

I don't know that I've ever preached two messages in a row that are so woven into one another that without the one, you won't fully understand the other, but that's where we find ourselves today. So if you missed last week, some of this tonight might be difficult for you. So what I want to try to do is recap as best I can, and then from there, we'll get into the rest of this text. So if you have your Bible, let's read the text, and then I will recap it. Here we go. Matthew 5, we'll pick it up in verse 13, "*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" Now, all we covered last week was verse 13. We couldn't get out of verse 13. Here's what we said. If you've heard the message of salt preached, what you've seen happen is people will grab salt and say, "Salt is a preservative, so then we are a preservative of society. We preserve the moral decay of society." And we've heard, "Salt flavors stuff, and so we flavor stuff as the church. We give life vitality and meaning...And salt is a fertilizer, and so we fertilize stuff. We make the ground fertile to grow....Salt creates thirst, and so we create a thirst for God when people are around us." And I believe that is absolutely right and absolutely correct, but I wanted to take it one step underneath that and talk about even more of a foundational idea when it comes to salt than even that. And here's what we said. Being salt is the spiritual act of inhaling. It's what happens when the Holy Spirit begins to work in us, chisel on us, shape us and mold us into the type of men and women who do preserve against moral decay, who do make others thirst for God, who do make the ground able to support growth. They are those kinds of people.

But we spent the bulk of our time last week talking about the second part of that text, which says that salt, if it's lost its saltiness is worthless. And I threw out there and I'll continue to throw out there, because I believe it's impossible to empirically argue against that on a whole, Evangelical have completely lost our saltiness. And what's happened is that we've gotten great at believe but have not been transformed by what we say we believe. And so, in the end, no matter what you want to look at numerically, whether it's marriages or debt, how we spend our money or giving to charity. You can empirically look across the line and we are either no better than or, even in some cases, worse than those who don't believe what we do. And so the Bible says, in the end, if you've mastered information but you haven't mastered life, who cares? If in the end, you can systematically and theologically unpack all the mysteries of God but you've been completely unmoved by them, then who cares? And then in the end, this text says what happens when you have belief but no transformation, is you get to be a punchline on "South Park." That's what you get. Because what ends up happening is we run our mouths but there's no transformation to support us running our mouths, so the church completely loses its place in culture and ends up being disrespected, ends up being mocked, ends up being openly shamed. Because although what we believe is right and true, there's been no transformation in which people can look and go, "Maybe they're onto something here." But instead, we go, "Divorce is sinful. I want a divorce." Or "You shouldn't lust," yet at pastor's conferences there's porn off the charts in the hotels. So we've got believe, but there's been no transformation. And so, we've lost our saltiness. It's worthless. Throw it out to be trampled by men. So, you can not like this, but you cannot argue against it.

Alright, I grew up on the West Coast, San Francisco. We started every day in elementary school: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God..." That's one small piece of Christendom, which means the institutions of our culture teach Christian morality even though they're not teaching the gospel. That's dead. It's over; it's gone. In fact, if it wasn't for these little fortresses of Conservatism in the Bible Belt, we would mirror

Europe. Unless you get proud about our little fortresses, I'll give us ten years. The amount of Conservative thinkers and walkers, it's shrinking. Why? Because Christendom is dead. There is no moral compass anymore.

So what I wanted to do last week was go, "Okay, how do we get here?" Because I didn't want to argue about whether or not we're here. Because we're here. So how did we get here? And I thought there were at least five things that got us here. So I'll cover the five, and then we'll finish this text. Number one: I think there's an overemphasis on width rather than depth, which I simply said was this. There is an undue importance put on the amount of information you know rather than what you're obedient to. And almost all across the line, people are going, "You need more information, you need more theology, you need more..." And I know there are certain guys out there right now who want to make theology out to be the bad guy. I think they're just as ignorant as the ones making theology to be the savior. So theology in itself isn't bad, but an increase in theology when you're unwilling to be obedient to the small things that have been revealed to you is comical. You're simply learning more of what you don't plan to obey. You're like, "Man, I can't do these simple two or three things leaving me. Maybe I should get into sovereignty, maybe something a little less complex than 'Don't get drunk.'" So the church has this massive overemphasis on information. "Know more information, get more information, read more books, study more Scripture," instead of a, "Be obedient to what you know." There's an overemphasis on information, a passion on width, none for depth. That's one.

The second thing: absolute disintegration of community. And I'm not talking just church; I'm talking culture wide. We have back porches; we don't have front porches anymore. Let me tell you community, deep authentic community is so unbelievably vital for depth. To grow deep spiritually, you'll constantly be in need of two things: encouragement and rebuke. You'll need encouragement when you're absolutely exhausted and you're so spiritually tired that you can't be honest about how spiritually tired you are. Been there? "How you doing?" "Great. (And I'm just saying that because I don't want you to talk to me anymore)." So we need to be known well enough that people can know where we are even when we're not strong enough to tell the truth and come love us. We also need people who love us enough to call out sin and wandering in our lives. And if we're not in close community, that's always going to go bad. People always handle rebuke, I don't care how godly you are, two ways. You'll go, "You're right. I'm horrible. Maybe I should give up," or you'll go, "That's interesting that you noticed my sin, because while I was looking around, I saw some stuff that I would like to bring up." Because I've said it a thousand times here: If we can make someone else the enemy, we can never have to deal with ourselves. So, we've got to have deep, authentic, real relationships. Without them, you won't get the encouragement and you won't definitely get the rebuke you need.

The other thing I think lead to this lack of depth, although numerically there are tons of people in churches, is a lack of the understanding of authority. And what I mean by that is most people treat church like an ecclesiological buffet. "Ooh, I like the preaching here and I like the music here...look at this laser show! They have intramural sports over here..." And we just kind of pick and choose, but we'll never humble ourself under one group of leaders who can know us deeply, who we can know deeply and do life long-term with. So we never really join a church; we just kind of hang out in a bunch of them. I think it's a problem.

I always get nervous about number four because people mishear me, but I think there's been an overemphasis on light. And what I mean by that is everything in the Evangelical community that gets viewed as success has large numbers around it. And so light is the end goal. Forget there being any depth or transformation; if we can just fill the seats, we did it. And that starts even before seminary. It just carries on, everybody's trying to fill their churches, but in the end, that was never the goal in

Scripture, ever. That was never God's self-disclosure of what He was after or what He wanted.

And then the last one we talked about, I find my heart so heavy on this one. I war so much with it. I think the other thing against us is that we live in culture and a day and age where we get everything right now. And when things are slow, even when we know they're going to be slow, we want it now. I think the examples we gave last week were sitting on I-35 at 5:15 near downtown going, "What in the world?!" It's like, "Well, you're downtown at 5:15. You knew this." You're like, "I know, but still..." Or that Friday night thing where you pull up to the restaurant, send your kid in to check on the times, "How long is it going to take?" and they come back out and it's like 45 minutes. You're like, "Are you serious?" And then, my favorite act of lunacy is when the kid gets back in and you just drive around like you're going to magically find a nice restaurant with nobody at it. And even then, we just want it now. And let me just be really honest with you. Spiritual depth crawls; it doesn't fly. And do you know why my heart's heavy for you? You'll find a thousand preachers who will lie to you and tell you something different. "No, no, no, just do this. If you'll just do missions, you've got it... No, no, no, you get into a discipleship program, and you'll take off..." And I'll say it's like having a kid. You don't see your kid grow. You can stare at them all day long. You don't notice them adding inches. You don't see it, you don't feel it, but you can measure it. So the thing I talked to you about last week is, I wonder how many of us quit too soon. Because what I think happens is we go, "Hey, community's a necessity." And we go, "Yeah! Community is a necessity." And then we go to home group, and then three weeks later, when we don't have deep, authentic relationships, we're like, "Ahh." And we're out. We want it now. We want everything right now. And if it's not happening exactly right now and it's there's still some struggle two years from now, this just must not work.

And all these things are working against us. And so this is what we said last week, which leads us into today. Let's look at it. *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* If salt is inhaling spiritually, then light is exhaling or the breathing out of that transformation. Now, I need to spend some time here chatting with you about light, because I think on a whole, the majority of us, when we think of light and in terms of light, we think of evangelism. We think, "Okay, light. (knock on the door) If you were to die today,..." which almost sounds threatening, a stranger on your porch. It just sounds a little scary. "I'm a stranger on your porch. If I were to kill you right now,..." So, I don't think E.E. is bad or evangelism is bad. In fact, we need to do it, we need to get better at it, we need to more fully understand what the gospel is. Honestly, I think this salt problem is why evangelism dies pretty quickly in our lives because we feel like our lives don't match up to the gospel we proclaim. So we keep our mouths shut because we know everyone around us will call us out on it. But that's another sermon. So then, although I do believe that we should share the gospel and share with our neighbors and share with our coworkers, I don't believe that that is what this text is talking about at all, but rather something different.

So let me try to unpack this. The church finds itself in a very difficult time to exist, in a Post-Industrial Revolution Age. Let me try to explain this. Most churches, this one included, want the people who come here to be obedient and to grow in their knowledge of what obedience is. And because we live in this kind of Post-Industrial society, we know how to do that. We look where people are, point A, and we draw a map to Point B. And we point out systems and programs to move you from point A to point B. And although it definitely has some value, in the end, it has a wicked step-brother that enables you to compartmentalize so well that you end up having no shot at really being salt, which in the end, give

you no chance at being light. Let me explain what I'm talking about. Here at the Village Church, we've taught often that everything you have and all that you've been given has been given to you by God for the glory of God to push back what's dark in the world. If you have any history here, right now you're not going, "What?!?" I mean, I'm working that end every other week at least. So, here's what we do. We sit back and go, "Okay, we're saying that week in and week out. I'm giving it to them, alright. No. You know what we should do? We should help them get there. Let's do Transform. Here's what we're going to do. We're going to take the summer and we're going to partner with churches and schools in Denton, Lewisville and downtown Dallas and we're going to push back what's dark. We're going to paint and rebuild and hammer and we're going to do all of those things. Let's do it." And so, I get up here and I preach a message on it, a good one. I mean, the earth is just trembling; that's how good it was. And then I say go, and everyone herds out to the Transform table. And they get there and sign their name on the Transform. And then sure enough, Saturday morning rolls around, and we head to Transform. So we walk into a poor neighborhood and we paint and we hammer and maybe we interact with people who live down there, probably not. But we hammer and paint and we do all that we're supposed to do. And then we get back in our car and we leave and we were obedient, biblically. No real transformation, no real heart for the poor, no real "my life serves a bigger purpose than this." Simply, "Let me go to Transform." I'm not just picking on Transform. Pick one. Parents are going, "Hmm, okay I've got to impart the wonders of God to my children, but I can't be molding and shaping him all day long. I know. Let's find Awanas! We're going to get them in Awanas, they'll put on their little para-military organization outfit..." I'm so kidding; it's such a great deal. "...And they're going to learn the books of the Bible, Genesis, Exodus in a little song and it's going to be great." And then, "I've got it. Train my kids, I did it. Check. That's it." And what ends up happening, instead of there being any real transformation that creates a life that is, there's programs that create a life that does. Let me do it like this. When I was a kid, there were envelopes in the back of the pew. Nobody had chairs back then, uncomfortable pews. And in the back of those pews, there was envelopes. And you pulled the envelope out, and whether you were giving or not, you were supposed to fill one out: Name: _____ Did you read your Bible daily?: _____. "Of course." Do you remember those envelopes? Did you pray daily?: _____ Have you prayed this week?: _____ "Father I love You. (Yes)" And then: How much were you giving to missions?: _____ How much were you giving to general?: _____. Does anybody remember those? Great times in church history. And here's what's happened to us. We've replaced the envelope with programs. So even in the Village Church that prides itself on being organic, instead what we've done is we've said, "We're supposed to have a heart for the poor that's been moved, and all that we have is not ours and it's been given to us to push back what's dark in the world. So I'll go to Transform. Missional living = Transform. I did Transform. (Check) Community, deep authentic community = home group. I went to home group. (Check)" And on and on. And so in the end, all we've done is change the envelope. That's all we did. We just made the envelope a little cooler. We just put more graphics around it, a different style of dress but still require you to check the boxes. So in the end, you have this mechanical action that creates little to no depth. It's a tough spot, isn't it? I don't have a lot of answers today, just rants. You've got to create paths for people to walk, but in the end, they just walk the path and they think the path is the point. The path isn't the point, transformation on the path is. And listen, that's why you have church conflict that breaks all the time, because all of a sudden, paths become sacred. "You ain't touching this. You are not touching this. How will people ever grow in Christ if you cancel this?" I think it'll be alright.

So, I want to contrast that with some other things here. This past Tuesday, a group of businessmen downtown who are members here, they took some of their own money and went to McDonald's and bought 50 cheeseburgers...\$7.00. And then, they went to a Super Wal-Mart and bought socks and underwear and toiletries. And they went and took about an hour and a half, and they went down to one

of the little slums there and they just handed out cheeseburgers and they handed out toiletries and they prayed with people. They just prayed with them. And they do that every Tuesday. When they don't go out on the streets, they get together and they pray for those people. And they know them by name, and they know them by situation. They even know the ones who are homeless because they want to be and the ones who are homeless because catastrophe struck their lives. Businessmen, they didn't go to seminary or nothing. I wonder what the other boys in the office must think. Seriously, you've got these business guys, I'm sure dressed in downtown attire heading down to Mickey D's to buy some cheeseburgers. There's this couple here at the Village Church that had some really bad marriage issues and some adultery, and it broke the marriage apart and they divorced. And then, the gospel started saturating one of their hearts, and the wanted it restored so badly. Another one, the gospel started penetrating their heart, so they had to start working through those issues. And God brought their marriage back together, and they remarried. And you know what they do now? They minister to married couples all the time. But it's not, "Hey, here's a book to read," it's like, "Hey, come to my house." And their house is open every night. Like every night, there's men crying because they just lost their wives or wives crying because their husband just left. And they've just like, "Stay and pray. Just come over and eat dinner. Just come over and have dessert with my family. Just come over and drink a cup of coffee." And literally every night of the week, men and women fill their house to hear that there's hope. And this other family here, they heard that down in Zambia there's this little boy in an orphanage filled with orphans whose parents have mainly died because of AIDS. But this baby had a little spark and they didn't know what would happen to him. And so, they flew to Zambia and the wife had to hang out there for like a month. I don't know hot vacation spots in the world, but I think on a list of ten, Zambia is not on there at all. And they adopt this little baby boy and bring him home. Then there's this group of orthodontists here who somehow or another saw that there were some real issues in Romania. So they got a bunch of their friends together, and they head over to Romania and fix teeth with their money, on their dime, with their time. There's another guy here who's a doctor who heads to Africa for a couple of months a year just to do free surgeries. This isn't what they do, this isn't what they are, it's different.

Let me try to talk to you about how the light penetrates the darkness. I think what we've been sold is a little bit of a half truth. Culture doesn't get changed and impacted because we bring people here. Really this is very unimpressive. Is it not? We've tried to make it so. There wasn't anything cutting edge. We've got some candles and me yelling and Bleecker singing. Okay so follow me. These businessmen in the world of business, economics, finance, they run with other businessmen, they hang out in a business world, they're downtown. And the gospel penetrated their hearts and now it's deepening them. And as it deepens them, they begin to see things that they never saw before. Now all of a sudden, within that realm, within that domain, they begin engage society. They begin to engage culture. Right outside their office, they begin to feed poor, homeless men and women with their dime and their energy, with their money, with their creativity. They're doing it, and now the light of the gospel is shining in that area. And whether the men in their office come to know Christ or not doesn't change the fact that they could boldly proclaim Him without shame. Because their very lives exude the light. And then there are other people who are in the arts. They're musicians, actors, actresses and writers. And there's this really big push right now that I find funny that the church should reclaim the arts. So what ends up happening is churches go, "Paint some stuff. Get some painters, and let's paint. Let's have an art ministry." Um, it's just my own opinion, but I think that's kind of a swing and a miss. And here's why. We don't want them painting here; we want godly, Holy Spirit transformed men and women painting out there in their domain, in the domain of the arts, writing deep, beautiful music, painting deep, beautiful portraits, acting and writing for the glory of God within that domain. And then those who are governors and lawyers and judges, that they would see in justice and weakness and what's broken and they would use what they are to get in there and work and fix. And educators...Can

you imagine what would happen if all the teachers who believed in Christ at a certain school got together and said, "What are the issues here that we can address?" "Well, there's none of this." "We can pull that money together. I mean, it's ten grand, but there's fourteen of us. I think we can pull that together. Maybe it takes us four months, but maybe we then go to the principal and go, 'Here's the money that we need to buy whatever.'" It transforms lives; it starts shining. Or pick the domain. Agriculture. Pick it. But this is how the light penetrates. Everybody is once again trying to make this building the bastion of what is. Let me tell you what this is. This is collision of the domain that just blows people's minds. Where else in society does the vice president of Verizon get together and eat dinner with the night shift manager of Taco Bell? Nowhere. They don't get together. They don't hang out. But all of a sudden, you come to the church and there it is. Now the person that's almost impoverished and the person that has millions are all of a sudden doing life together, helping one another, walking with one another. This is unbelievably powerful for the outside world, because they don't see that anywhere else. This is how we're light. Now sharing the gospel is part of all of that. In fact, I think living like that is the gospel.

But we can talk about light 'til kingdom come, but if we're not being transformed from one degree of glory to the next, as 1 Corinthians lays out, light is just a pipe dream. You can talk about light all you want; if you haven't been moved by the Holy Spirit of God and acted on it with obedience, then it's mechanical. And if it's mechanical, you're doing rather than being. And so, I end it like we started it. Where are you walking in disobedience? Where are you saying "no" to the Lord? What are you saying, "Listen, I'm not going to do that. I'm not going to surrender to that. I'm not going to walk like that?" Where are the areas of your life where you know but you're not practicing? Build accountability. Build authority. And then I want to continue. What did you give up on too soon? We've said small groups are where we've got our best shot at community, but you went and three months later it wasn't there so you just bailed. Maybe you gave up too soon. Community doesn't happen over night; it crawls. In fact, each group almost needs a little bit of a crisis to make it happen. We've talked about healing and wholeness and all of that. And so you went to recovery and you worked it, but you're just like, "Aw, it's been three or four months and that should transcend and dupe my thirty-eight years of wickedness, and it hasn't! So I'm walking away." "*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*" But if you'll be fiercely committed to salt, to deepening, then you will be the light of the world and you will be seen, you will be impossible to hid against the backdrop of a nonrhythmic, broken world. So let me ask this and I'll end. If Jesus said we could actually be this, do you think He can be trusted to lead us there? And unfortunately, I can only answer that for me.

Let's pray. "Father I thank You for how You reveal Yourself to us. I thank You for doctrine and theology. I thank You for thick, deep truths that force us to wrestle and cry out and even maybe walk with a limp. But I pray that You might do something in our hearts in here today and that maybe we grow tired of the boredom that is much of Evangelical thought in life. I thank You for the businessmen in this room. I thank You for the places You've put them, the businesswomen, the things You've put them into. God, I pray for success for them. I pray that whatever they touch, gold just falls out of the sky. But I pray, in that domain, that they would live like there's something bigger than them. And then in being obedient to You, I pray that their light might shine and men might glorify Your name. That doesn't necessarily mean believe in You but at least acknowledge that someone's been transformed by You. And for the men and women who are in the arts community, God, might they live deep, thick lives. I pray against trying to be the cool Christian artist but rather that they might just let you transform them. I pray for lawyers, I pray for doctors, I pray for educators, I pray across all domains, Father, that we would see this as the place we come to cross domains to be encouraged, held

accountable and held in deep community. And I pray that we'd see work as mission, home as mission, neighborhood as mission. We're going to need Your help, Father, because we're easily distracted and there's not a lot of voices saying this. Some would make theology the enemy. Others would make the church herself the enemy. It's a dangerous day, Father. Protect us. I pray, just as Christ did, that You not take us out of the world but You protect us from the evil one. It's for Your beautiful name I pray. Amen."