Take your Bibles with me and turn to Matthew 5. Matthew 5.

Today is January 1, 2023. It's the first day of a new year and it's a Sunday. I think that's significant. It's also a bonus Sunday. We have 53 Sundays this year. So I wanted to do something a little different with my message this morning and give our church a challenge for 2023.

Are you at Matthew 5? Let's read verses 1-16.

Bible

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto 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 they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Blessed

are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed

are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.

Blessed

are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

Blessed

are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.

Blessed

are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed

are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

<u>Matthew 5:1-16 - KJV</u>

This is one of my favorite passages of scripture. It's the first recorded teaching of Jesus in the whole Bible and I think it's foundational

teaching for the Christian life. Years ago when I first came here I made sure this was one of the first things I preached through. I just love these verses.

The first part of this is called the beatitudes. I really want to focus on the second section, verses 13-16, but let me quickly give you an overview of what I believe Jesus is teaching in the beatitudes:

I believe that Jesus is describing **conversion** there. All a person has to do to be saved is to look to the lamb of God. All a person has to be saved is to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. Then a person is converted.

There is no gauntlet. There is no checklist. It's simply "accept Christ's free gift to you in faith."

But when a person truly does that they are converted. They are changed. And I think Jesus is using these first words of his teaching to describe what that looks like:

- Poor in spirit when a person is converted they realize they have nothing to offer God.
- Mourn when a person is converted they realize they have a sin debt and mourn that.
- Meek when a person is converted, they are willing to do whatever God wants them to do for salvation. They are willing to let God have control.
- Hunger and thirst after righteousness when a person is saved they realize they
 aren't righteous and they desire
 righteousness they don't have.

All these you could say happen to a person before they are converted, or before a person is saved. They are part of the process of believing. Now, this could happen in an instant. It could happen in a minute. The person might not realize any of this stuff. But under the surface this is happening as they come to Christ.

The next beatitudes show the result of that faith...

- Merciful when we trust Christ and get saved, we are given amazing mercy. We are going to pay that forward and show mercy to others.
- Pure in heart when we trust Christ and are converted, our relationship to sin changes. We want to keep our heart right with God.
- Peacemakers when we trust Christ and are converted, we have peace with God and we want to see others have that peace.

Do you see it? Isn't that awesome. God changes us through the faith.

The last two beatitudes describe how the world treats someone who has been converted. It says we will be persecuted and we will be reviled.

So that is the beatitudes. Now, I want to get to the main thing I want to preach on this morning

which is verses 13-16. Let me read those again.

Bible

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-16 - KJV

Now, there are three points I want to make from this about what happens when we trust Christ and get saved. The first point is this...

1. When we are saved, we become different.

Salt is different. It's a unique material.

If you are into cooking, you know that salt is the key to flavor. Unlike any substance on earth, salt does things to food. Ever got McDonald's french fries without salt on them? They are disgusting. But with salt - one of the most addicting substances known to man.

Jesus said we are the salt of the earth. The world around us is rotting. The world around us is flavorless. We are the salt. Those two things aren't just different, they are opposites.

Then Jesus said we are the light of the world. The world is in darkness. We are the light.

You can't get more different than light and dark. They are opposites. They are literally yin and yang. ("Yin" means dark, "yang" means light.)

Before we trusted Christ, we were darkness. Before Christ, we were darkness.

Ephesians 5:8 says:

Bible

For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

Ephesians 5:8 - KJV

The point is that we are different. God has changed us.

So point 1: when we are saved, we become different. The second thing I want you to see from these verses is this...

2. When we are saved, we become useful.

Salt is useful. Salt flavors food. Probably more important in Bible times, salt preserves food. You can take meat or vegetables that would spoil very quickly and add a lot of salt to them and preserve them for a long time.

Light is useful. We need light to see. We need light so we aren't all stumbling around in darkness. We need light so we don't ram our cars into trees. We need light so we don't step on legos in the middle of the night.

When Jesus said we are now salt and light, He was implying that we are now useful.

Let me me tell you this - **this world needs Christians**. Look around sometime. Think about all of the awful changes coming down the pike. Think about, for instance, how many anti-God and anti-common sense things are being pushed in the schools and the universities.

A few weeks ago Cambridge dictionary updated the definitions of man and woman to include "people who identify as a male" and "people

who identify as a female." We have groups openly advocating bringing children to drag shows.

Listen - that's not just happening in Boston and Los Angeles. That's happening here. That's happening in our back yard.

It sure seems like things are going crazy. In 1996 Robert Bork wrote the book Slouching Towards Gomorra. That was 27 years ago, we aren't slouching towards Gomorra anymore, we are running towards it.

What is going to stop this trend? What is going to slow it down? Christians. Christians being Christians. Christians being salty. Christians being salt and light.

How are people going to find their way to Jesus? We need Christians who will be the light. Who will hold the light high. Who will be a bold witness. We need Christians to preserve and light our nation, to preserve and light our area, to preserve and light our families.

But listen, that doesn't just happen. And that brings me to my third point.

- When we are saved we become different.
- When we are saved we become useful.

The third point is...

3. We must be deliberate about being used.

Jesus said that the salt can lose it's savor. Salt can lose it's saltiness. Salt can become useless.

We certainly are in danger as Christians of losing our saltiness. We are in danger of becoming just like the world we are supposed to be preserving.

In college there were several phrases that were drilled into my head and one of them was this:

In order to make a difference you must be different. Nothing is made better by adding more of the same.

So we need to be the Christians that God has changed us into. We need to put on the new man. We need to walk in the spirit. We need to be separate from the world.

But there is another aspect of being used and fulfilling our purpose that I think we need to give some attention to...

You see, there are two ways for salt to not fulfill it's purpose:

Salt that has lost it's savor is useless. Salt that has lost it's saltiness is useless. I've already covered that.

But the second way salt can not fulfill it's purpose is to spend all it's time in the salt shaker. In order for salt to fulfill it's purpose, it has to get out of it's shaker and actually touch the meat.

Listen, I'm thankful for our church. I'm thankful for our church family. I really am. But if we spend all of our time inside of these walls and talking to these people - how are we going to be salt to the earth? The salt has to touch the meat.

This goes for our function as light too. Jesus said that we need to put the light on a candlestick. In order for the light to be useful, then it needs to be visible. The world needs to be able to see it.

If we spend all of our time hiding in the bushel of the church - we might end up with a really bright church, but is the light visible?

I told you at the beginning of the message that I wanted to challenge you today. I want to give the church a new years resolution.

We need to get out of the shaker. We need to put this light on a bushel. We need to stop being so insular and start working to reach people. We need to become a church that has a

heart for our city and a heart for the people around us.

Listen,

- today within a mile of here there are people who don't know Jesus.
- Today, in our city there is a family about to implode.
- Today, in our city there are parents who don't know what to do with their kids.
- Today, in our city there are people that need to hear the gospel.

Do you know what they need? They need to see Christians. They need to feel the salt. The need to see the light.

So as a church, I think we need to make this a focus in 2023. How do we get out of the four walls of Bible Baptist and get where the people are? How do we as individuals and as a church reach more people for Jesus Christ?

And I want to give you a confession: This is not my strong suit. I'm a shy introvert. I'm very comfortable in my office typing on a keyboard. My goal for myself this year is to be a better Christian when it comes to being a light and a better pastor when it comes to getting our church out there.

Now, let me close by talking about something many of you may have never even heard of. We have something called a church covenant. It's a list of promises we make to each other about how we will behave as individuals. For the last couple of months, I've been preaching through it on Sunday Evenings a line at a time.

This next thing I was scheduled to preach on was this promise:

We engage to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

As members of Bible Baptist Church, we need to be zealous about advancing God's kingdom.

Not advancing our church. Not filling our church rolls. But filling the rolls of heaven.

Jesus left the church with this command:

Bible

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:19-20 - KJV

That is why the church exists. It exists to preach the gospel and to teach converts.

So let me close by asking you - are you zealous to see God's kingdom expanded? Do you know what would make us forget the news? If we saw people regularly coming to Christ and getting

baptized. It's impossible as a Christian to be pessimistic when you see that God is still saving people.

Let's advance God's kingdom this year. Let's be salt that touches the meat. Let's be light on a candlestick. God has changed and us made us useful. Let's be used by Him.

I'm going to ask the pianist to come and play and as she plays through the first verse, will you pray with me silently in your seat that God will use you this year to advance His kingdom? Will you pray that God will use you as salt and light this year?

Pray silently with me as she plays the first verse. Then we will close in a song.