

# Being Representatives of Jesus

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 21 July 2019

Preacher: Jonathan Thomson

[ 0 : 00 ] Good evening, it's great to be here tonight and to open up this passage. This is a great passage, I've really enjoyed looking at it over the last wee while. So, as said, this is a Sermon on the Mount.

We've heard over the last two Sunday evenings that this sermon is Jesus, the radical king, proclaiming his radical kingdom. In case anyone hasn't been here, in the preceding chapters to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has been baptised by John, he's been tempted in the wilderness by the devil and has called his first few disciples to follow him.

It is at this point that we find Jesus teaching the disciples how they are to follow him. This announcement of God's kingdom is to transform the hearts of his disciples so that they can love God and their neighbour, including and especially their enemy.

If we are a follower of Christ here tonight, if we have accepted Jesus as Lord of our lives and as Saviour through the work of the cross, then this message tonight is for us.

If Christ is our King, then we are his subjects in his upside-down kingdom where all are invited and no members are privileged over any other. We are to live out the teachings of the Sermon in loving response to the work of the Lord Jesus on the cross, which has put us in the privileged position of being Christ's disciples.

[ 1 : 31 ] Sponsorship. Sponsorship is big money. In 2017-18, Federer, I've got a photo of him up here, he was ranked seventh in Forbes list of the world's highest paid athletes.

He earned \$77.2 million in earnings, and that included \$65 million in sponsorship. He is sponsored by Uniqlo.

That's the clothing brand that he wears, a Chinese brand. Mercedes-Benz, Lint, Rolex, Credit Suisse, and that's just naming a few. All of these top brands, they pay massive amounts of money for top sports people to represent them.

They choose based on who the person is, how they come across to people, and whether they'll represent their brand well. What Federer does, whether it's on the tennis court or in his personal life, affects what people think of Uniqlo.

Federer is their representative. He's got to wear their gear, he's got to talk about them, attend their events, and represent the values of the brand. Being a Christian means to be Christ-like.

[ 2 : 40 ] We represent Christ here on earth. What we say and do affects what people think of us, which in turn affects what people think about Jesus. The two go together.

This means that our values have to align with God's values. Our attitudes are to be aligned with God's attitudes, and our actions are to be what God would want us to do.

The passage we'll look at is all about being radically different in the world that we live in, in order to point people to God. We are to be God's representatives.

The question to start off with is, are you representing God in the way that he would want you to? Last week, Alistair spoke to us about blueprint for the Christian life, the Beatitudes, the characteristics of the Christian.

Tonight, we're going to look at salt and light, and how we are to be God's representatives on earth. Great. So, Jesus says in verse 13, if you want to keep it in front of you, that would be great.

[ 3 : 44 ] Jesus says that you are the salt of the earth, in verse 13. In order to try and understand this phrase, we need to put ourselves in the mind of those listening at the time. In Old Testament times, under the law, sacrifices were to be salted.

You can find that in Leviticus 2.13 later on, if you want to look that up. Now, Paul says in Romans 12, that Christians are to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God.

This means that we are to offer our lives conformed to his ways, and to live them out in the way that he teaches. We are to allow God to mold us, and use us however he chooses, and for his glory. Salt was also used as a sign of a covenant, or an agreement. Jesus established the new covenant by offering himself on the cross for our sins.

Jesus dealt with our sins once and for all, by being the perfect sacrifice. Hebrews describes Jesus as the guarantor of this better covenant. We are the beneficiaries of this new covenant as redeemed people who have been made right before our holy and righteous God.

[ 4 : 58 ] If you are here tonight, and you are not right with God, if you have not accepted Jesus as Savior, then you need to seriously consider these things. Why not speak to myself or someone else tonight about it?

And as Christians, we are to lovingly and willingly serve Jesus as those who have, undeservedly, been forgiven by grace. Ephesians 5 verse 1 to 2 says, Follow God's example therefore, as dearly loved children, and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us, and gave himself up for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Are you living your life as a living sacrifice? to God? As well as the thoughts that this image of salt would have about sacrifices and about covenants, those listening would also think about their everyday life and what they used salt for.

Now in Bible times, salt was the only way that they could preserve anything. In the modern world, refrigeration and freezing, we've lost this a little bit, but salt's still used in brining processes for meat and for fish, and it stops it going off, as well as being added into lots of different foods to increase the shelf life.

So we can still relate to this image. Now we are to be preservers of the gospel message in the world. We are to prevent the corruption of Jesus' message and of Christian values.

[ 6 : 30 ] In an increasingly liberal and secular society, Christian values are under threat from popular opinion as well as the laws of the land. We are called to defend our faith, standing up for what we believe in and our freedom to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

Are you standing up for what you believe in? Now salt also causes us to thirst. So that's good timing. We've all been there.

You're driving home after the evening service, you stop off at the local Chinese takeaway for a honey-shredded chili chicken, and then you wake up on a Monday morning and you feel like you've slept in the desert. Yeah?

Maybe just us. Anyway, we've all had the salty meal in the past, and for a while afterwards we find ourselves needing to drink a lot. Now we are called to make others thirsty for righteousness.

By our conduct in our day-to-day lives, others are to see that we have something different and that we are to make them thirsty for that. As Christians, we are to point others to Christ and the righteousness which comes through our saving faith in him.

[ 7 : 44 ] We do so by studying his word so that we can learn and live out his teachings. We can't live out his teachings unless we study and submit to them.

This is the importance of regular Bible reading and attendance at meetings such as this one where the Bible is taught or discussed. We need to learn Jesus' teachings to be conformed to them so that we can carry them out in our daily lives.

Are you causing others to thirst for righteousness? Salt also gives flavor. I once turned to Corey and said, I don't really get the whole salt thing. I hardly use it.

To which I got the reply, well, I put it in your food every day. You know, salt brings out the flavoring of the ingredients in order to make the whole meal better. I've been known to bake from time to time and almost every recipe has a bit of salt in it.

And this might seem strange in a sweet dish, but it's an integral part of the process to bring out the other flavors, whether it's vanilla or chocolate, whatever it may be. Now, we are to season conversations and situations with wisdom from God.

[ 8 : 53 ] We are to bring out God's love and mercy from the dealings we have with people in our day-to-day lives. Our deeds and words are to point people to the goodness of God, not of ourselves.

My sister, and you can't tell her this, but she once mixed up the salt and the sugar quantities in a cookie recipe. So we had one teaspoon of sugar and multiple tablespoons of salt.

And as you can imagine, as soon as we took a bite, we just spat it back out again. Now, we aren't to draw praise and attention to ourselves. You don't put salt in to taste it. But we are to be constantly pointing people to God.

We are to be representatives of the one who saves and who is truly good. Are you pointing people to God by your words and your deeds? It is at this point that we have a serious warning about the lives that we live.

The rest of verse 13 says, But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

[10:00] Nowadays, we eat a refined salt, which is pure. But in biblical times, salt was impure and it had little vegetable and earthy parts mixed in. And if the salty bits or the saltiness had been lost, then they would use this for roads and paths, a kind of equivalent of gravel.

This helps us to understand this image slightly better of salt that has lost its flavor. Now we are to take this as a serious warning. We are called, as Jesus' followers, to be salt, representing the new covenant, preserving, causing thirst and flavoring.

If we are not doing so, then we are not being subject to our king and following his teachings. If we are not true to our calling, then we are good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

If we are not true to our calling, then we will be trampled in the world as hypocritical, self-righteous people who do not practice what we preach. This is a serious warning and it should motivate us to radical change in our lives.

Jesus also says in verse 14 that you are the light of the world. Light in the Bible, it's often associated with goodness, righteousness and life.

[11:20] Whereas darkness in the Bible is often associated with evil, sin and death. We are to shine for Jesus in the world. In John 8 verse 12 we read, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. Jesus is the source of the light. We are the reflection of that light.

Have you ever thought about the moon? Following the moon theme of the week and of the day and of the walls. You know, the moon is just a grey lump of rock rotating around the earth. There is nothing of itself that is beautiful or gives any joy.

However, when the sun shines on it, it glows brightly and beautifully and it gives light to the earth during the night. We are like the moon. We have nothing bright or attractive about us on our own but with Jesus we have his light to share and to illuminate the darkness.

First of all, we need to realise that the world is a dark place. Darkness is the absence of light. As we look out into the world we can see that the world is a place without God.

[12:36] The world is a sinful place with many living without God and the peace that comes through our saving faith in him. The darkness is great. However, the smallest light can dispel the greatest of darkness.

I always remember as a child we would get power cuts during the night. The street lights would be out, the hall light would be off and the house would be pitch black. I would be blindly trying to find the door out of my room when my parents would come in holding a small torch or a candle and the whole room would light up with a warm glow.

This is how we are to be in the world. We are to go through life dispelling darkness and shedding light in the darkest of places. We are not strong in ourselves but by relying on Christ.

We can approach any situation with confidence and assurance. We do not just have a small light to shine though. We have the light shining through us of the very one who is light.

This truth should compel us to go out into the world as shining representatives of Christ. This is not saying that we are to be of the world joining in sinful activities and going along with the crowd.

[13:52] We are to conform to Jesus' ways not to the ways of the world. But on the other end of the scale we are not to shut ourselves off from the world and live in a Christian bubble.

We are to live in the world but be so different in the way that we live that people can't help but notice. Are you a shining representative of Christ? We are also drawn to think of light in natural terms as well.

You know light allows us to see the way. As city dwellers most of us there is very little darkness even in the depths of night. But if you take a trip out to the countryside you can appreciate real darkness.

If you're on a walk on a cloudy night you wouldn't be able to see a thing and you'd be stumbling and tripping on your foot. You know we are to shine for Jesus in our daily lives showing others the path and illuminating the way.

We are to show people who are still in darkness those who are not yet Christians the way that is good and true and leads to eternal life. We are to share the good news of Jesus with everyone we meet be it close friends, family or those who we are just passing by.

[ 15 : 08 ] God gives us opportunities to do so. We need to be brave enough to take them. A challenge might be to go away and pray for opportunities to show others who you encounter in your daily lives the way.

Furthermore we can help other Christians through our words and deeds. We can be shining examples of how to live in a world that is increasingly difficult to navigate and full of bumps in the road.

Are you praying for and taking opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with others? The rest of verse 14 and 15 if you want to look back is a warning not to hide our light.

It says a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lamp stand and it gives light to all who are in the house.

With this image I always think of Edinburgh Castle. I cycle to work near the bypass on the south side of the city and at one point I can look left back across the city and I can see cranes I can see tops of buildings you can see Arthur's seat but the one thing that always sticks out is the castle built on the crags above the city.

[ 16 : 23 ] You know Edinburgh Castle cannot be hidden it is there for all to see. This is our responsibility as guardians of the light. We are to shine forth into the world as witnesses of the one who is light.

As with the salt though this is not about us. Verse 16 says let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.

This is not saying that we are to be boastful and showy in what we do. We are to be representatives of God not advertisers of ourselves.

Further on in the sermon and I won't encroach on what someone will speak on in a few weeks but there's a warning not to do things so that others will see and give us praise. We should remember this as we seek to serve God in what we do.

Jesus he was the ultimate example of humility and meekness and it is his example that we should follow. Now you've probably heard many a story about a celebrity who's had their reputation tarnished.

[ 17 : 35 ] One of the ones that came to my mind was Lance Armstrong the infamous cyclist who was central of the biggest doping scandal in cycling history.

One day he was the most successful cyclist in the world. He was loved for his success but also his charitable work but the next day he was labelled a fraud and a liar who cheated his way to the top. Suddenly all the top brands they were all running away from him. They didn't want anything to do with him. And this isn't unique. Tiger Woods, Maria Sharapova, Mike Tyson all suffered the same fate.

These people were giving the brand a bad name by what they had done and how they had acted. They as representatives of the brand had tarnished it in an instant all the good work that had built up over many years.

We are representatives of Jesus reflecting his light into the world in word and deed. As we've heard over the last two weeks being a Christian is something that we behave as well as we believe.

[ 18 : 41 ] Being a Christian is about our attitudes and our actions. There are many well-known figures who are Christians and use their position to defend the Christian faith.

I recently heard Jeremy Balfour, MSP for Lothian, speak about living as a Christian in the political world. He has a history of making challenges in Parliament to motions and rulings which go against his faith.

He's a great example of someone who is doing what he can in the position that he has, albeit to the potential detriment of his career. Now there are many other examples that will come to your mind of Christians who are doing likewise.

Some of you might know that I'm part of the Edinburgh Street Pastors. In case people don't know what that is, every Friday night of the month and two Saturdays of the month, people from churches

all over Edinburgh go out into the streets between the hours of 11pm and 4am.

The tagline is listen, care and help, as that is what we are there to do. We go around seeing if anyone is in a difficult or a vulnerable situation. We're there for people who maybe just need someone to listen to them or people who need practical help.

[ 19 : 55 ] It might be finding lost friends, getting home safely or getting a warm drink for the cold night. As we meet people living on the streets or spilling out from pubs and clubs, the most common questions are who are you and why on earth are you here at this time of the night?

Once we explain who we are and why we do it, people are often amazed that it's a volunteer service and that we don't get anything out of it. We do it because as we go around Edinburgh we are shining the light of Jesus into the darkest of places and proclaiming that his kingdom come.

This is an example of being radically different in the world we live in. It's counter-cultural in today's society to give up your time and your resources in such a way to serve others.

But street pastors is just one example and I would also just add that good deeds are not just limited to Christians. Drew a few weeks ago he talked about how Basics Bank which is run by the church is such a great way to care for people holistically, physically and spiritually.

People here also volunteer with the Bethany Care van feeding the homeless or those who are struggling. CAP, Christians Against Poverty, also does great work across the country and many people come to faith through their work.

[ 21 : 21 ] Practically speaking it can be great to be part of groups who carry out such activities in a regular and organised fashion. However, we can be radically different and reflect the light of Christ in our daily lives whether that's at home, at work, or on the sports field.

We are to be salt and light representatives of Jesus through his power and for the glory of our Father in heaven.

There are many ways we can serve God and use our gifts and skills to witness for Jesus. This is our call. Will we take it up? It's too easy and I stress that I'm challenging myself here to sit and nod along when we hear from God's word and then not to put it into action.

But we need to act. We're God's representatives and we need to act accordingly. In the morning series recently we've been going through the Psalms and it's been great to hear how different hymns and choruses have really brought to light the passages that we've been studying.

And you know as I was thinking about this if you're going home and you're humming a tune I would like it to be this one and we all probably all sang it as we were a kid. It was This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine.

[ 22 : 41 ] This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine. This little light of mine I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. And then the second verse Jesus is the light I'm going to let him shine.

And it finishes let him shine. Let him shine. Let him shine. I'm just going to pray to close and then we'll we'll have some questions for us to discuss. God and Father we thank you for your word.

We thank you for the teachings of the Lord Jesus and how even though they were so many years ago they are so relevant to today's world and to us as we sit here tonight.

We pray that we will really take these things on board that we will think about this passage that we have looked at tonight and that as we go home we will put these things into action and that we will act and that we will live radical lives and really make a difference in the world that we live in.

That people will see that we are different and want to know why that is and that we will be representatives of Jesus no matter what we are doing or where we find ourselves. We pray that as we open up for a discussion that we will have good discussions and that you'll bless the rest of this evening.

[ 23 : 55 ] We pray this in Jesus name. Amen. We've got a couple of questions up there but if you just want to get a tea or a coffee if you want one first bring them back to your table and then in a few minutes if your table is back together again you can just discuss the questions.

So we've got how does the picture of the church as Jesus presents it here challenge us considering how we are often portrayed and the second one is what are some of the opportunities you have to be salt and light representatives of Jesus in your daily life.

and that I know you I know it I know I know