

THE BIG IDEA: We are different. We're called to make a difference.The Take-Off

As we leave the Beatitudes and the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, I need to highlight a very crucial fact. Jesus has laid the foundation of the message firmly on identity - on who we are.

Almost all of the remaining messages - if not all of them - will deal with activity - with what we do.

Do not let the amount of time spent on each confuse you about which of them is the most important.

Identity fuels activity.

Say that with me: identity fuels activity.

We are who Jesus says we are in the Beatitudes and because of that, we can do what He's going to call us to do.

We aren't because we do; rather, we do because we are.

That's so important because if we get that backwards, the greatest sermon becomes the greatest burden.

That's not what Jesus had in mind over the next 3 chapters.

His message is clear: because of who you are, these are things you'll do.

We're different because of Jesus, y'all.

2 Cor. 5:17 is simple and powerful: if we're in Christ, we're a new creation. The old IS gone. The new HAS come.

And so what Jesus describes over the next 3 chapters is a revolutionary lifestyle that has the power to literally change cities and cultures all around us.

But it only happens as fruit growing out from new roots, not as duties completed in hopes of looking new.

These are characteristics of a believer more than a checklist for a believer.

Make sense?

In other words, we don't make a difference by trying to look different or be separate.

We make a difference because we ARE different.

Let's say it like this for the Big Idea: **We are different. We're called to make a difference.**

As we jump into the next 4 verses in Matthew 5, I think that will become even more clear.

Matthew 5:13-16 (NLT)

Before we jump into these verses in more depth, let me just say this: I love the simplicity of Jesus - He could have used lofty, over-the-top comparisons to describe the kingdom, but instead chose 2 of the most common objects: salt and light. These were items that were used every day, and Jesus took the common and tied it to the sacred.

For any of us here who feel common, that's good news.

1 Cor. 1:27 reminds us that God uses foolish (or simple) things to reveal His wisdom.

As a "commoner" this gives me hope! I pray it gives you hope, too.

1. We are salt. We're called to be salty.

- a. What we're going to find in these verses is that Jesus follows the same pattern twice.
- b. He tells us who we are and then tells us what we're called to do.
- c. Verse 13 / We are salt - this is an identity statement - who we are
- d. But it isn't enough to just be salt - **we're called to be salty**
- e. Salt DOES stuff!
 - It creates thirst
 - It adds flavor
 - It prevents muscle cramps
 - I've learned this again and again in ever marathon I've run
 - Cramps are the worst and make it very hard to function
 - Cramps happen when a muscle can't relax - salt helps prevent that
 - That's odd, isn't it, because I bet most people in the world actually DON'T relax around Christians
 - It can at times seem like we're the anti-salt!
- f. All of those are true, but in the days that Jesus taught this, salt as a preservative would have been the most common use
 - It took a lot of salt to preserve meat without refrigeration, so they couldn't use it as a luxury like us
 - They used it to prevent the decay of meat
 - **[IMAGES / Stinky meat]**

- g. We're called to slow down and at times prevent the corruption and moral decay in culture
- h. This was such a big deal to Jesus that He said we'd be thrown out if we lose our saltiness!
- i. This isn't as much about losing our salvation as it is about losing our effectiveness at being salty
- j. Let's talk about losing our flavor or saltiness
 - It's actually scientifically impossible for salt to lose its saltiness
 - It never actually becomes "less salt" - but if mixed with impurities it would become useless as a preservative
 - It still looks like salt, but it's useless
 - Christians who become contaminated by the impurities of the world, however, they lose their ability to preserve or restrain anything. They may look like Christians, but their influence for good is gone.
- k. **It's not enough to be salt. We've got to be salty.**

2. We are light. We're called to be seen.

- a. In verse 14, Jesus follows the same pattern by telling us who we are and then what we're to do.
- b. **We are light. We're called to be seen.**
- c. Think about what light can do:
 - It can give direction
 - It can provide comfort (night light, anyone?)
- d. But the number one thing light does is reveal
- e. It reveals hidden things
- f. Jesus makes it clear that our good works are the light and that they reveal the Father to a world that until then hasn't seen Him (just like a lamp under a bowl can't reveal what's already in the room)
- g. The phrase "good deeds" is a general expression that covers everything Christians say and do because they are Christians, every outward and visible mark of faith, including the testimony of their words
- h. They are practical, visible deeds of compassion. When people see these, Jesus said, they will glorify God, for they embody the good news of his love that we proclaim. Without them our gospel loses its credibility and God loses His honor.
- i. **It's not enough to be light. We've got to be seen.**

The Landing

As we land this one, let me give you a practical example of what it looks like when we decide to get lit and be salty
Y'all know that we just wrapped up The Big Give and it ended up being The Really, Really, Really, Really Big Give
Total came to \$10,194.70 - 2.5 times bigger than any previous year!!

As good as that is, if all we do is celebrate what we gave, then we're shining light in light and oversalting food!

We were able to do so much for so many! We paid 31 power bills and still had money to do more than we expected!

But as good as all that is, the proof of verse 16 came when Angela went to a power company to pay bills and watched
the lady at the customer service desk tear up when she heard why Angela was there. As they got the account
numbers lined up, the joy for this woman grew and eventually the whole place was excited!

Let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father!

We are different. We're called to make a difference.

So GO MAD! Go Make A Difference!

Let's pray.