

Faithbook Series: God's Friend Request
Matthew 5:13-16
February 27, 2011

Jason Crabb video "Somebody Like Me"

Quite a scene from that video. The town drunk finally gets the nerve to come to church and seek help. But when he comes to the very people of faith who should reach out; they drawl back from him. It's a story as old as Christianity has been around. I believe that because of the words we hear from Matthew's gospel as we continue reading from the Sermon on the Mount.

Please stand for the reading of scripture.

The words of Jesus are for somebody like you and me to carry his message and carry him. Jesus said something to his disciples which he is really saying to us his church - he is defining the character of his believers. He teaches they are like salt and light. There are many directions we could go in unpacking all the symbolic meanings of salt and light. **I would rather us focus on this question. Why did Jesus mention salt and light together?** If he mentioned salt and meat you could make the connection. If he mentioned light and darkness they clearly go together; but what's the common ground between salt and light?

God calls us to make a difference

One thing salt and light both have in common is when they get used, they make a difference. You add salt to your food, it changes the taste. You turn on light in a dark room and you see better. One of the first things Jesus was telling his brand new disciples, the men he has just called and the crowds that had gathered early on in his ministry was that they are to be salt and light. **They are to make a difference in their everyday living. They are to make a difference so that others can discover God through them.**

Are we living daily as Christians and making a difference? Everyone has a unique finger print that belongs to you when you touch something. When we touch the lives of others everyday is an opportunity to leave the spiritual fingerprint of Jesus on their lives. We are to live as a congregation so that people in the community can see our church seeks to be a spiritual difference maker.

There are encouraging signs that we are. Now that the bad weather has ended we are seeing attendance on Wednesday nights pick back up amongst youth and adults. I have been told for the past two Wednesdays we have had a count of 40 or more here on Wednesdays enjoying the meal and then going to small group activities. That's hopeful sign. 40 people on Wednesday is over half what our attendance has been averaging on Sunday morning worship.

We are preparing a mailer to go out for inviting people in the community here for Easter Sunday. Maybe that is a first for this church to do in a while, but it is a way to tell the neighborhood we are trying to be salt and light we're trying to make a spiritual difference in Newbern.

Salt can lose its flavor, light can be hid

One thing we have to be careful about though is that when people come we truly have the joy and power of Jesus Christ flowing through us. I say this because Jesus taught that salt can loose its flavor. Salt can go flat, loose it's distinct taste, loose its power to preserve meats or heal wounds like salt was sometimes used.

Jesus said a light can be hid under a basket so the light cannot be seen - what a waste. Think how powerful of a point Jesus made in his day when lighting was a scarce resource. They didn't have flashlights, street lights along every street, lights in every room of

the house that you could just flip a switch or clap your hands and the lights came on. Light was scarce so if you had it, you used it; you didn't hide it.

But Jesus also knows our human tendency can be to withhold the good God shares freely with us. Like that music video where the very Christians who could reach out; instead held back. Or someone comes to visit in worship and they are allowed to sit by themselves. Or a relatively new person stays for a church meal, and no one invites them eat with members, and they eat by themselves.

Are you holding back in any way of being a difference maker? Jesus warned salt can lose its flavor. I don't know just how salt can lose its flavor. One possibility is that salt loses its flavor only when it is diluted by adding other seasonings or adding too much water. Our Christianity gets waters down when we are letting some influences have more leadership in our lives than Jesus Christ.

It's easier to get the point about the light. Light can be covered up. Some lights can be turned down to where they barely can be seen like our lights in the sanctuary.

Matthew alerts the church through the words of Jesus look out for anything that would water down your credibility as follower of Jesus. Don't let anything inspire you to hide the character of Jesus Christ in your life. And think about this. Jesus doesn't offer any exceptions either. **Let's remember that at the time Matthew writes this gospel, Christians were persecuted and harassed for following the unknown carpenter from Nazareth. Even though they we're living in tough times, they were to let their light shine to others.** No exceptions, if anything the game was on the challenge was laid out for them to be salt be light - be a difference maker.

It can be what we say or fail to say that causes us to not be the salt and light of Christ to others. It can be what we do or fail to do. It can be _____. You can fill in the blank.

But whatever it is we need to face it and grow through it because if Jesus didn't give his people an exception, we certainly cannot have any excuses either.

Be an influence of distinction - Share Christ in the opposite conditions of life.

Here is something else to think about. When Jesus calls his disciples to be salt and light he is calling them to mix into the situations of life that are the very opposite of who they are. I think there is a bit of an edge to his words. Salt is the very opposite of something bland like flour or meal. Ever tasted baking flour? Do it once and you won't have any desire to try it again. It just has no flavor. Jesus said be light. Light is the opposite of darkness.

It could very well be that Jesus means to say don't play it safe just being with people like you, people who already believe, people who share all your views. Mix it up a bit out there in the world. Get into a conversation with that person who doesn't believe what you believe. Have lunch with that family you have never met but you always seem them at school, the ball field, even at church. Stop and talk with the kid that is the loner or the employee that has the distinction of being "a problem." Or even add someone to your Facebook even though they aren't your friends, maybe you have been at odds.

I don't know much about cooking, and while Marlene has been away Daniel and I both have reaffirmed that truth, but I know this much salt with more salt is useless. But salt added to a little macaroni and cheese, or some turkey bacon frying in the skillet works pretty good. Light in a dark room prevents stubbing your

toe or tripping over the dog.

God is reminding the church/believers get out there in situations different from what we are and make a difference.

- Don't get watered down by their views.
- Don't become a part of the darkness that others are in, but let the character of Christ in you mix in with them.

Illustration: I recently read about a woman who did this as she was talking with a friend who was not a Christian and never made any specific religious claims. The woman who was a Christians just simply commented about something she had read in her morning devotion. She was just mixing a little salt a little light into the conversation.

The purpose in the difference we make is so that others can see God through us

Last point Jesus wants us to be salt and light so he can be seen through us. **Jesus said “let your light shine so others may see your good works and give glory to God.”** Any time there is talk about giving glory, the scripture is pointing to an experience where something is getting revealed. It means people can see or understand things about God that they have not been able to see before. **Jesus is challenging us to be light so people can see his light. It's sort of a double-decker sandwich of emphasis.**

And notice Jesus didn't say be salt and light and get someone to come to church. We want people to attend church worship, Sunday school and Wednesday night's etc. But that is just a means for them to really come to know Jesus Christ. Be salt and light so people experience God; not just going to a certain location.

As I have recently started using Facebook I see people on there that have been salt and the light in my life in many circumstances

and that didn't include being in a church building. I see family and friends who need the light of Christ brought to them before they will ever dare to walk into a church building.

I mentioned last week how on Facebook you start searching for people you know and you request them to add you on their friends list and then in most cases they click yes and now your friends on Facebook.

God through Jesus Christ on the Cross put out the most dynamic, powerful, passionate friend request to the world. God's request goes out to every nation, every color of skin, and every condition of life.

But here's the important point - His friend request is made through us as we are really striving to live genuinely as the salt and light of Jesus Christ. Those who watch our lives are more likely to accept God's request if we are the difference makers we're called to be.

When we worship be salt and light because people around us need inspiration for various reasons.

How we work, how we play - be salt and light.

How we face adversity and suffering - be salt and light.

Being salt and light is the calling of every Christian for somebody like you and me.