

JESUS ON ENGAGING THE WORLD (MATTHEW 5:13-16)

Video One

This section of Jesus' revolutionary Sermon on the Mount flows directly on from what has come before.

Jesus has just outlined his vision for the 'blessed' people of his kingdom:

He's said – the fortunate, flourishing people of his kingdom are those who are helpless. Because in his kingdom, they'll receive help.

And he's said – the fortunate, flourishing people of his kingdom are those who live for his kingdom today. Because one day, they'll be shown to have had their priorities right.

But now Jesus wants to turn our gaze outwards. To the influence these unlikely people will have in the world.

This passage is all about influence. You see it in the metaphors that Jesus chooses:

You are the salt of the earth. Salt spreads through the substance it's in. Flavouring, preserving, purifying.

You are the light of the world. The glow of a **town built on a hill** shines through the night's darkness for miles. A lamp in a home **gives light to everyone in the house.**

And in order to have this influence, his people will need to be different to the world around them. Salt is a different substance to the food it preserves or flavours. Light is the opposite of darkness.

As his people live differently to the world around them. As they embrace their neediness and weakness amongst a world of showy strength.

As they pursue justice and mercy and purity and peace, in a world that is so often lacking those things.

They will change the environments they find themselves in.

Jesus knew that his people would need this encouragement. In just the verse before, he's warned his people that living distinctively will be hard. His people will be **persecuted and accused of wrong** for living the way they do. They'll often look unimpressive and feel weak.

But if they keep living as salt and light before **others**, in the sight of others.

What will happen?

Jesus' metaphors are deliberately a bit mysterious.

Salt has many functions. Perhaps Jesus is saying that his people will preserve goodness and prevent decay. Or that they'll bring purity. Or bring a distinctive flavour. Or produce in people a thirst for the things of God. Perhaps he meant all of those things.

The same goes for light. Perhaps Jesus is saying that his people will bring clarity, or hope, or direction, to the communities they find themselves in.

But one thing that Jesus is clear on. His people will bring the light of salvation.

Jesus says, as the world watches his people's **good deeds**. Even when they feel weak. Even when it feels costly.

Those watching **may glorify your Father in heaven**. As they see the light, they may come to know the source of the light for themselves.