

If someone had the whole laundry list of your sins in hand, what do you think they would call you? As that person read through your list of not just the things you're willing to admit in public, but of every last nitty gritty detail—thoughts running through the dark corners of your mind, late nights spent where the sun doesn't shine, every last blow up, meltdown, and lash-out at God for all the things he could be doing better—**what do you think you'd deserve to be called?**

Liar, fraud, hypocrite, dead-beat, spoiled, manipulative, selfish, greedy, and the descriptions could go on to infinity. Maybe we could sum them all up into one general description: the scum of the earth. Usually we'd save that description for those terrible people we hear about on the news, but that's the worst part about this. There is an itemized list of everything we've done that would be more than enough to demonstrate the truth: scum of the earth.

It's bad enough to know our own guilt and what it says about us. Add to that our shame at the thought of others knowing our deepest secrets, but it doesn't stop there! The scariest part is what God says about people that match such descriptions, **"Of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure, or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God...because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient"** (Ephesians 5:5-6).

Now we come face to face with our deepest fear: God knows all these things, it's not like he has to write them down to remember them. He's got a pretty good memory. This is the one who is able to destroy both our body and soul in hell and he's got every reason he needs to declare us the scum of the earth and send us on our way for the lake of fire. *And what does he call you?*

"You are the salt of the earth." **"You are the light of the world"** (Matt. 5:13,14). Yes, you heard him right, not scum, but salt of the earth! Not the deepest darkness he's ever witnessed, but the light of the world. Now I realize that we live in a low sodium world, where over the last few decades, salt has come to be known as the enemy of high blood pressure. But realize that over the history of the world, salt has universally been considered **a good thing**, a commodity, a luxury, something that makes life better. It gives flavor to a nice juicy steak, or even to your broccoli and Brussel sprouts! It's not just a modern cooking convenience either, they used salt for flavor even in ancient times.

Salt was also how they kept things from spoiling in the days before their kitchens had big box that magically kept things either frozen or at 40 degrees. It's the reason why your beef jerky can sit in a package forever without going bad and why it tastes so good. Our bodies actually require some amount of salt in order to survive? Salt is good.

I don't think I need to spend much time explaining why light is good. We don't have room in our house that doesn't have a light. We put up lights to line our streets. The light bulb is still revered as one of man's greatest inventions, and it doesn't even come close to the light God put in the sky! Light is good.

When we consider everything we talked about before, we know well how we have no business being called anything good like salt or light. But here's another fact we have to wrap our mind around. The one who says it is the one who doesn't lie. He looks at his believers, his disciples, and he says, **"You are the salt of the earth,"** **You are the light of the world."** And we have no business calling him a liar, so it must be true, but how, how can it be?? I know what my list looks like; I'm the one who filled it in, and he knows what on it better than I do! How can I be what he says I am?

The answer lies in one of the great gospel metaphors woven throughout the Scriptures. There were prophecies given of a light who would enlighten the gentiles, of a great light that had dawned on a people living in darkness. "The light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world." And when that light came, this is what he said, **"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"** (John 8:12). So as you follow the Light and trust in him, his light shines into your deepest darkness and overwhelms it. His all-surpassing radiant light purifies you

from all our sin and makes you light! It reveals to you the truth of God's promise that he will remember your sins no more!

The light of the world totally transforms our identity. The list is gone **“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord” (Ephesians 5:8)**. Did you ever have the glow in the dark stars on your bedroom ceiling? By themselves, those stars were just little pieces of plastic stuck to the ceiling, they didn't shine on their own. But when you turned your bedroom light on, those stars would somehow absorb the light from the source and then glow through the night, long after you turned the lights out!

So there's natural reaction that takes place. When Christ shines on you, you become light, and you start to shine for others to see. Your new identity comes with an automatic calling. **If he calls you salt and light, then he calls you to be salt and light**. Light shines onto something or someone else! It's what it does. And salt too, has to be applied to something else, otherwise it's just a pile of salt sitting there. Salt's job is to be salty!

If it's not working, what good is it? **“If salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?” (Matt 5:13)**. If salt just sits there and gets wet and stale, you can't resalt it, “it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled by men.” Then, there will be nothing to salt people's lives and make them better. So if your *identity is salt*, then your *calling is to be salty*, be helpful, make things tasty for those around you, help them see life with all its savor, life with their Savior.

It's the same idea with light. I've got a little clay oil lamp here. There's a big hole to put oil in it and then light the wick. If you were living in your little hut back in these days when there were no light switches, you'd be pretty fond of this little guy to light your way. Nobody would light a lamp and then stick it under a bowl where all the oil would burn up and the nobody would benefit from the light. **“Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house” (Matt 5:15)**. In the same way, **“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven (Matt. 5:16)**. Your *identity is light* and your *calling to shine your light and brighten people's world* with your borrowed light shining from Christ.

So we've got our identity, light and salt. We've got our calling, shining light and being salty, the good kind of salty, not the way I get when I sit in the office all day. Let's think about our target audience. People. Good, got that narrowed down. Out of the people we know, who needs us to carry out our calling the most? **The people in the darkness**, right? So it is important to gather around the Light of the world and charge up our lights together, but we can't forget to **go with our light and shine where there are people in total darkness**, the one who need it the most! So how do we identify them?

Today we have a little tool to help do that. It's call a **“Friends Who Need Jesus”** sheet. It's designed to help you think about all the different people in your circle of friends, relatives, neighbors, and co-workers who desperately need the light of Jesus. Once you identify them, then pray for these people, and pray dangerously, for real things to happen, for opportunities to be light and salt to them. When you're asking God for moments to do this, you know what starts to happen? You see those moments and you seize them! Pretty soon you're not afraid to start creating some moments when the borrowed light you have from Christ can shine in a natural way to others who need it.

The one thing that this text doesn't tell us are the specifics of how to be light or be salt! That's a part of the fun! You have the freedom to use your talents and your connections and let your light shine in its own special way. If you like going to the gym, you can be best fitness buddy the gym has ever seen. If you've got a good snow-blower, maybe your neighbors never have to shovel again. If you work long hours, maybe your coworkers notice you're the one who never gripes or gossips about other people.

Maybe you're the most pleasant babysitter any Mom has ever known. You're the neighbor who stops over to welcome everyone! You're the mom who listens.

In a world of people who need light and salt, and are longing for true connection with others, you can be a **common commodity with an uncommon calling**. After all, salt and light are some of the most common things on earth, but your job is to show the **uncommon** light of Christ for an **uncommon** purpose, that the people who see what you do may glorify God.

The last corner of the "Friends who Need Jesus" sheet is a reminder to invite them to worship with you. I know what you're thinking! Here comes pastor's plug for me to invite all my friends to church. You're right, partially, But, remember what I said before, you have freedom in how you let your light shine. Maybe if you haven't built any relationship yet, shoving an invite in their hand might be as good as splashing saltwater in their face. Then don't use it right now. Keep them in mind for Easter, or down the road.

If you've got some ground work you need to lay, then do it. That's totally fine! Have them over for dinner a few times. Be real friends, not just crazy church inviters. But at some point we do need to make clear who our Father is and what he has done for us in Christ, so that they may glorify our father in heaven.

So if you have the ground work laid with someone, and the thought of verbalizing your faith to them is terrifying to you, 90% of the time that's true for me too and I'm the evangelism pastor! If that's the case, we've all got room to grow, but we've planned something to help. Next week, is our Festival of Friendship, one opportunity to invite your friend who needs Jesus to be your personal guest for worship here at Mount Olive. We've designed the service especially with guests in mind. You can use this invite as a tool to put in your friend's hand. "Come and be my guest, we'll go together. I'll show you the place where my life finds meaning. Amen!

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom of priest to serve his God and Father- to him be glory and power forever and ever.