

# Still Shining Through Our Witness

## Matthew 5:13-20

### Introduction

Tonight, more than 125 million people will tune in to watch Super Bowl LX (60), a rematch from 10 years ago when the New England Patriots defeated the Seattle Seahawks 28-24. I plan to be one of those 125 million people.

- Another 67,000 will be there in person. I will not be one of those people.
  - As of Friday, January 30, the average purchase price for a Super Bowl ticket is \$7,694. That might sound high, but it is only 9% higher than it was last year.
  - Eggs are up 61%. But your Super Bowl ticket is only up 9%!

Now, imagine for a minute that you paid that \$7,694 so you could go to that game.

- And imagine that for nearly 3½ hours you watched as 22 men – 11 on each side of the ball – huddled together in a circle and ... talked. Just talked.
- They never broke the huddle. They never ran a play. No touchdowns. No tackles. They just stood in a circle and talked.
- You would want your money back, right? That's not what you paid for! The 67,000 people who will pay more than \$7500 a ticket will want to see more than a group of guys who get together and talk.
- They want see what difference all of that time in the huddle makes in the game itself. They want to see:

Does what happens in the huddle make a difference in the game?

Even if we don't know much about football, everyone knows that football is NOT about what happens in the huddle. When Sam Wyche was the coach of the Cincinnati Bengals, they even ran a no-huddle offense! Football is about what happens when the players break the huddle and play the game.

Likewise, the church is NOT about what we do when we gather here in our Sunday morning huddles. It has everything to do with what happens when we break the huddle and begin to play the game OUT THERE.

These remaining weeks leading up to our celebration of the Lenten season we are talking about how the light of Christ that is seen all throughout the Christmas story continues to shine after Christmas is over.

The Light of Christ is still shining!

We have seen already in this series that the Light of Christ continues to shine ...

- Every time someone says "yes" to the call of Jesus of their lives.
- In those moments when we broken, inadequate or just plain "can't do it anymore."

Today's text highlight for us how the Light of Christ shines brightly when we are out there playing the game, and that truth is particularly revealed in these two sentences:

You are the salt of the earth. (Matthew 5:13)

You are the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)

So ... what does this mean for us? Let me make three observations:

### **OBSERVATION #1: YOU ARE**

Pay close attention to the verb tense of those two statements:

You **are** the salt of the earth. (Matthew 5:13)

You **are** the light of the world. (Matthew 5:14)

You are. Not "you will be" or "you are in training to be." But "you are."

You know how sometimes when you are reading a familiar passage in the Bible and you have a thought that you never thought before? That happened to me with those two sentences. You ARE.

- My first thought was ...

This isn't an option. It is a reality.

It says: "You are." When you come to faith in Jesus Christ, there are few things that happen automatically, things over which you don't really have control. They just happen. For example:

- Your sins are forgiven (Romans 8:1)
- Your life is changed (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- You gain eternal life (Romans 6:23)
- You become a part of family of God – the church (Ephesians 4)
- You become salt and light (Matthew 5)

There is never a time when Jesus comes up to you and says "Hey, would you like to be salt and light?" Because you already ARE.

- I had to go to seminary to become a pastor.
- It would take training and practice to be an Olympian.
- The Seattle Seahawks and New England Patriots are football players. It took years of practice to get them to that point. Moms and dads took them to Pee-Wee football games, high school games. These players went to college and worked on their skills all year around in order to called a "Super Bowl player."

Likewise, you don't have to TRY to be salt and light. You just ARE.

## OBSERVATION #2: YOU WILL BE

Look at verse 14:

A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matthew 5:14)

The light of Christ in you cannot be hidden. We can try, and we often do. That's the warning of verse 15:

Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. (Matthew 5:15)

But even then the light in you leaks out.

- In our auxiliary kitchen here at Grace there is a pantry. Every once in a while someone will leave the light on in there after Sunday morning fellowship time. But I can see it shining under the crack at the bottom of the door.

Because Christ is in you, the light of Christ will shine through you!

I have kept a copy of every sermon I have ever preached. More than 47 years worth of them. Some day I will figure out what to do with them. But I went back to see what I preached on this text years ago. And in one sermon I preached back in 1982, I talked about how salt...

- Adds flavor to life
- Creates thirst for the Gospel
- And keeps from going bad.

And a light ...

- Gives direction
- Serves as a warning
- And even a tiny one makes a big difference.

44 years later, it is the same message. When you and I step out the huddle and up to the line of scrimmage, we will make a difference just by being there.

- One of the reasons we as a church are involved in so many outreach ministries is that we make a difference just by being there.

Whenever we have a worship service, I wear a collar. It's part of the garb, along with the alb, the stole, the pectoral cross. For the most part, I do not wear a collar any other day of the week. Some of my colleagues do. I choose not to.

- Unless.
- On more than one occasion, I know I will be somewhere or want something that is not readily available to the average lay person. When people see the collar, their level of cooperation increases significantly. *Oh, yes, Father!* They will say.

But you don't need to be a priest to experience that effect. As the light of Christ fills you, it leaks out around you and things around you change. Even if you don't DO anything, just by being there you are making a difference. (The ministry of presence.)

- Add a drop of white paint to a gallon of black paint, and the black paint is NOT as dark as it once was.

Because YOU ARE ... YOU WILL BE a difference maker wherever you go.

### **OBSERVATION #3: YOU SHOULD BE**

Look at verse 16:

In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

You might recognize that as one of the verses recited whenever we have a baptism. But it is more than a baptismal verse. This verse is the Christian's Super Bowl game. When we come out of our huddle this morning, this the play we are going to run. HUT, HUT HUT.

In the early 2000s, we were introduced to an animated series titled "The Care Bears." These teddy-bear like characters live in the Kingdom of Caring in a little town called "Care-a-Lot."

- Throughout the films and various TV series, various villains tried to rid the world of love and caring.
- But the Care Bears had a special weapon known as "The Care Bear Stare."
- These Care Bears would stand together and radiate light from their respective tummy symbols. These combine to form a ray of love and good cheer which can bring care and joy into the target's heart, break dark spells, or revive something that has been broken, wilted, or messed up.

It was really powerful. I would use it as a part of my parenting toolbox. Whenever one of the kids would respond to me with an "I don't care," I would stand up straight, thrust my chest out, and repeat "We Care. We Care." And peace and quiet would reign once again ... usually because that child would go to their room to get away from me.

As we do not have tummy symbols. We have the light of Christ in us, and we should use it. The verse says:

Let your light shine! (Matthew 5:16)

### **APPLICATION**

Charlie was a drunk. He understood that even before that night when he became a Christian in an evangelistic service at one of those inner city missions.

Before his conversion Charlie had gained quite a reputation as a tramp and alcoholic. Most people believed there was no hope for him. But on that night when he asked Jesus to forgive his sins, everything changed. Charlie became a new man.

In fact, he became the most caring person at that inner-city mission. He spent all his days there doing whatever needed to be done. There was never anything he was asked to do that he considered beneath him or that he refused to do. Whether it was cleaning up vomit left by some alcoholic or scrubbing toilets used by men who left them filthy, Charlie did it all with a heart of gratitude. He could be counted on to feed any man who wandered in off the streets and care for his needs when he was unable to care for himself.

One evening after the mission director delivered his evangelistic message to the usual crowd of solemn men with drooped heads, one of them came down to the altar and kneeled to pray, crying out to God to help him change.

That night a repentant drunk kept shouting, "O God make me like Charlie! Make me like Charlie! Make me like Charlie!"

The director of the mission leaned over and said, "Friend, wouldn't it be better if you prayed "Make me like Jesus" instead? After thinking about it for a few seconds, that drunk looked up the preacher and asked, "Is Jesus anything like Charlie?"

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Let your light shine..

Amen