

Sermon for February 7, 2026 – The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany

Matthew 5:13-16 EHV

Theme: You are...

- 1) God's preserving salt.
- 2) God's saving light.

¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its flavor, how will it become salty again? Then it is no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people. ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket. No, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶In the same way let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Do you ever feel like hiding your faith?

Maybe when your employer expects you to participate in something that goes against your conscience. Or when friends enthusiastically support something that clearly opposes God's Word and then turn to you and ask, “What do you think?” In moments like that, it's tempting to shrink back and hope no one notices we're Christians.

But Jesus doesn't want us to hide who we are; he commands us to be who we are.

And who are we?

With Jesus as our guide, let us learn that

- 1) **In Christ, you are** God's preserving salt.
- 2) **In Christ, you are** God's saving light.

Part One: In Christ, you are God's preserving salt.

Our sermon text comes from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. After describing the blessedness of those who suffer for His name, Jesus tells His disciples:

You are the salt of the earth

In the ancient world, salt wasn't used only for flavouring food. More importantly, it was used to preserve—to slow decay and prevent destruction.

That is the picture Jesus uses for you, dear Christian.

You are what preserves the world from destruction.

How so?

When the LORD looks at you, He does not see you in your sins. He sees you clothed in His Son. Through faith, Christ's righteousness covers you,ⁱ and God loves you with the very same love He has for His Son. That is why God is patient with this world for your sake and holds back His wrath.

Do you remember the story of Abraham praying for Sodom and Gomorrah? The LORD promised that for the sake of just ten righteous people, He would not destroy those wicked cities. For the sake of a few believers, God was willing to spare many unbelievers.

We see the same thing before the flood. As long as there were believers in God's promise, the LORD patiently endured humanity's corruption. But when Noah and his family became the only believers left, God saved them and destroyed the world.

So also today. For your sake, God is patient with this world. You are the world's preserving salt - not because you are morally superior to others, but because God has placed His Word in your heart and on your lips. As you confess His Word, He continues to preserve the world. He doesn't want anyone to perish, but everyone to repent and live.ⁱⁱ

But Jesus also issues a warning:

But if salt has lost its flavor, how will it become salty again? Then it is no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled on by people.

Salt only loses its saltiness when what makes it truly salt is gone. What remains may look like salt, but it no longer does what salt is meant to do.

Your saltiness, dear Christian, is your relationship with Christ.

By living the perfectly obedient life you failed to live, and by dying on the cross to pay for your sins, Jesus made you who you are. Through His Law, He led you to recognize your sins and repent. Through His Gospel, He forgave your sins, clothed you in His righteousness, and declared you to be His royal ambassador to the world.

Don't lose your saltiness by losing Christ.

A "Christless Christianity" serves no purpose. Instead of leading people to the LORD, it leads them away. Sadly, much of what calls itself Christianity has lost its saltiness by turning its back on Christ and His Word.

Many Churches have replaced preaching repentance and forgiveness with vague spiritual encouragement. They silence God's Law and reduce the Gospel to a message of self-affirmation. That kind of salt does not preserve the world—it accelerates its decay.

And don't think we could never fall into the same trap. Jesus' warning is not only for others. It's for us too.

So how do we remain salty?

By remaining in God's Word, ever repentant and focused on Christ for the forgiveness of sins. When the devil, the world, and your sinful flesh attempt to entice or shame you into doubting God's truth, flee to the LORD in prayer. Ask Him to mercifully strengthen your faith by His Holy Spirit.

The LORD is more than happy to do what you ask. Why? Because He adopted you to be His holy child at your Baptism – making you not only His salt that preserves the earth but also His light that shines in the darkness.

Part Two: In Christ, you are God's saving light.

Jesus continues,

¹⁴You are the light of the world.

In the Bible, light is often associated with truth and faith; darkness with ignorance and unbelief.

Our world lives in darkness. It does not know God on its own. His truth must be revealed, and you are the light that reveals it.

Yes, you, dear Christian, are the light of the world—not because of who you are in yourself, but because you belong to Christ, who is the Light of the world.ⁱⁱⁱ To know Jesus is to know God. And the LORD is pleased to let that knowledge shine through you.

You are the light of the world. That is your identity, and it defines your purpose.

Jesus continues:

A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket. No, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

It's interesting how Jesus talks both about a city and a lamp. A city shines with many lights; in the same way, the church shines with many Christians together, attracting the attention of the world. A lamp shines individually, giving light to a house. Similarly, the individual Christian's witness of the Gospel draws the attention of those God places in his life.

But that invites the question: do we want the world's attention? I mean, what good could come from the world examining our teaching? Secular society will just ridicule us for what we believe. Isn't it better to hide what we believe and not to draw too much attention?

No, God gave us His Word and Sacraments precisely to gather attention. He wants people to know the truth about Himself, their sin, and their Saviour. He wants His light to shine brightly in the world's darkness so that His lost sheep might know Christ, repent, and be saved.

Jesus says,

¹⁶In the same way let your light shine in people's presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Understand that Jesus is not asking you to shine His light into the world; He's commanding it. He saved you for this very purpose: that people might see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

But what is a good work? Is it merely a matter of being kind to others? Atheists and followers of other religions can do that. How are a Christian's good works different from those of the world?

The answer lies in who those works glorify.

Unbelievers do good works to either earn favour with a god, gain praise from people, or simply to feel good about themselves. Therefore, the glory they seek is glory for themselves.

A Christian's works are different. They are always done in faith—not to earn God's favour, but because they already have God's favour in Christ. When a Christian does a good work, he wants the world to recognize Christ working through him. His purpose is to share Jesus with others in both deed and word.

Another difference is that the world praises those who do the extraordinary, whereas God is glorified when Christians faithfully do what the world considers ordinary.

What I mean is this: Jesus didn't call you to grab a soapbox to preach in downtown Ottawa, lead protests against abuses of power, or enter every online debate to defend Christianity.

Instead, he called you to be a loving husband, a respectful wife, a nurturing parent, an obedient child, a trustworthy employee, a fair employer, a respectful citizen, a caring friend, and even a loving enemy. God is glorified when we carry out our various stations in life the way he calls us to in Scripture.

And when we do that, people become curious as to why we act the way we do. How can we not tell them about Christ!

Let's go back to the beginning of this sermon, when I asked if you ever felt like hiding your faith rather than facing backlash for confessing it.

We are all guilty of hiding our Gospel light from the world in one way or another. We stayed silent because we were afraid to speak. We conformed to the world, instead of confronting it. Yes, we all have been less than salty at one time or another, for which I pray: "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

If your past unfaithfulness bothers you as my past unfaithfulness bothers me, know this: the same Jesus who calls you salt and light also went to the cross for every time you were afraid, every time you stayed silent, and every time you denied Him in pursuit of worldly respect. As you turn to Him in repentance and faith, He forgives and restores you, still telling you what He told His first disciples: "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world."

Now, whenever you are faced with a difficult situation in which you must either hide your faith or face backlash for sharing it, remember this text and who you are in Christ. You are God's salt and light on this earth, created and saved to draw attention to Him.

Ask God to give you the wisdom you need to testify to truth in love. Pray for the Holy Spirit, and He will come to your aid. Regardless of the consequences, God will use your respectful testimony of His Word to glorify His name and carry out His saving purposes.

So don't be too quick to ask Jesus to take you out of this evil world. Even though being with Christ in heaven is infinitely better than living on this earth, understand the noble purpose you have in

this life as Jesus' ambassador. You are his salt and light—the means through which He reveals Christ to the world.

Rejoice in your calling, brothers and sisters in Christ. Seize every opportunity God places in front of you to witness the truth. Trust that the One who died and rose again to save you will keep His promise to not only work through you, but also to deliver you from every evil attack and bring you safely home to Himself in heaven. Amen.

ⁱ Cf. Galatians 3:26-27

ⁱⁱ Cf. Ezekiel 18:32 & 33:11

ⁱⁱⁱ Cf. John 8:12 & 9:5