

## **Jan 22 - Matthew 5:13-16 "The Glorious Power of Salt & Light"**

### **Read Matthew 5:13-16.**

1. What are some of the ways that you have felt the heartache of the world lately? What was your reaction?

*Allow space to contemplate some of the heartache of living in a broken world, and as a leader try to bring out examples both globally and locally. It's natural in the face of seemingly impossible situations to disconnect emotionally, so allow a safe space for that reaction if possible. Try to avoid problem-solving or criticizing reactions – the goal here is to simply allow the group to feel the need for salt and light. Allowing ourselves to be open to the pain of the world is one of the blessings of the Beatitudes.*

2. Why did Jesus follow the Beatitudes with this immediate pronouncement of salt and light?

*The Beatitudes are pronouncements of blessings upon Christ-followers; ways that they begin to exhibit Jesus' kingdom nature. Jesus is emphasising that these blessings are not for his followers alone, but are to be used for the benefit of the world.*

3. In the sermon on Sunday, two aspects of salt were discussed: as a flavour-enhancer, and as a preservative/healing agent. How does this work as a metaphor for Christians? Did one of these stand out to you more, or hold more resonance for you as a metaphor for a Christ-follower? Why?

*By way of reminder, the flavour-enhancing properties of salt: it has its own taste but also enhances all other ingredients; minimises bitterness; balances sweetness; minimises unpleasant tastes; and accentuates pleasant ones. The Holy Spirit, working in our lives, opens our eyes to the kingdom of God and gives us the 'flavour' of Jesus. By living in proximity to Jesus and loving our neighbours as ourselves, we act as a preserving and healing agent in the world.*

*We are also called the 'light of the world', receiving light from the true Light of the world that gives meaning and purpose to the human existence.*

4. What do you think about the idea that salt can't lose its saltiness? Do you think this is what Jesus was getting at in verse 13? If not, why not? If so, how does this idea free us for ministry in the world?

*There are differences of opinion about what Jesus meant here. Another way to understand this passage is as a parallel for a tree being known by its fruit (Matt 7:15-20). Salt was taken from the Dead sea, and salt deposits often included*

*gypsum, which looked like salt but wasn't. Jesus may be saying that if someone looks like salt but is not salty, that is how they will be known as not being a follower of him. Which way of understanding this passage holds more hope and/or encouragement for your group?*

5. It is easy to understand the metaphor of hiding a light under a basket. Have you ever found yourself playing down the fact that you are a Christian? Why is this a tempting thing to do in our culture? What are some of the reasons it's hard to 'come clean' about our faith?

*Chances are, everyone has experienced times of 'hiding their light'. As a leader, it may be helpful to think up your own examples so that you make space for others to share. The goal is to get at the root of why we do so. Are we ashamed or afraid, and if so, why? Try to make space for an honest conversation without any judgment if possible.*

6. What are some ways you have seen Christians acting as salt or light around you, or around the world? Do you see places in your own communities that could use some 'flavouring', 'preserving', or have the light of the understanding of the gospel shed on them?

*Thinking of examples of ways that Christians have made a difference for the better, both in your own life and in the life of the world, is a great way to inspire us to act as salt and light. Try to help the group think of small (doable) ways that they can lean into their nature as salt and light.*