

You Are

Matthew 5:13-16

Pastor James G. Buske ~ Lighthouse Youth Center ~ September 20, 2015

April 28th, 2006. This date will forever be etched into my memory. It was the first night that Lighthouse Youth Center opened its doors. My wife and two children had just moved 2000 miles cross country from Washington back to Wisconsin. We purchased a house and began the unending struggle to unpack and organize our home with two children under the age of three. And if that wasn't enough change and turmoil in my life, it was because I was called to start a brand new ministry, at least in our circles, an inner city after school program that reaches out to youth ages 10-18. Lighthouse's mission is to be "A beacon for Christ to the youth of the community."

I had only been at Lighthouse for two months when we opened our doors. Much of the planning for this program took place before I arrived on site. On our first Friday night that we were open, we were blessed to have four of the ten youth that I invited show up and check out us out. Three of the four were a pair of brothers and their sister – William, Dorean, and Tatyanna . It was a great opening night, we played games, ate dinner, looked at God's Word and just started to get to know each other. The following week I called their mom and asked if I could stop by for a visit. Mom said that it would be fine but it would have to be after 5:00 because a family counselor was stopping by to talk to the kids. The reason, to make a long story short, their aunt was abducted by her ex-boyfriend at gunpoint, dragged across the front yard in her pajamas and thrown into a car. The ex-boyfriend, drove around on the country roads near Mequon threatening to kill her if she didn't come back to him. She pleaded for her life and asked to be let go. After two hours, he pistol whipped her and dropped her off at her sisters house. When I called that morning there were police and detectives at their house. I arrived at 5:00, butterflies in my stomach, scared about where this was going to go, and how I could help. I rang the doorbell and Tatyanna answers the door with a glowing smile and excitedly blurts out, "Pastor Buske are we going to play catch phrase tomorrow night?" I was floored, this twelve year olds aunt was in the hospital under going tests, a family counselor was at their house speaking to them just moments ago, and the thing that this little girl wanted to know is if we were going to play a board game at the center the next night. It felt as if my jaw hit the floor, my heart sank deep into my chest and that's when it dawned on me that this was everyday life for many kids in the city. I caught my self thinking "what did I get myself into? What am I, a white kid from a farming community in rural Ixonia Wisconsin, doing in cross cultural urban work? What did I get myself into?"

What I want to share with you today from a portion of God's Holy Word is the answer and comfort to my doubts and fears and apprehensions, and why God has called me to serve as pastor at Lighthouse youth center. It is also the answer and comfort to your own personal ministry as you share your relationship with Jesus with the people you are close to. The answer and comfort is a simple promise that Jesus makes – "You are" Two simple word that say we are prepared for anything and everything, Jesus promises, "You are!"

Our text is found in Matthew chapter 5. Matthew 5-7 is Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. It is important that when we study these chapters to understand to whom Jesus is speaking to and what He is speaking about. Jesus is speaking to believers who know that they are justified, declared innocent by Jesus, and knowing there is only one way to heaven. Jesus is speaking about sanctification, a believer's life dedicated to him and service to him in love.

My fellow readers of God's word – What topics does Jesus speak about in the Sermon on the mount? The beatitudes, the law, murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, prayer, fasting, worry, judging others, heaven and Evangelism! Jesus gives us practical advice about our everyday lives and our walk with Him. Today we focus on evangelism, our responsibility and privilege to share Jesus. Jesus speaks about sharing the good news in two beautiful pictures – salt and light. Two elements that make a radical difference with what they come into contact with.

First of all, salt – **“You are the salt of the earth. But if the 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.”** Salt has two main purposes, they are? A preservative and a seasoning.

In biblical times, even a few generations ago, they didn't have a Maytag refrigerator with a water and ice dispenser on the door, no they needed something else to keep food preserved and it was salt. They would put their meat into salt bath and it would remain edible for months. And salt as a seasoning, we know what salt does to steak or a bland green vegetable or popcorn. They come alive! The steak melts in our mouth and it makes green beans edible and buttery salty popcorn becomes the perfect movie snack!

Now Jesus isn't talking about food preservation and preparation. He is using this beautiful picture to make a point about our lives. Let's draw the conclusion. How does Jesus' Word pass from one generation to another? Through His word and through us. Jesus says be a preserver. Take care of my word, spread my word, carry the Good news to the next generation. Season people as they come into contact with your Christian life. When people come into contact with you, they should get a salty taste. Uhm, salty! This person is different, they carry themselves differently, they control their tongue, they build others up at work, when things go wrong they can handle the situation. Uhm, salty! And that's your opportunity to preserve and season them. An opportunity to share your relationship with Jesus, and share your hope and strength.

The second picture is light -- **“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ 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.”** Light that's a pretty easy picture, it makes a dark area light up. Again in biblical days, they didn't throw a switch on a room lit up, no it was an oil lamp that chased the darkness away and enabled them to walk with out bumping into things. Where did they put the lamp? In closet? Under a bowl? No, in the middle of the room so that it's light could be seen and used by all. Get the point! Let your light shine. Isn't that the song we teach our little ones? This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. Live your life so that Jesus is a beacon for all to see. Jesus tells us in verse 16, **“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”**

The best part is Jesus' promise. You are – Jesus speaks to us and says, “You are, I made you that way when I called you to faith through my word! I prepared you as I strengthen you in my Word. Be salt and light!”

These two simple elements, salt and light make a radical difference to the things they come into contact. Add a little salt to steak it comes alive. When the power goes out at home and you light a candle, it's amazing the light one little flame can produce. Each of you have the ability to preserve, season, and light up a dark sinful bland world – it's Jesus! If a little can make such a difference, just think if we add a lot of salt and light. When we all work together, just think of the difference we can make on the world.

Example, what is the quirky element that you add when you are making chocolate chip cookies. It's salt. I remember the first time my younger brother Brad made cookies for the first time by himself. My brother

sets to work mixing the batter, my mom enters the kitchen, takes a finger sample, and runs to the sink and spits it out. Why? Brad added a quarter cup instead of a quarter teaspoon – it was enough salt for 72 batches of cookies. A lot makes even a bigger difference – Let's work together.

But what is the temptation? To hide our light or cut salt out of our diet. We do so when we choose to use the accepted vulgar language of our society. We hide our light when we cut out of work early and cheat our employer. We cut Jesus out of our lives choosing the pre-game over the bible class. We are tempted to hide our Christianity because we don't want to give offense, or simply don't want the attention, or are scared that the Gospel might work and produce a change in another person. May we turn to the cross of Christ, confess our weakness, our fear, our hesitation – our sins, and ask for his forgiveness. Then stand up straight knowing the burden of sin and guilt has been removed through our Saviors sacrifice. His pierced hands, beaten body, and thorn pierced brow, was sacrificed for you! He lived perfectly, was victorious and gives you His victory as your very own. You are freed. You are forgiven. You are family. You are salt and light! You are his good news bringers.

There are three “c” words that I think about as a walk my life as a Christian – Costly, Compassionate, Consistent. As we build relationships with the people we know they are watching us and that can be the greatest message that we send them about who we are and whose we are. Everybody is looking for solid relationships to fall back on, it is a human need. Be a Costly Christian – being a friend no matter what. Helping friends through the down and dirty times in life are often the best time for us to share the light of Christ. Be a Compassionate Christian – have a real desire to listen and help, being able to meet people where they are at and help them. It might be a meal, a helping hand, mentoring, or simply time. When we know where people are at we can help them with the Gospel. And be a Consistent Christian – be honest, be real, be an example, a model of Jesus.

Lighthouse is a safe structured place where youth can gather, learn, and most importantly be seasoned by solid Christian mentors. We have been open for over 9 years, we now have 2 campuses and hundreds of youth come through our facilities yearly. These youth are seasoned as they come into contact with these Christian mentors who let their light shine. Jesus is proclaimed in everything that we do. Over a hundred unchurched youth have attended Redemption's and Garden Homes Sunday morning service and Sunday school, and dozens have been added to God's Kingdom through the saving waters of Baptism. God is so good!

Change, turmoil, uneasiness, cultural differences, fear, they are nothing when we remember the promises of God. Jesus promises: You are . . . You are salt, You are Light. Dream big, pray, work together, God will do the rest! **“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” Amen.**