

October 14, 2018

***"He who has ears, let him hear..."***



***"You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."***  
Matthew 5:13-16

Who are you? If you really want to have a humbling experience ask those who know you pretty well to answer that question. The answer that most of us might give to that question is probably not the answer that others would give about us. This was even true of our Lord. At the end of his ministry here on earth Jesus asked his disciples this question:

***"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."***  
Matthew 16:13-16

In his 'Sermon on the Mount' Jesus addresses this very issue. He explains who we are, or at least, who we are supposed to be. He says, ***"You are the salt of the earth." "You are the light of the world."*** I wonder if those would be the answers we would receive from those who know us well. Is that what they would say about us? "Oh Mike, he's the salt of the earth!" "Oh Mike, he's the light of the world." It would be nice to believe that those would be the answers given wouldn't it? But, in reality, few of us would be described in those ways, would we? Why not?

In these two very short parables our Master explains how we fail to be salt and light. He says, ***"...if salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?"*** The thing about salt is that all by itself it doesn't taste very good. Most of us would not eat a spoonful of plain salt, but all of us would eat several spoonfuls of salt on french fries or potato chips. The truth is, we like the way salt influences the taste of other foods, a lot.

Like salt, our lives as believers should be constantly influencing those around us. Our every word and our every action influences someone around us in some way. If we live Jesus before the world then our influence will impact our world for good. We will 'flavor' those around us with Jesus.

But we can also 'flavor' our world in negative ways. We can, and too often we do, leave a bad 'taste' through our words and actions; through our influence. We call this influence, reputation.

The thing is, the reputation we develop affects our influence. Keeping a good reputation is not easy and ruining a reputation is sadly, not very hard. If the reputation we have developed is not very good, how can we make it good again? It's pretty difficult to make that happen. We can become like salt that has lost its saltiness. We can make ourselves useless in the cause of Christ.

In the same way, Jesus says we are the light of the world. If Jesus lives in us he must, because of who he is, shine out. Like any light source, once it is turned on, he will produce light. But, it is possible to hide that light by covering its source. Of course that wouldn't make a lot of sense, would it? We would call that wasteful and it would be.

In the same way when we choose to follow Jesus and let him live in us he will produce his light through our lives. If he is really in us he must shine out. We can hide that light however. Our light can be hidden by our refusal to actively interact with those around us. Our light can be hidden in our homes and in our church buildings because we have no presence in our community. It is really not possible to let the light of Jesus shine into our communities if we keep it hidden in our hearts or our homes or our church buildings. When we take the love of Jesus to our world, then his light can shine.

So, if Jesus lives in us, we are the "*...salt of the earth...*" and we are "*...the light of the world...*" But, it is possible for us to lose our capacity to flavor our world by destroying our reputations. And, it is possible to hide our light by refusing to take it into our world. Are you living as salt and light? Am I?