

## SALT and LIGHT

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way let your light shine before men, so they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16*

### **If Central Baptist Church left Invercargill, would we be missed?**

If we had a power cut tonight, I think I can safely say we would miss being able to turn a light on. We would want the light back.

Like that light, would the Invercargill community miss us and want us back if we were no longer here?

Let's look at the context: This scripture about is found near the start of the sermon on the mount. Jesus has been going throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. Healing every disease and sickness among the people. News about this man Jesus was spreading like wildfire.

He had a massive following. Jesus saw the crowds, so he walked up a hillside with his disciples close by him and started teaching.

Let's look at the significance of salt and light before we work out the how.

"There is nothing more useful than sun and salt." This was a phrase the Romans said in the time of Jesus.

Salt was connected in people's minds to 3 special qualities: purity, preservatives and how salt enhances the flavour of food. Over 2000 years later Jesus' metaphor of salt still makes sense to us today.

Light – Imagine what would the world be like without light? In Genesis 1 the first thing God did when he was creating: *And God said, "let there be light," and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness...*

Light illuminates, provides warmth and nourishment for plants to grow, and is also attractive (like moths to a flame).

The Big story of the Bible reminds us that we as individuals, and as church community, we are joining God in his mission to restore and reconcile the world back to himself.

In the Old Testament when God made his covenant promise with Abraham part of the promise was that God will bless all peoples on earth through him (Genesis 12). God chose one family to bless all families but throughout the OT we see Israel forget that ultimate purpose. God's big plan was not only to redeem Israel but all peoples through the coming messiah.

How often do we have the same short sightedness Israel had?

What happens if we forget the mission that God has invited us to be part of? What happens if we come to understand God's great love for us, the price Jesus paid for us and stop there. The danger is that we would become introspective and insular. Ultimately losing our effectiveness to be salt and light in the world around us.

Throughout the New Testament we see the unfolding of what God is inviting us into, the Kingdom of God being brought to earth as it is in heaven. **God did not create His Church to be a club that exists for itself but a movement that transforms this world with the Good News of Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit.**

A note about our calling to be light: "Jesus commands his followers to be what HE himself claimed to be. Jesus said in John 9:5 *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world"*.



When Jesus commanded His followers to be the lights of the world, he demanded nothing less than that they should be like Himself.” 118

Time and time again the Bible convinces us that good news and good deeds cannot be separated. They are like two wings on an aeroplane. The plane isn't going to get far at all if it only has one wing. Likewise, the Good News of Christ transforms how we live. What the Holy Spirit is doing inside of us then naturally flows out of us in out in tangible, practical ways.

The book of James thoroughly drives home this point. In chapter 2 it says: *“Suppose a brother or a sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to them, “Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,” but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead.”*

So, where do we begin? By serving.

Serving is a critical way we can put our faith in action. We are to serve each other and our city not for any other reason than blessing it. However, there are some flow on effects: it builds relationship and trust with people and out of relationship comes opportunity to have genuine faith conversations.

I am encouraging us all to just look down at your feet and start there. Serving starts wherever our feet are placed. Currently that is in our homes. And that is a great place to start. Eventually the levels will go down and we will be all around Invercargill, at school, work, sports and other activities. These are the places we are to be that salt and light.

#### **Action Points:**

As well as Serving the City together in a few weeks' time, we can all be thinking of ways to be salt and light through serving.

Where there is darkness in the world around you.

Where has God already placed your feet?

Ask the Holy Spirit to show ways you can serve in those places.



**CENTRAL BAPTIST**

LOVE GOD : LOVE OTHERS