



## **No 9      Let your light shine      Matthew 5 verses 14 to 16**

The 'light of the world' is one of the most common phrases used to describe the effect that faith in Christ should have on us and on others. It follows the 'salt of the earth' metaphor used just before this passage. Light is an important theme in scripture and reminds us of the need to remove spiritual darkness from our world. Jesus' statement that he is the 'light of the world' (John 8:12) is followed by his purpose – 'so that those believing in him will no longer be in darkness.

21<sup>st</sup> century living has weakened both of these images. Salt was essential in preserving and flavouring many 1<sup>st</sup> century dishes. We use the fridge and Tesco. When you entered a room, you had to take a light with you (a lamp or a candle) to bring light to that dark space. Lamps in Jesus' day were made of clay and had a reservoir of oil with a hole in the top to top up the oil. There was a spout one end in which was placed a wick of flax or cotton. It was a fairly small lamp and gave light to the whole room – that's why Jesus said it must be on a lampstand.

**All this is suggesting that our faith is not simply about what we believe in our minds but about the flavour we bring to the lives of others and that there is some visible evidence of what we believe**

The 'city on the hill' is probably Jerusalem. It fits well with its geographic location which was on a hill. From every direction you went 'up to Jerusalem'. The batch of Psalms called the Psalms of Ascents (120 to 134) were used as you sang your way up to the central focus of the Jewish faith – Temple Mount. Again, visibility is the key idea – Jerusalem, along with many other Jewish towns and cities was built to be seen. Cities rose from the plain as a symbol of long-lasting strength.

So, we must face the inevitable question.

**How should we make our faith visible?**

**When we walk into any situation should 'light shine'.**

**What does being a shining light mean in practice?**

**Do we add 'good flavour' to our relationships? Share with each other how you have experienced that in your group**

Jesus gives the disciples clear guidance about what he wants. He says that if we do our good deeds whenever we get the opportunity, people will see them and be reminded that God is our motivator and they will turn to him.

**Share some events in your life where a simple act of kindness has drawn someone nearer to trusting Christ as Saviour.**

**Why don't you each think of a good deed that could be done this week which would be a testimony to another person.**

The second part of Jesus' last statement is easily forgotten. What we do, however simple it may be, doesn't make us look great, it brings glory to God. It's a bit like a hard-working employee enhancing the reputation of the company she or he serves. They would be happy that doing a good days' work has helped the company

to thrive. We should be delighted if our acts of service lead to people wondering why we help them. Whether we speak or not our humility should demonstrate that we live to serve a master much greater than ourselves.

**Is there sometimes a danger that we do good things to enhance our own reputation?**

**Are we sometimes a bit put out when we don't the glory?**

This last statement is a perfect summary of this nine-week series. We've been looking at 'Loving God, loving our neighbour'.

If we love God, we will love our neighbour. The two ideas are inseparable. And we bring glory to God through our love for him and with our acts of kindness.

### **A personal note to finish.**

**I used to lead trips to Israel on a regular basis. I would do the 'Bible input' and my Jewish friend and guide, Michael, gave us all the history of the site we were visiting.**

**In the Galilee there is a hill above the lake where a chapel is dedicated to Jesus' teaching on the mount of Beatitudes.**

**I read the well-known passage in Matthew where Jesus speaks of those who will be blessed (Chapter 5 verses 1 to 12)**

**As we left the site Michael, whose knowledge of the Bible (both Old and New Testaments) was huge, touched me on the arm and stopped me in my tracks.**

**He uttered words I shall never forget.**

**He said – 'If you Christians lived that, you'd change the world'**

**Let's ask God to help us live lives that change our bit of the world.**