

“Salt and Light”

We are offering a series of reflections for individuals and churches who may be finding it difficult to provide midweek prayer and shared learning from Scripture. You can use these by watching the YouTube video, reading the relevant Bible passage and then reflecting on the questions below. To help make this a shared activity, you are encouraged to reflect on this together with friends using an online conference package, or simply arrange with a friend for them to watch it too. Then ring each other up, share your thoughts and responses and then pray for one another, and pray together for our world.

Read Matthew 5:13-16

If you can, watch the YouTube Video: <https://youtu.be/IFRoPcLU7WM>

Much of our experience of the last year has been the change from being a “gathered” community to becoming “scattered”. While we have found some creative ways of remaining together as God’s people, it would be true for most of us that we have spent more time apart. When Jesus speaks of being “salt” and “light” we might recognise how each of these reflects these two realities. Light tends to be concentrated and has its effect by being placed in a prominent and obvious position, salt becomes useful when it is scattered and although it might virtually disappear to the eye, it is obvious through its “savour”. We might find it helpful to reflect on these two images as we recognise some of the changes that we have had to face in recent months. The point that Jesus is making is that as his followers, we can have an impact both when we are gathered and when we are scattered. We are called to be consistent whether we are together or apart. We might find help and encouragement to live as effective disciples in the present climate, by reflecting on the purpose of those things we did when we were “gathered” and considering how that purpose can still be fulfilled while we are “scattered”. As we consider Jesus words, there are three questions we might ask ourselves:

What is distinctively Christian about how I am going about things at the moment? Jesus makes the point that salt is useless if it has lost its savour or its distinctive saltiness. This might lead us to consider what it is that makes us distinctive as his followers. As we think about the things we are doing, the way we are dealing with what’s happening and the priorities we are setting, the question we are led to consider is “in what way does my Christian faith stand out through that?” Things may be very different at the moment, but what is distinctly Christian in the way that we are handling that? This might offer us a challenge – do we need to re-think some of the ways that we are dealing with things, to act in a more distinctly Christian way?

What do people see and what does God see as I live my life day by day? Jesus says, “You are the light of the world - the city on a hill – set on a lampstand and not hidden under a bowl.” We are visible – as conspicuous as a load of houses on a hillside. This leads us to consider what people have seen in us over the last few months. And if God is present with us in every circumstance - what has God seen? God’s word makes it clear that God sees us completely – not just our outward self, but our motives, our attitudes and our true intentions. That can serve as both a challenge and an encouragement. An encouragement because sometimes people mis-judge us and wrongly assume our motives. But God says “I can see you, and I know your heart – even if others don’t recognise that.” But it’s also a challenge, because God can also see through any outward show – he **can** see our heart. But if we are to describe ourselves as God’s people, then people will form their opinions of God on the basis of what they see in us. What have people seen? What have we displayed?

How can God be glorified in the things that I do and say? Jesus invites our light to shine so that others may give glory to our Father in Heaven. This is our calling – when Jesus spoke of being the Light of the World in John’s Gospel (ch9v4) the disciples wanted to get into a theological debate about whose fault things were. Jesus simply says – you’re asking the wrong question – the question is how can God be glorified in these circumstances? In John’s Gospel, God’s glory becomes fully revealed at the cross – the place of suffering and sacrifice. We might be facing our struggles, but often our faith is most powerfully revealed in how we cope with adversity.

PRAYER: Loving Lord Jesus, whether I am together with your people or we are forced to remain apart, help me to reflect your likeness in all that I do. As I cope with a changing and uncertain world, may it be my faith in you that remains constant. May this be what makes me distinctive and causes others to give glory to God. AMEN