

**“Living Bushel Free”**  
**January 26, 2014**  
**Text: Matthew 5:13-20**  
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Today’s scripture reading comes from what I would say is the most important discourse in the New Testament; Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was just beginning to choose his disciples and this was a training session. What the 10 Commandments were to the Old Testament, the Sermon on the Mount is to the New Testament. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ in a nutshell. Jesus, seeing the crowds, goes up on a hillside and sits down. That might have been a sign to his followers that they might want to get cozy and listen because we gonna be here awhile, and the message will be worth every minute.

Scripture tells us that, (Chapter 5) "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his Disciples came to him and he opened his mouth and taught them, saying 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when humans revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven for so people persecuted the prophets who were before you.'"

Now you will hear more on these verses next week when Pastor Brian shares more. It is the following verses that we will be focusing on today. Jesus goes on to say: "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 trodden under foot."

"YOU are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give Glory to God in heaven."

Now the first part of the scripture, commonly referred to as the Beatitudes, the BE...Attitudes are all promises of the commonwealth of God. To be part of God's commonwealth is to be comforted, to be satisfied, to obtain mercy to see God and to be called children of God. These verses also describe who receives the promises of God. The following verses, the ones we are going to focus on, show that Jesus expects his teachings to be put into practice. Notice Jesus says very plainly, "You ARE the salt of the earth...You ARE the light of the world." Not, you should strive to be, or I would like you to be, salt and light but you ARE salt and light.

Salt was greatly valued in early times for preserving foods. Without it, food spoils, without food, people die. Just as salt gives zest to food, so the salt of the earth adds zest and celebration to life. And we, as followers of Christ, the salt of the earth, are to be adding that zest to the life of the faith community and the world. We are called to be the salt of the earth. And in

order for salt to keep its flavor and be effective it has to mingle with the substance it is enhancing. We cannot be the salt of the earth without touching the person in the pew next to you, without reaching outside these walls into the community and world. You ARE the salt of the earth, Are you enhancing the world around you or have you lost your saltiness?

And by the way, writes biblical scholar John F MacArthur, that “YOU” is plural: He’s talking about the collective body of believers. You don’t put one grain of salt on anything. You don’t say, pass the salt, then pick out one grain. It only functions in combination with other grains of salt. Likewise, the church, to influence the world must be collective salt. It’s not enough to be all alone at it; we must be at it together using collective influence. And, he says, by the way, the same is true about light. It takes many lights to light a city and many grains of salt to affect a substance.

YOU are the light of the world. Now, coming fresh off of Advent and the Christmas season we have focused on “Those who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” And we all know that that light is the Messiah, the light of the world, Immanuel, God with us. But wait, now Jesus tells us that WE are the light of the world? How can that be? We have just been walking in darkness and now you tell us WE are the light? But perhaps Jesus pondered the mystery of darkness at the end of the day and the dawning of the new light. In the night the fields sleep, work is silent and still, the streets are empty except for prowling wickedness and the windows of home are blind. Then the sun rises. It is a parable of Jesus light in the world and also the light of his followers for he has the power to shine in them.

For the past week or so a song from the musical Godspell, which tells the story of Jesus life and ministry with a 60's kinda twist, has been running through my head. It says, "You are the light of the world, you are the light of the world. But the tallest candlestick ain't much good without a wick. You got to stay bright to be the light of the world. With Jesus as our wick we ARE the light of the world. And it takes all of our lights shining bright to light the city of God." And like the salt, the light must be useful. The song from Godspell goes on to say "so let your light so shine before men, or to the world, let your light so shine, so that they might know some kindness again, we all need help to feel fine, let's have some wine!"

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor does a man (or woman) light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand and it gives light to the whole house." What do you think that means, hiding your light under a bushel? Do you hide your light under a pretty and ornate lamp shade? Is the purpose of your light solely to bring beauty to the lamp? See, the lamp is not important, the light is everything, the light, coming from God, shines through the lamp to give glory to God. If we are the lamp that reflects God's light, we have to be able to be transparent so God's light has the opportunity to shine.

What is your bushel that hides the light? Perhaps God's light in you shines through music, but you are afraid to share it because you don't think you are good enough, BAM! Bushel basket. Or perhaps you have the gift of speaking or writing, or you are an artist, but don't recognize that it is a gift from God, so BAM bushel basket. Perhaps you are too busy or self absorbed to notice a mother in the parking lot struggling with a crying baby

and cart full of groceries, you could go help, but are afraid of what she might think, BAM bushel basket.

My friends, it is time to start living bushel free! Look at the world around you! Instead of despairing of all the darkness there is in the world, after all, there is only so much I can do, I am only one light, that bushel basket can be so comfortable and yet so overwhelming, I encourage you to peek out from underneath that basket and step out knowing you are not alone, knowing that your candlestick has at its very core a very strong wick, a wick so strong that a bushel basket can no longer contain it.

YOU are the light of the world! As for me, I pledge to you and hope you will join me in pledging:

In this next week I am going to live bushel free. I will look for opportunities to let my light shine to others. In the next few weeks you are going to be hearing of how our lights have been and will continue to “Squash the Darkness”. The children have been working on squashing the darkness and have come up with some wonderful ideas about how we can squash the darkness and make room for the light to shine. So kiddoes, how ‘bout that little light of ours? Are we gonna hide it under a bushel? NO! We’re gonna let it shine. Won’t you join us?