

Salt, Light, and Keeping the Law

Matthew 5:21-37

The Sixth Sunday after Pentecost, February 12, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Last Sunday your Lord told you that you are the salt of the earth. Last Sunday your Lord told you that you are the light of the world. Since you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world you bring life to the world.

Last Sunday your Lord told you that in order for you to bring life to the world you shall to keep the commandments. He told you that none of the commandments had changed.

In order to keep the commandments I explained to you how the meaning of the Law had stayed the same as when Moses gave it, but the things about which the Law was speaking had changed. For example God commands you to sacrifice the Lamb of God. In the Old Testament God was referring to animals that His people sacrificed. In the New Testament the commandment is the same and its meaning is the same, but the referent has changed. God is no longer referring to animals when He commands that the Lamb of God be sacrifice. He is now referring to Jesus and so Jesus was sacrificed when He died on the cross.

I also gave examples regarding the tabernacle and the priesthood. I could have given examples regarding the dietary laws of the Old Testament and the Sabbath Day, but we I chose to stick with what I stuck to.

But what about those commandments whose referents did not change? In other words what about those commandments in which the thing which God is referring to in the Old Testament is the same thing that God is referring to in the New Testament.

Your Lord takes today some examples of those kinds of commandments. The surprise today is that in order to let your light shine in the darkness, your light will shine beyond the righteousness of others. In order to be the salt of the earth, your saltiness will exceed the saltiness of others. To put it bluntly if you are the salt of the earth, you are going to stand out in contrast to the world. If you are the light of the world, you are going to shine out brighter than the darkness in which you are living.

Jesus then explains what this means in terms of keeping the commandments.

He says, You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be guilty in the judgment, but I say to you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be guilty in the judgment.

When it comes to keeping the commandments whose referent has not changed in order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world the disciples of Jesus are going to do better than the world around them. The world around you knows that murder is wrong. The vast majority of unbelievers keep the letter of the law not to murder. Therefore if you refrain from murder and do nothing beyond that, then you are not letting your light shine. You are putting it under a basket. In order to let your light shine you must do better than the world.

Therefore not only will you not murder, you will also not be angry with your brother. Since your Lord is speaking to His disciples when He makes this statement when He says, "your brother" He does not meet your blood brother, rather He means a fellow disciple. He is saying that one disciple of His will not be angry with another disciple of His. If one disciple of His is angry with another disciple of His, that disciple who is angry will answer in the judgment the same as he would answer if he had murdered his fellow disciple.

When the disciples of Jesus are not angry with each other, they are the salt of the earth. They are the light of the world. They go beyond the letter of the Law to keep its spirit. When you do this your light will shine beyond those who are in the world.

Furthermore in order to be the light of the world the disciples of Jesus will reconcile to each other. One of the ways in which they will do this is the following: if you are planning on attending the Divine Service and there you remember that a fellow disciple of Jesus has something against you, you will settle it before you attend the Divine Service. You will not wait for him to come and correct you. If you know that he has something against you, you will go to him. If your fellow disciple has something against you, that means that you have broken a commandment and it has harmed him in some way. It does not matter how big or small the commandment is in your eyes or his. All that matters is that he is aware of it. He has something against you.

If you do not, your fellow disciple will continue to hold it against you and you will suffer for it. You can deny that you are suffering. You can make it seem like it is his fault, but you are still suffer for it.

When your Lord commands you to be reconciled that means that you will go to him and confess the wrong that you did against him and request his forgiveness. When he forgives you, you are reconciled. At that point and in that situation you may attend the Divine Service.

When the disciples of Jesus reconcile to each other confessing their faults to one another and requesting forgiveness from each other, their light shines. They will stand out against a dark world and no one will be able to hide them.

Therefore it is not sufficient as the light of the world to merely keep the commandment forbidding adultery. The salt of the earth and the light of the world go beyond that. The salt of the earth and the light of the world do not even look at a woman in order to lust after her.

Therefore the salt of the earth do not go online and look at pornography. They do not subscribe to it to be delivered to their homes in whatever fashion it may come. But pornography is not the only way that lust occurs. Therefore the salt of the earth will not even make use of run of the mill television or images of women in order to lust. They will not have the Sports Illustrated Swimsuit edition or the Victoria's Secret catalog in order to lust. They will not desire to spend their time with women who dress in such a way to invite lust. And boys of the congregation the reason that girls dress in a suggestive fashion is because you give them attention when they do so. When you give such attention because they are dressed in a suggestive fashion, how are you any different than the world? Do not even the unbelievers do the same? And don't the unbelievers engage in the same practices that I have just described?

You are not unbelievers. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. If your right eye gives you a problem with lust, take it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye than have two eyes and be cast into hell. And next our Lord indicates that He does see all when He points out that if your right hand assists you in your lust, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one hand than to have two hands and be thrown into hell. And if you want to keep your hands and your eyes then throw the computer away. Cancel the internet service. Put accountability software on your computer that blocks lustful images. Cancel the subscription or the satellite or cable channel. Confess your sins and receive God's forgiveness.

You are the salt of the earth. When you do these things you will impart life to others. When you do these things, your light will shine.

Furthermore it is not sufficient as light of the world and the salt of the earth if you merely avoid adultery. You must avoid divorce as well. Since God joins a couple together when they are married they

are joined when they are married. The creator joins the married couple together into one flesh. The creator created them to be one flesh. Once they are one flesh they are one flesh. Therefore if someone divorces his wife he causes her to commit adultery. Our Lord speaks in ancient fashion. The reason that such a husband causes her to commit adultery is that she will have to find another husband in order to survive and as soon as she does that she is joined in one flesh with two different men, her first husband and her second. Furthermore, since a husband is joined to his wife in one flesh, if he divorces her and marries another it is adultery because now he is one flesh with two different women, his first wife and his second. The only exception to this that the Lord makes is if the divorce occurred because the first wife committed sexual immorality. The same commandments apply to women, but that is in Mark's Gospel and I am preaching on Matthew's Gospel today.

It is not sufficient for the light of the world and the salt of the earth merely to keep the promises that you make in the name of God. It is not sufficient that you swear in the name of God and keep your promise. Even the unbelievers swear in the name of God and keep their promises. Take some presidents as an example.

What makes salt stand out as salt against an unbelieving world is honesty. What makes light shine in a dark world is simple every day honesty. If your yes is yes and your no is no, you do not need to take an oath to God to confirm it. If you make a promise and keep it, why does the promise need to be made in the name of God?

If you are not honest, then everything that comes from you that is dishonest is from the devil. Satanic things pour forth from anyone who is not honest.

Therefore salt and light, it is best not to take oaths at all. You may if a higher authority requires it, but a higher authority should not need to require it from you. Your integrity should make it unnecessary and when it does, you are the light shining in a dark world. Your saltiness will stand out over against a dishonest and deceitful world that even lies to itself.

This is what it means to be salt and light. This is what your Lord commands in order for you to give life to the dead world that is around you. This is what it means to be that city that is set on a hill. And I guarantee you that when you do these things, you will not be able to be hidden.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.