that happen?
- f. Jesus continues with a second metaphor. **Read Matthew 5.14-16** (again, the verb is *indicative*, not *imperative*). In this statement, Jesus joins a long line of passages from the Hebrew Scriptures about light. Let’s read a few from Isaiah: **9.1-2, 42.6, 49.6, 60.1-3.**

With the background from these prophetic texts, what do you think Jesus is intending to communicate to His disciples?

What does this imply about the world *without* the involvement of Christians? How should this inspire our behavior in the world?

How could you increasingly let your light shine?

- g. **Read Matthew 5.17-18.**

Why do you think Jesus took the time to clarify that He was not abolishing the Law or Prophets?

What do you think it means for Jesus to instead *fulfill* them?

- h. **Read Romans 13.8-10, Galatians 3.13-15, and 6.2.**

How do these verses clarify Jesus’ statement?

- i. **Read Matthew 5.19-20.**

The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law knew that the Hebrew Scriptures contain 613 commandments – 248 are positive (“do *this*”), 365 are negative (“don’t do *this*”).

Does Jesus mean that we must maintain strict adherence to these laws? If not, what do you think he means? Why?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Confess any ways you have ignored your “saltiness” or not “let your light shine.”
- b. Ask God to increasingly instill characteristics of Christlikeness in you.
- c. Lift up those suffering from COVID-19 – and all those serving in hospitals and on the front lines of this pandemic.



## V. Digging Deeper

- a. If you're curious, engage Jesus' fulfillment of prophecies, as noted by Matthew:  
Isaiah 7.14/Matthew 1.22-23, Micah 5.2/Matthew 2.6, Hosea 11.1/Matthew 2.15,  
Jeremiah 31.15/Matthew 2.18, Jeremiah 31.15/Matthew 2.18, Isaiah 40.3/Matthew  
3.3, Isaiah 9.1-2/Matthew 4.14-16, Isaiah 53.4/Matthew 8.17, Micah 7.6/Matthew  
10.35-36, Isaiah 26.19, 29.18, 35.5, 42.18, 61.1/Matthew 11.5, 15.31, Exodus 23.20,  
Malachi 3.1/Matthew 11.10, Isaiah 42.1-4/Matthew 12.18-21, Isaiah 6.9/Matthew  
13.14-15, Psalm 78.2/Matthew 13.35, Isaiah 29.13/Matthew 15.8-9, Malachi  
4.5/Matthew 17.10-13, Isaiah 62.11, Zechariah 9.9/Matthew 21.5, Zechariah  
13.7/Matthew 26.31, Zechariah 11.13/Matthew 27.9, Psalm 22/Matthew 27.35-46.

