

## Restore the streets

### Matthew 5.13-20

In this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains that salt that has lost its properties is no good for anything and, just as light is visible for miles around, so we need to 'let our lights shine' for God. Jesus says he is not coming to abolish any laws and therefore urges his hearers to be obedient.

Now read **Matthew 5.13-20** see p.2 for text.

### A note on the passage

Jesus used the familiar images of salt and light to challenge his disciples about how to be effective for him. Salt transforms what it is mixed with in a variety of ways, while light is visible for miles around. Here is the test: are we making a difference in our situations and shining for Jesus' glory?

## Prayer WALK

Wrap up warm and walk (some of) the streets of your local area, praying as you go. As you pass different types of building, pray for whatever is happening there. Let your imagination fuel your prayers as you walk and listen for the prompting of the Spirit – e.g. as you pass a particular house where you know there is a need, or for those struggling with school. If you are feeling brave, you could ask people who pass you in the street if they would like you to pray for them (or something important to them). You may be surprised! If you aren't able to walk physically, you could use a local map to help you imagine a walk.

## SHADOW PLAY



What does it mean to be salt and light in our world?

Have fun exploring light by making shadow puppets. Shine a lamp onto a plain wall, and use your hands to make shadows on the wall. There are lots of videos on the internet about how to make different animal shapes – e.g. <https://drama4kids.com/activities/31-how-to-make-hand-shadow-puppets>.

But try experimenting too, making up your own shapes. Play a game of guessing each other's animals. You could restrict yourself to animals mentioned in the Bible – that may take some research, but there are plenty to choose from!

## ART Prayer

In *The Message* version of the Bible, **Matthew 5.14** says: 'You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colours in the world'. Make a poster of the world's God-colours – use your own imagination to work out what that means. Use paints, collage materials, pictures from magazines, etc. to show what God is like and what God is doing in the world. Use your poster to stimulate praise and prayer at home, asking God to show you how to discover more God-colours.

## COMMUNITY ACTION

Find out how you can be salt and light in your community by asking about, or researching, the good things that are going on and then joining in (perhaps with other members of the church). Is there a community action project, a litter picking group or gardening project perhaps? If there is an obvious unfulfilled need, get together as a church and work out – and ask God about – what you can do to be effective.

## REFLECT AND SHARE

Salt has many properties and uses – e.g. flavouring food; melting ice; as a preservative; as a valuable commodity; and for rubbing on wounds (ouch!) to aid healing. Hold a salt cellar in your hand; think about how you can be like salt (e.g. helping a situation 'taste good', or providing steadiness). At the last meal of each day, pass salt around the table with each person sharing how they have been like salt today. Or ponder about why or how you haven't (e.g. I didn't make a valuable contribution to...).

Choose a version of the passage to read. The first is the ROOTS version for children, the second is the NRSV text which may be suitable for older children, young people and adults.

**J**esus challenged his followers by saying: 'You are the salt of the earth. If salt loses its taste, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer useful, but is thrown out and trampled into the ground.'

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but on a lamp stand, so it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see the good that you do and give glory to your Father in heaven.'

'Do not think that I have come to get rid of all the old books of the Bible. I have come not to get rid of them but to bring them to life. Whoever breaks God's commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will not be praised in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever follows them and teaches them to others will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you,

unless your goodness is greater than the goodness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 5.13-20



### Did you know?

- A commandment is a rule given by God to help people live a good life.
- Scribes and Pharisees were important people who lived strictly by God's laws.
- Those who didn't follow the laws would not know the love of God in their lives.

## Matthew 5.13-20 (NRSV)

'You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.'

'You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, 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 in heaven.'

'Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the

prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks 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. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.'