

Being Salt & Light

Week 3 - Accepting & Loving (4/27)

Last week we discussed the general cultural context of the world around us, this week we want to focus on our personal interactions with that world in the people around us. If the role of salt is to preserve food from the dangers of decay, then salt must be in contact with what it is trying to preserve. Our ability to be effective salt and light in this world depends directly on our attitudes toward people. How can we learn to hate the sin and love the sinner? How can we live morally distinct lives without thinking of ourselves as morally superior? How can we demonstrate the truth of God's love for sinners (like us) before people accept Christ? How do we reconcile the Scriptural ideas of "bad company corrupt good morals" with "Jesus a friend of tax collectors and sinners"?

"Be Jesus to Them"

When Salt and Light go into the world they both have an effect on the world around them. When we interact with the people around us we can have a sanctifying influence on them. Now we need to think about the tools we bring to the task of being salt and light. The first tool is a recognition that we are sent as emissaries, ambassadors, representatives, in the "name of Jesus" we are carrying His message to the world as if we were Him.

- John 17:13-18 – "I am sending them into the world as you sent me into the world"
- 2 Cor 5:16-21 – "...And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us.
- Apostles – the word apostle means one sent on behalf of someone else.
- Rom 5:6-8 – God demonstrates his love...that while we were sinners, Christ died for us

World has Stereotypes against the church / Christianity

Last week we learned that only 16% of 16-29 year olds have a favorable impression of Christianity: judgmental, hypocritical, old-fashioned, politics

- John 15:18 – "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.....who was it that hated Jesus on earth? It was those who considered themselves the Righteous.
- 2 Pet 2:12 – "live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us."
- Why would someone who is negatively biased against church / Christianity come to a church service?

"Bring Church to People"

- Matt 20:28 – The son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."
- Luke 7:16 – after Jesus had healed many people they declared..."God has come to help his people"
- Mark 9:1f / Lk 9:28f – after the mountaintop encounter with God the disciples want to build a memorial of the event, a place where people could come to experience God. Instead of that (listen to Mark's version) Jesus comes down to serve the people.
- In what ways do we sometimes expect people to "come to us" instead of us "going to them"?

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Risk of Criticism

There is tension between the ideas of “bad company corrupts good morals” and “Jesus a friend of tax-collectors and sinners.” The issue involves our view of righteousness as well as the strength of our trust in God. If we imitate Christ, we are not concerned about the criticism of others who accuse us of “doing wrong.” Consider the following:

- 1 Cor 7:1f – here Paul addresses the desire to separate from non-Christian spouses because they are unholy. Paul’s response is to say that the believer has a sanctifying effect on the unbeliever, not the other way around.
- 1 John 4:4 – says that the one who is in us is greater than the one who is in the world. God’s power in us is greater than the power of sin...if we trust and rely upon that power.
- 1 Tim 1:15f – Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worst.
- Matt 9:10; 11:19; Mk 2:15f; Lk 5:30f; 7:34; 15:1f – All indicate that the religious people criticized Jesus because he had close association with sinners. They believed that righteousness consisted of being separate.

Jesus Example of Accepting and Loving

Accepting the person does not mean we are condoning their sin. Just because we don’t point out their sin does not mean that we are failing to uphold God’s word. Follow Jesus example of dealing with sinners.

- Rom 4 – while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us
- John 8:1f- The religious leaders brought a woman caught in act of adultery to Jesus and tried to trap him into condemning her. But Jesus lives out the intent of the law (define righteousness and make it clear that all are prisoners of sin, not to allow one group to distinguish itself against another) and declares to the woman “...neither do I condemn you, go now and leave your life of sin.”

Theology of Patience

- 1 Tim 1:15 – “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.”
- Rom 2:3 – So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance?
- Ex 34:6 –“ The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished....”

Love First...and always

- Love one another, love is patient, love is kind, love keeps no record of wrong.

Love = A commitment to like someone for the sake of
God’s work in them