

Kingdom Citizenship, Part 2

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[0 : 00] We return to our study at the end of the Beatitudes, looking at salt and light.

And today we conclude our section on light in Matthew chapter 5, verses 13 to 16. Let's pray. Father, thank you for raising up new leaders in our church. And we know you will raise up more. And we thank you for their service even now as they begin officially. Thank you. They've already been serving. Thank you for showing us who they were because of their service already to our church. And we praise you that they will serve even more. Protect them. Watch over them and keep them, Lord. As now you've set them apart for this work, we know the enemy will try. And test them.

[1 : 01] But we know you will protect them. May their faith be in Jesus. May they be grounded in the truth. And may they find good fellowship with their brothers and sisters who serve with them.

Father, bless your word now as we come to hear your voice that we might know what it means to influence those around us for the good news and the glory of our Savior, Jesus. May the light shine. May the light shine. Use us. Fill us with your spirit. Teach us. Empower us. May the light shine.

Use your unworthy servant now to proclaim your word in a way that your people can hear and understand. And may your spirit move upon us. In Jesus' name.

Amen. Matthew 5, 13 through 16. Once again. You. This is emphatic.

[2 : 08] You and only 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 trampled under people's feet.

You and only you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand.

And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others. So that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

That is the word of the Lord. Thank you. Please be seated. Thank you, praise team. Thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Thank you so. You become an influencer. Much better than the ones on social media. For you are influencing people for the sake of Christ and his kingdom.

[3 : 45] Not for your own glory, but for his. And for their good. That's how God wants to use you. You don't run from the culture.

But we engage the culture in love and holiness through faith in Jesus. You bear witness. That's what we're really talking about here.

You bear witness through your kingdom character, including being persecuted. You bear witness to the reality of Jesus.

So let me just say, light it up. Light it up, folks. So that's what we saw, that God is light.

His presence, meaning his presence is glorious, bright, revealing, holy, brings truth. And then by the gospel of Jesus working in us through the power of the Holy Spirit, he creates a people who are being transformed into his light.

[4 : 54] His people now are light. Christ's light in us. We don't reflect Christ's light.

We are Christ's light. And we display that by doing that which is right, good, and true.

As you saw in Ephesians in his sight. We seek to know his will so that we might do it. This is what light does. I want to elaborate.

Our Lord is going to elaborate on this by giving us two examples of how light is effective. The first thing I want you to notice is kingdom light is not meant to be hidden.

Notice what our Lord says here. I mean, you've read this many times, but you see it. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

[5 : 53] Now, why would he say that? Because in the ancient world, cities were places of light. In those days, they were usually built, if possible, on an elevated place.

It was more defensible. It was more defensible, but also at night, when lit up by torches and lanterns. These cities were very visible.

You knew the way home because you could just follow the light of the city. Outside of the city, the people were in darkness.

They didn't have street lamps. So if you were not in the city, if you lived outside of the city, at night, you would find yourself in great deep darkness. This picture of a bright city makes us think even of our modern cities sometimes.

I remember back in 2019, Sandy and I were privileged to be in Tokyo. And if you go to downtown Tokyo at night, you will be struck. I mean, struck by how lit up it is.

[6 : 59] The billboards and the signs are just bright and interactive. And they're doing, it's all, it's like a carnival in downtown Tokyo because of such bright lights.

You couldn't miss it. It was like noon. It was so bright. Downtown Tokyo could not be hidden.

A city could not be hidden. No, that people want to hide it. Who would want to hide a city? The same is true for our Lord's people.

Why would you want to hide? The illustration Jesus gives is he intentionally makes it, doesn't make any sense. Why would anyone want to hide a city?

The next example of light. When a person lit a lamp, they would raise it up because the height allowed more light to fill the house.

[8 : 11] Putting a lamp, maybe a kerosene lamp, oil lamp of some type, or even a candle. Putting it under a basket, like a thick wicker basket, or even a bowl.

Putting it under something like that would be foolish and silly. Who would do that? Who would light a lamp or a candle only to cover it up?

When you do that, you're keeping the light from doing what it was made to do. Again, another nonsensical idea.

Jesus is saying, who would do that? You, he says. And it's emphatic. You and you alone.

There's no one else. There is no plan B. You, the disciples of Jesus, are the light of the world.

[9 : 15] Your kingdom light is not meant to be hidden. It ought not ever be hidden. Christ wants his people to shine for him in this world of deep darkness.

Now, that makes perfectly good sense, doesn't it? It's obvious, right? So why does he have to tell us?

It's a no-brainer. But why does he have to go through all this to tell us? Because like salt that loses its saltiness and becomes useless, some people who claim to be Christians decide to hide their claimed relationship to Jesus and become ineffective as witnesses.

Some people are ashamed or even fearful to be associated with Jesus because to be associated with Jesus in a world steeped in darkness will draw negative attention to you.

That's inconvenient. And in some places, it's also very dangerous. You see, bright light, you know this is true, bright lights make people very uncomfortable, especially when it's unexpected.

[10 : 47] Like, like you're in bed sleep. Somebody help me. And if you have kids, they come running in.

If you don't have kids, maybe somebody just wants you to get up. And what do they do? They flip the light switch.

And what do you do? Ah! The light! The light! I mean, it's like we're a bunch of vampires. Like, ah! The light! And it hurts.

It's annoying. It's painful. That bright light shining in your face. Kind of blinding. Like when, you ever remember the old camera with the flash bulbs and they would take a flash and you would see a blue dot.

Remember that dot? It would hit you in the eyes and you would see a blue dot for about 10, 20 seconds. It was painful. Blinding. Blinding. That's why on sunny days at the beach or wherever, we tend to wear sunglasses to shield our eyes from bright sunlight.

[12 : 03] We are told, are we not, never to look directly at the sun for too long. Because it can cause blindness or some kind of eye damage. You see, that's the nature of light.

Light not only reveals what is there, it can also damage and blind. Light hurts eyes that are not accustomed to it.

Light hurts eyes that are accustomed to darkness. You feel with me? Now, I'm going to geek out on you.

The Matrix. Okay? Let's go back in time. I know it seemed like a long time ago for those of us. But I loved it. The first movie, The Matrix, it was amazing.

I mean, Neo, the hero, he's unplugged from the false reality of the computer world called The Matrix. He had been living a lie.

[13 : 12] All the human beings in the world were actually sleep. And they were living by being connected to this computer program, The Matrix.

They were living in their heads. Bodies never moving. But living in their heads and their minds. What they thought was real.

But it wasn't real. When you got unplugged from that Matrix, like Neo, our hero, then you could finally see the truth.

You could finally see the light. You wake up. You wake up. And now you can see what's really going on around you. And it's not like The Matrix.

The Matrix, that's a dream world, as it were. It wasn't reality. You remember when Neo was awakened by his mentor and savior, Morpheus, played by, was it Fishburne?

[14 : 21] Lawrence Fishburne? Neo asked a very telling question. And he said, why do my eyes hurt? You remember?

He says, my eyes are hurting. What's going on? Why did it hurt so much? Morpheus said something very telling. He said, because you never used them before.

When you're asleep, when we're dead in sin, living in darkness, sometimes when God wakes us up, you're taken back.

But if you're not woke, if you're still asleep, you're living in a half-life.

You don't see reality fully. This ain't a movie now. I'm talking about life. Because this is real life, okay? But you don't see it fully.

[15 : 30] Something is missing in our understanding of reality until we know the Lord. Something is missing. You say, Pastor Kevin, what could be missing?

The knowledge of God. That God is real. That you are not a cosmic accident who happened to crawl out of the cosmic soup, grow legs, a brain, and arms and legs.

You're not an accident. See, that's the darkness. The darkness says, I'm an accident. I don't have any meaning or purpose other than what I can drum up for myself. Jesus is just a, if he lived, if he lived, he did.

That's how you see Jesus. Jesus. He's a great avatar or a great revolutionary or a great teacher or a great man.

But in the dark, you don't see him as a son of God. The eternal son of God. The word made flesh. The creator of everything that we see and know.

[16 : 42] You don't see him that way because you're in the dark. In that movie, The Matrix, you remember there was one guy named Cypher.

Cypher was part of Morpheus' crew. Do you remember him? You know what happened to him? He betrayed the whole group. Got most of them killed. Because Cypher wanted to be put back in The Matrix.

He wanted to go back to sleep. He wanted to live the fantasy. Listen, listen, because the fantasy to him was better than real life. How many people today choose the fantasy, whether it's especially online, the fantasy world of being online, sometimes, sometimes, the fantasy world of gaming?

Because reality is too much to bear. How many of our people are living as an avatar?

In basements. Plugged into The Matrix. Plugged in. Because to them, the darkness is better than the light.

[18 : 08] But. Here's what Jesus says about that. John 3, 19 to 21. This is the judgment. The light has come into the world.

And people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light.

Lest his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light. So that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

What makes the difference? We got someone better than Morpheus. We have a savior. Who lives in time and space. A savior who walked this world. Lived as one of us. Understands and sympathizes with each one of our hurts and areas of weakness.
[19 : 21] Not sin. But our areas of weakness. He knows what it means to be a weak human being. We have a savior like that.

Who went into the darkness. To bring us into the light. What makes the difference? Is this savior goes and snatches people out of the darkness. You didn't want to come. You didn't want to come. You were in the dark.

You had no way of knowing that anything better existed than what you had. Than what you could make for yourself. The darkness says it's all about me.

Get all I can. I got to make it happen. Me, me, me. That's the darkness. Notice. When you open. When your eyes are opened by the light of the world.

[20 : 25] You recognize. That it's not about you. You recognize you can't save yourself. You recognize that all your efforts will only end in futility.

You recognize that life is hard. And you might not make it. You recognize how tough things really are.

And you say. Help me. And you cry out for help. To the only one who can help you. Not a higher power.

The power. The creative power. The sustaining power. When your eyes are opened by the light of the world. You cry out for his light.

And he will never turn anyone away. Who cries out to him. That's what makes the difference. Otherwise we would still love the darkness. We still live lives steeped in fear.

[21 : 33] Anxiety. Pain and suffering. And then you die. Oh. There's good times. Don't get me wrong. There's good. People have good times. Don't let me.

I'm not saying that people don't. But without Jesus. Those good times are short lived. Without Jesus.

You're still in the dark. And sometimes you really can't know. What a really good time is. Until the light's turned on. You see.

That's what we need. We need this truth. You can't please God. You can't make God love you. You can't do enough for God to make him save you. The light of the world says.

I've done it for you. I've done it all. Trust me. It's that simple isn't it? Trust me.

[22 : 31] But in the dark. You never trust yourself. But when you see the light. You recognize Jesus is the only one you should trust.

And he is eminently trustworthy. Light is an easy target in the darkness.

So have you chosen the easy path that leads to shame and worst case destruction by hiding your light? Are you willing to each day light it up?

Let Jesus light it up in you. Every day. Light it up, Lord. No matter what it means. Lord Jesus light it up. We're afraid of suffering and pain.

There's some reality here. Hello. No one should like it. But you got to understand. Pressure actually causes more of Christ's light to be revealed in us.

[23 : 42] Let me give you some hope. Whatever you're going through. You're pain and suffering right now. As you trust in the light of the world. You will not be destroyed. He's going to show up even more in you.

I'm thinking of a passage. 2 Corinthians 4, 7 through 11. I've referred to this passage many times.

One of my favorite passages in all the Bible. We have this treasure, Paul says, in jars of clay.

To show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed. Perplexed but not driven to despair. Persecuted but not forsaken.

Struck down but not destroyed. Always carrying in the body the death of Jesus. So that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies.

Now get the image. Jars of clay. They would take their treasures, their jewels, whatever. In that time and place. And they would hide them in nondescript vases.

[24 : 47] This is pretty. It wouldn't be this pretty. It would be plain. Just something that you would never think anything in it would be worth anything. Maybe they put a plant on top of it like this.

But inside of that thing? Jewels. Coins. Whatever they thought was valuable. They put it inside something like that. Okay? Now here's the thing.

The treasure, if you were to go back and read that passage I just quoted. Above that, the treasure is the gospel. It's the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus.

That's Paul's statement. The treasure inside of us is the gospel. It's Christ in us. The light of the world in us. Now here's what happens. Pressure comes on your clay pot.

And what happens is the pots crack. Clay pots crack. Pressure is put on it. That pot begins to crack.

[25 : 47] Now we're not going to, he said not crushed, not destroyed. So it's not going to be destroyed. But your pot, your life, your humanity gets cracked.

And you're hurting, right? But see, here's the thing. When you're cracked, the light can shine out. When you're cracked.

See, if I were to put a candle inside of this and put little cracks in it, you would be to see light through it. Through the cracks. That's what happens. When the pressure comes on you.

You who are the light of the world in Christ Jesus. When pressure comes, you become crackpots. Welcome to my pain.

You become crackpots. But there's a light in you. And when you crack, but you're not destroyed. You're still standing. When you crack, but you're not crushed.

[26 : 45] When you crack, but you're not done. When you crack, then the light of Christ, the glory of Christ shines through you. Because what's holding you together is not you.

It's the power of Christ in you. So don't be afraid to say you're weak. Don't be afraid to say you're hurting.

Don't be afraid to admit it. Don't claim it, Pastor. Don't claim it. That's foolishness. Claim it. You sick. Tell the truth.

You're a light. Remember, tell the truth. I'm in pain. I need prayer. But you haven't fallen apart.

People will see the light. That's why Jesus ends it with this great statement. I'm going to close with this. He ends it by saying simply this. You know, I lost my page.

[27 : 47] Okay, here we go. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Let your light shine before others.

Let your light shine before others. Admit who you are. Admit it. Don't answer that. It's not the Lord. Admit it.

Admit it. Admit it. Admit it. Admit it. And give yourself to doing his will. Give yourself to doing good. Listen, the good that you do in Jesus' name points to him.

And people will give glory to the Father if they begin to see the light. You say, oh, but Pastor Kevin, isn't there a passage in Scripture that warns us about drawing attention to ourself?

Yes. Thank you for saying that. Matthew 6, 1. Jesus said, beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them.

[28 : 56] For then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. What's the difference between that and what he says here in chapter 5? Motive.

Motive. Motive. In chapter 6, the motive is for personal glory. Look at me. I give to the poor. Look at me.

I am so humble. I pray every day. Three hours a day. Look at me. I'm wonderful.

If you had known me years ago, you wouldn't like me. But now I'm wonderful. Look at me.

I speak so well. Listen, we've turned... I'm going to... Applaud. We've turned Christian leaders into superstars. Too often.

[29 : 59] Honor should be given. Yes, the Bible tells us. But superstardom? But superstardom?

Where guys go to the green room before they speak. And they come out. And these guys get big heads and millions of dollars poured in.

And things begin to happen in your lives. Why? Because it's about me. Look at me. I'm wonderful. I can write. I can speak. I can sing.

And... Jesus says, you have your reward. So what's the other motive? The motive he's talking about here. Pastor Billy, you're so wonderful.

Thank you so much for visiting our family. You really blessed our family. And Jesus used you. We were so encouraged. We were so in need of encouragement. And then Billy says, I'm so glad to hear that.

But any good you see in me, any benefit you receive from me, is because of Jesus. Jesus is doing the work. Listen, listen.

[31 : 02] It's not me. It's Jesus. And you see the difference? It's a big... It's a huge difference. So yes, we are to do good. We are commanded all...

I mean, the book of Titus, chapter 2 and 3. I'm going to read it right now, but you read it. Chapter 2 and 3. He keeps telling us, be zealous for good works. Give yourself to good works. Do all... In other words, do all the good you can, Christian. You were saved for this purpose that you might be light. That's why you're here. To be light. And you're light as you do good. In the name of Jesus. Do all the good you can. Don't you... Is there some place where right now you could do good for somebody? You know. Is there some place right now that God is putting on your heart right now and saying, that's a person you could do good to?

There's a family you could do good to. There's a widow you could do good to. There's a guy who's just coming off of drugs, coming out of jail. You could do good to.

[32 : 04] You think about it. They're all around you. Who are they? Let God use you. Whatever the good is that God lays on your heart to do, do it in the name of Jesus.

Yes, they will thank you. If they have any sense of humility, they will thank you. But that's your opportunity right there. Don't let it go. Don't just walk away and say, you're welcome, and walk away.

Stop for a second. I know. I know what you're thinking. Pastor Kevin, I don't know if I can do it. Yes, you can. But I'm an introvert. I don't care. God didn't give the Great Commission to extroverts only. Come on. We got friends who are psychiatrists who debunked the whole idea in Manchester. They debunked the whole idea of being extrovert and introvert.

It's just a way of limiting yourself. Both psychiatrists. Are they true? I don't know. But here's the thing. The Word of God is higher than your extroversion or introversion.

[33 : 12] Jesus will give you power. Ask Him to light it up in you. And you can tell that person who thanks you, hey, you're welcome.

I'm glad I could help. But let me tell you something. I don't even like people like you. But Jesus has worked in my heart.

Okay. Let me be honest. Okay. Okay. You set me up. Thank you. I'm in the South.

I didn't want to live in the South. My mother's from the South. My dad's from the South. The stories they told me about living in the South as African Americans under Jim Crow, if I told you, my mother was urinated on.

Sitting in the movie theater, white kids in the balcony, peeing on them, thinking it's funny. I didn't want to come to the South. Because I couldn't trust white people in the South.

[34 : 25] I thought you all were racist. Or the children are racist. Or the grandchildren are racist. Some of you know what I'm talking about. But God saved me.

He saved me. And I look at this congregation and I see my family. Look, I walk around this city and I see my family or people who could be my family.

Come on. And I've watched God treat me so well in this city over the last 12 years. He did it.

White people come up to me and say, oh, we love your jacket. Oh, we're this and that. I mean, thank you. I mean, look. You see, Jesus. Jesus does that.

So when I said, I didn't even like you. See, you thought I was joking. Jesus. Now I can't get enough of you.

[35 : 30] You're my family. You're my brothers and sisters. You're my mothers and sisters and fathers. And you're family. Whether you look like me or not, if you're in Christ, you're mine. And I want you in my life.

So when someone comes up to me and says, thank you. I can look to Jesus and say, I know you've done a work in me.

Maybe I won't tell them this story. Maybe I will, depending on who they are. But one thing that we can do. We don't do good just to do good. I've heard Christians say that.

Do good just to do good. Uh-uh. Whatever you do, in word or in deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

We never just do good, brothers and sisters. We always do it for his glory. We always do it in his name. We always do it that the light might shine and set people free.

[36 : 32] Who's in your life? Who are the people in your dorm? Hospitality. Another way of being in life. In your community. In your dorm. Be wise now. Especially if you're in dorms.

Be wise. But who can you love on? And show them God's goodness. It's a risk. Because remember, one of the marks of kingdom character is you'll be persecuted. Your good will be evil spoken of. But that's all right. Because Jesus sees. And he will reward you. He will exalt you in due time. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. Fear not. I think it was A.W. Towson who said, A fearful world.

A scared world needs a fearless church. A scared world needs a fearless church. And scared people need fearless people in the name of Jesus who will come into their lives and let the Lord light it up.

[37 : 42] Be that person, will you? Ask God to help you to be that person. Father, in Jesus' name, Lord, we would be light. We were darkness, Paul said.

But now we are light in the Lord. Help us to live as children of light. Help us to display the kingdom character of being poor in spirit. Being meek. Being hungry and thirsting at the righteousness. Being peacemakers. Oh, God, all of that. Help us to be pure in heart. All of that. May we live lives that show goodness. May we live lives that care about the hurt that other people have. And may we use us to bring healing, light, and salt to a bland and dark world. Use us, please. Don't let us hide.

And certainly don't let us be useless. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.