

## **THE CITY AND ITS CULTURE – The Kingdom of God (2)**

Christ came to establish not simply a church, but a Kingdom. Too often the church has failed to distinguish the Church from the Kingdom. While the Church is within the Kingdom of God and God's primary extending agent of the Kingdom, the Kingdom encompasses a broader vision of ministry encompassing the totality of the city and its culture. This Kingdom work is not to be against the city, nor is it to condone, but seeks to transform both city and culture. As 'Kingdom Saints' we believe that is our responsibility to winsomely and realistically engage, San Antonio – its beauty and ugliness – all for the glory of Christ.

**Read**            Matthew 5.13-16

### **Context & Meaning**

Salt and light...two powerful metaphors chosen by our Lord Jesus not only to describe our identity as his followers, but also to describe the nature of our influence, as his followers, in the world. In order to truly grapple with the power of these metaphors we must first find out what Jesus means by using them.

First then, what did Jesus mean when he said his followers were the salt of the earth? In Jesus' day salt was used as a vital preservative in order to keep meat from spoiling due to a lack of refrigeration. It's been said that meat properly salted could be preserved indefinitely. When no salt was used meat, through a rather unpleasant process, would simply decay into nothingness. Similarly, apart from the lives and actions of Christ's disciples the city and culture where we live will rot.

But we're also familiar with another property of salt, one that is much more familiar to us moderns. Salt preserves, but it also seasons. It gives zest to the food we eat. In a similar manner, Christians should bring a 'zest for life' into the areas in which they live. For too long, Christians have been plagued with the stigmata of being morose and dull, of being a people whose mere presence brings with it an air of 'no fun.' But contrary to this 'label,' Christ's followers should 'add something' to life (joy, celebration, gratitude), for they are the ones who have received abundant life in Jesus. Preservation and celebration, this is what it means for us to be the salt of the earth.

As for the other metaphor, light, like salt, is an indispensable thing. Without light all life would cease to exist. The purpose of light, as you are probably aware, is to dispel darkness in order to give life to those things within its rays. And like light, Christians, because they belong to THE Light of the world (John 8.12) are themselves set apart to shine Christ's life into this world darkened by sin (Phil. 2.15). They are to be like a city set upon a hill and like a lamp that gives light to an entire house. Through our words and actions we are to show forth Christ to those we're with and around on a daily basis trusting that as we do we are bringing glory to our Father in heaven (v.16)

## Apply

Do you want to preserve the ugliness of life? Do you feel the call to enter into its rotting parts: family, city, workplace? Do you have a passion to draw attention to Christ in all that you do as a light of Christ in the world?

These are the kinds of questions we should be wrestling with as individual followers of Jesus and as a church. Belonging to Christ means we *are* salt and light and have therefore been given the joyful responsibility of living lives that bring out the full meaning of these Jesus' chosen metaphors in our homes, neighborhoods, workplace and city.

Practically speaking, what does this look like for us as a church to be 'salt and light' in the city of San Antonio? It means being committed to the following.

- **Bringership** – we must be committed to exposing our unbelieving friends and co-workers to Christ by bringing them to church and other community related events in the life of the church.
- **Movement Mentality** – we must be committed to seeing ourselves as a Movement, a movement of God's Spirit within the city in order to bless the city. We've not been given the call to maintain, but to 'Go'.
- **Rubbing Shoulders** - we must be willing to engage in the lives of those we **rub shoulders** with on a daily basis. We must see it as our calling to build relationships with our neighbors and co-workers, and with any others that we regularly encounter. Being salt and light means taking seriously Jesus' command to 'be in the world, but not of it.'
- **Process Evangelism** – This means rather than seeing evangelism as simply 'crisis-oriented,' we see evangelism as possibly (more likely) taking place over the course of several weeks, months, or even years. Trusting that God is the one who saves, we are free to patiently expose others to Christ through multitude of ways – friendship, meeting needs, engaging in like-minded activities, etc...
- **Kingdom-Prayer** – This is most important, and it means practicing a prayer life that's less concerned about our own personal needs and is more and more concerned with Jesus' Kingdom, i.e. praying for those in our spheres of influence who don't know Christ and praying for the Church and its influence in the world.

Below are the many 'pathways' through which we as church seek to be salt and light:

- a. Worship
- b. Men and Women Bible Studies
- c. Newcomers Dessert at the Gibbs' Home
- d. Intro to Redeemer Class
- e. Community Groups

- f. Music, Arts and Holiday Celebrations (Redeemer Fine Arts Concert, Christmas Party)
- g. Community Events (Anniversary Celebration, Ice Cream Social, Redeemer in the Country, Redeemer in the Park, Fall Festival)
- h. Felt Needs Ministries (Guadalupe and Tobin Centers, CMDA, Agape Pregnancy Center, Christmas Food Basket Distribution)

**For Reflection and Discussion** – The Kingdom of God (2) (Matthew 5.13-16)

1. What does it mean for you to be salt and light practically in the area (work, neighborhood, family) that God has placed you?
2. Do you have any significant relationships with unbelievers? If you do, how have you been able to share the gospel in word or in deed with person?
3. Is it easy for you to get involved in people's lives who aren't Christians? Explain.
4. What intimidates you about sharing the gospel with others? Are certain people more intimidating than others?
5. Have you ever invited someone to church or to a community event? How would you describe your guests experience?
6. How can we as a community group seek to be salt in and light in the community?

**Prayer**      *Father, please use me to be salt and light in the particular area you have placed me. Amen.*

