

Last week, we began a new series on “The Sermon on The Mount”. And I’ve divided the sermon up into 11 weeks, so at our current rate of 3 Sundays a month, it’ll take nearly 4 months to get through it, and yet Jesus gave it in one message on the side of a hill. But there’s a lot in it.

Last Sunday, we learned about the beatitudes “**Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven**” and so on.... And we learned that all these beatitudes, are actually attributes of God’s character that He develops **in** us, **rather** than us **doing** stuff to be saved...

Citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven, are characterised by these attitudes of the heart.

And today, we’re going to be learning more about what it means to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And the way that we’re going about it today, is something that I rarely do. I usually preach on one big, continuous chunk of Scripture. But today, I’m going to be visiting 3 separate pieces of the one sermon of Jesus, to see how they inter-relate to each other.

So, let’s read them, and I want you to really be thinking, about how these go together.

Bible Readings: Matthew 5:13-16, 6:1-8, 16-18

A radio announcer in Los Angeles, about 30 minutes after a major earthquake, appealed to the listeners “The telephone company is urging people to please not use the telephone unless it is absolutely necessary, in order to keep the lines open for emergency use. We’ll be right back after this break to give away a pair of Phil Collins concert tickets to caller number 95”ⁱ

Don’t you just love contradictions????

If these readings we just had, were written by Michael Brumpton, most people would say, “He’s a fool – he’s contradicting himself.” First he’s saying, “Let all your works be seen by everybody, and then next thing he’s saying, don’t let anybody see your good works.”

Fortunately for you and I, Michael Brumpton didn’t write this, and while Michael Brumpton may be prone at times, to changing his mind, God isn’t, and certainly not in the space of half a sermon. And as these words are the words of the Lord, they are true and all true, all of the time. Therefore they don’t contradict.

So, let’s have a bit of a look, and let’s start with the latter reading first.

Chapter 6:1-8 and V16-18, basically says, when you do righteous acts, whether it’s giving to the poor, or if it’s praying, or if it’s fasting, do it for an audience of one...

When you do good stuff, don’t go drawing attention to yourself and what you’ve done, so that people will think “My,

what a good fellow he is.”, or “Wow, isn’t she great, what she’s done?...” Instead, when you do it, do it quietly. Do it without drawing attention to yourself. Do it modestly. In fact, do it in secret. Do it, for an audience of one. Your Heavenly Father will see what you do in secret, and He will reward you. If you do it for others to see, you’ll get an **earthly** reward – their recognition. But if you do good in such a way that only your Heavenly Father knows about it, then you’ll get a heavenly reward – the recognition of your Father in Heaven.

That..., is the economy of the Kingdom of Heaven – and it’s nothing like the economy of this world.

In a former job that I had, at times, we used to seek sponsorship from various companies and corporations. And whenever somebody was considering whether they would sponsor a certain event or initiative, the first question that we would always have to satisfy, is what recognition is in it for them? What sort of signage with their company name and logo, would be up for people to see? How big would it be? What sort of frontage would it have, so how many people would see it in a day?

It’s all about what sort of recognition is in it for them? How will **they** benefit by doing this good act?

*When you drive past the Royal Brisbane Hospital, the biggest sign there is a bright red one with the name “Clive Berghoffer” on it. He’s put a lot of money into cancer research. There’s no doubt about it – it was generous. He didn’t have to do it, but he chose to do it. The only problem is, he’s already received all the reward he’s going to get. He **has** the recognition of men, and that’s all he’s gonna get.*

I heard a story on the news a few years back, the US were giving food aid to try and win hearts in Iraq, and the news story was how the US were complaining because US donated food parcels were labelled UN, and not US. They wanted everyone to know it was them who were giving.

Everybody knows about Ronald McDonald house.

Thankfully plaques on furniture in churches “donated by so and so”, are becoming less common.... These are the ways of the world’s economy – not God’s economy.

A few years ago, the church I was involved with responded to the needs of the victims of the Victorian Bushfires. And we bought caravans to take down to them for people to live in until their homes were rebuilt.

Well, some how the ABC radio heard about it, and they rang me, and asked if I would do an interview with them, so they could tell the story of how this little country church, were doing their bit to help these folk out.

And I had an instant turmoil inside of me. “Yeah, if we let everybody know about this, they’re going to think we’re great, and it’s going to attract people to our church.”

And I said, “Jenny, thanks for the offer, but Jesus said, when you give to the needy, keep it between you and God. Don’t even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. So no, I’d prefer not to.”

The economy of the Kingdom of Heaven is a different economy to the one we’re used to.

Do your generous acts in secret. The fact that we will be generous is taken for granted, because that's the way of the Kingdom of Heaven, and that's the way of its citizens. It's **how** we do it that counts. Do it quietly, and don't bignote yourself.... God knows about it, and He's the only one that matters.

So, how does that fit with us being "Salt" and "Light"?

^{5:16}...let your light shine before men, that they may **see** your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

So, which is it? Do we hide it, or do we shout it out from the roof-tops? Which is it?

Well, one is about "being" and the other is about "doing". When you **do** good things, keep it between you and God – don't advertise what **you've** done, because then you get glory... But what you **are**, be **very** public about. Do not advertise what you have done, but **do** advertise what **God** has done.

If being a Christian was a crime, would there be enough evidence to convict you of it? Would there be witnesses to your confession to being a Christian? If you are a Christian – if you are a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ, be very public about that.

A few years back, I remember a Christian pop song about being a secret agent Christian.. (alright, it was a lot of years ago, and I couldn't even find it on the internet), But there are

a lot of us who are secret agent Christians..... And we're not meant to be secretive about what God has done for us. And that's what it means to let your light shine..

^{V13} **"You are the salt of the earth.**

The Beatitudes, which comes just before this, are about who we are. They're about who we **become**, when we are in Christ. And now Jesus says, **"You are the salt of the Earth."** What does that mean?

At one meeting some young people were discussing this text, ... One suggestion after another was made as to the meaning of "salt"

"Salt imparts a desirable flavour," said one.

"Salt preserves from decay," suggested another.

Then a Chinese Christian girl spoke out of an experience none of the others had. "Salt creates thirst," she said, and there was a sudden hush in the room. Everyone was thinking: Have I ever made anyone thirsty for the Lord Jesus Christ? ⁱⁱ

We could talk all day about what it means to be salt, but I think really, it's what Christ has made us. To be salt, means to be a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven – to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. ^{5:1}...when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His **disciples** came to him, ² and he began to teach **them**,

And it was to His disciples He said, “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.

For salt to lose its saltiness, is for disciples to lose their discipleness. It is for citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven to lose the character of the Kingdom of Heaven.... And then they're no good for anything but to be thrown out....

The scientist in me wants to ask “How can salt lose its saltiness?” NaCl (Sodium Chloride) is always sodium chloride.

I'll tell you how salt loses its saltiness – ... dilution... or contamination.

You very quickly know if you've forgotten to put the salt into the porridge. Eeww. Horrible, tasteless stuff. But if you make a pot of porridge to the right recipe, and then think, that's not enough, and then you add more porridge and more water, but no more salt, the salt that gives flavour, is diluted.

And if you as a Christian spend little time in the word, and hardly any time with other Christians, but spend a lot of time out in the world, your faith can very quickly become diluted.

The second way salt can lose its saltiness, is by contamination.

As a young fella, I used to shoot roos and skin them. And then in the old shearing shed, I'd salt the skins. When it came time to take the skins to town, I'd have an old tarp that I'd shake the salt out onto, so that I could use it again....

But after using that same salt 3 or 4 times, it just ended up one sticky, sluggish, bloody and fatty mess, that was no good for anything. It was contaminated.

And as Christians, if we stop living by kingdom principles, and start living a worldly life, we get contaminated and we lose our saltiness.

Salt – I love salt. I eat way too much of it. But it's supposed to be pure, white, yummy....

Disciples of Jesus Christ, are the salt of the earth, pure, clean, adding flavour..... Don't lose that.

But we're not only salt – disciples of Jesus Christ are light.
¹⁴ "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. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Light is only any good when it's visible. A hidden light is useless... What is this light? Where does it come from? Jesus.....

Who are we putting on display? Jesus. We are the light of the world, but where does that light come from? Jesus.

When we live with Kingdom values – when the very character of God, comes out in our character, who gets the glory? And why? ... God does, because it's about what we **are** – not what we do. You are a new creation of God.

When you **do** good things, that's between you and God.... But when you live by Kingdom values, that's not normal, and people **will** notice it.

You know, there's been times when I've met somebody and dealt with them, and I've thought to myself, "I wonder if this guy's a Christian?" Just his manner – his character – I wonder if he's a Christian.....

And there's been times where I've dealt with someone for years, and eventually I found out.... They are.... And here they are, they've been very secretive about it....

You **are** the light of the world. Shine the light that is Christ, in every quadrant of your world.

A lot of us put on our Christianity like we put on our suit:

- *Hmm, I'm going to church today. I'll put on my Christianity. And I'll be openly Christian today.*
- *Hmm, I'm visiting so and so today. They're nice people. I'll behave like a Christian, but I won't talk about it.*
- *Oww, but tomorrow is sheep work. I'm going to need to swear a lot. And I'll need to kick the dog. Hmm. No Christianity tomorrow.*

How often do we cover up our Christianity? ... It's just wrong. *I once had a really good spot light, and it was switched on, but it was sitting face down on the tray of the ute, and its Perspex face just melted....*

Let your light shine before men. Don't hide it. Be proud of your Saviour. Share the light to the whole world.

When people see Christ in you, that's when God gets the glory. And that's why, when we do good stuff, we don't want people to know that we've done it. Our job, is not to gain glory for ourselves, but to bring glory to God.... And your changed character, brings glory to God, **only** if you let people know what Christ has done in us.

Question / discussion time.

ⁱ 1001 more humorous illustrations for public speaking, Michael Hodgin. Zondervan 1998. P.48

ⁱⁱ Tan, P. L. 1996. *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*. Bible Communications, Inc.: Garland, TX