

**February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

**“Salt, Light, and the Heart of God’s Law”**

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Texts: Isaiah 58:1–9a, 9b–12; Psalm 112:1–10; 1 Corinthians  
2:1–12, 13–16; Matthew 5:13–20

There is a moment in the Sermon on the Mount when Jesus looks at His disciples, these ordinary, unremarkable people, and gives them an identity more powerful and surprising than anything they would have chosen for themselves.

No titles.

No credentials.

No achievements.

Just this:

“You are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world.”

*Not you might become.*

*Not try your best to be.*

*You are.*

Jesus calls them what He knows they already are because of His presence in their lives.

And for us, hearing those words today, there is both comfort and challenge. Comfort, because Jesus speaks this identity as pure gift. Challenge, because salt and light have one thing in common:

They exist for the sake of something beyond themselves.

Salt does not exist to be admired.  
Light does not exist to be stared at.  
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Salt exists to preserve, to heal, to transform what it touches.  
Light exists to reveal truth, to guide, to push back fear.

And Jesus tells us: *This is who you are. This is your calling. This is how the world will experience the presence of God, through you.*

The Prophets Ask the Same Question We Ask: “What Does This Actually Look Like?”

We might say:

“Okay, Jesus. Salt and light. Beautiful images. But what does that mean on Monday morning? At work? At school? In my home? In this community?”

And Jesus answers by turning us to the Law and the Prophets, God’s long, consistent story of forming a people who live differently.

This is where Isaiah 58 comes in.

In Isaiah’s time, the people are doing all the religious activities.

They’re fasting.

They’re praying.

They’re performing rituals with precision.

But their society?

Their society is marked by exploitation, marked by division.

Marked by powerful people taking advantage of vulnerable people.

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Marked by spiritual busyness that conveniently ignores human suffering.

And God, through the prophet, essentially says:

“You want to know what kind of worship I desire?

Not pious-looking rituals.

Not performances of holiness.

This is the fast I choose:

Break chains of injustice.

Set the oppressed free.

Share your bread with the hungry.

Welcome the poor into your home.

Clothe the naked.

Care for your own family.”

In other words:

If your worship doesn't lead to justice, it isn't worship.

Isaiah describes salt and light centuries before Jesus says the words.

And God promises, “When you live this way, *your light will burst forth like the dawn.*”

Our reading from Psalm 112 Echoes the Vision. Psalm 112 paints a portrait of the kind of person who walks in God's ways:

They are gracious.

They lend freely.

They act with justice.

They are generous without fear.  
They shine like a lamp in the darkness.  
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They are **not** flashy,  
**Not** grand,  
**But** steady.  
They **are** Faithful.  
They **are** Grounded.  
Their lives radiate something holy.

And that “something” is not their own brilliance, it is the character of God shining through them.

In Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he reminds us: This life comes from the Spirit. In 1 Corinthians, Paul wants to be absolutely clear:

The Christian life, the saltiness, the brightness, the courage, the generosity, does not come from human strength.

Paul says he didn’t convert the church through eloquent speeches. He didn’t persuade them with clever arguments. He came in weakness. He came simply proclaiming Christ crucified, and the Holy Spirit did the rest.

He tells them and us:

“We have the mind of Christ.”

Not because we earned it.

Not because we are wise.

But because God’s Spirit is shaping us from the inside out.

Salt and light are not human achievement.  
They are fruits of the Holy Spirit.

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So, now we return to Jesus' words in Matthew. Jesus tells us in our gospel: "I Have Not Come to Abolish the Law..."

After calling His disciples salt and light, He addresses a concern people clearly had: Was Jesus throwing out the commandments?

Was grace a replacement for holiness?

Was the kingdom of God a new religion that set aside God's law?

Jesus says absolutely not.

"I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets, but to bring them to their fullness."

Jesus tells us he has come to bring out their deepest meaning,

To reveal their true purpose.

To embody them completely.

And He warns the disciples:

"If your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

Now that sounds intimidating until we understand what Jesus means. The Pharisees performed righteousness.

It was visible.

It was measurable.

But it often missed the heart of God's law...it often missed mercy, justice, humility.

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The righteousness Jesus is pointing to is deeper;  
Not stricter rules, not better performance.

But a life shaped from the inside out by the Spirit, aligned with God's gracious, liberating, life-giving purposes for the world.

So what does this mean for us today?

People of God, what does it look like to receive Jesus' words?

To be salt is to preserve what is good.

Salt keeps food from rotting.

Salt slows decay.

Salt heals wounds.

Salt makes what is bland come alive again.

**To be salt is to:**

Speak truth gently in a world of harshness.

Uphold dignity where people feel unseen.

Choose compassion instead of cynicism.

Protect those who are vulnerable.

Refuse to participate in gossip, cruelty, or division.

Salt doesn't pretend to fix everything.

But it makes everything it touches a little more whole.

To be light is to shine God's compassion into dark places.  
Light doesn't argue with darkness.  
Light doesn't debate with darkness.  
Light just *shines*.

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**To be light is to:**

Offer grace in tense situations.  
Respond with patience in moments of frustration.  
Bring warmth to someone who feels alone.  
Live with integrity when no one is watching.  
Reveal truth, not to shame, but to heal.

Your life reveals the character of God. To live the Law is to let love be the measure of how we live.

Jesus fulfills the law by showing us its heart.

And the heart of the law is love.

Love for God.

Love for neighbor.

Love for the stranger.

Love for the overlooked.

Love even for the difficult person, yes, even that one.

Holiness is not about appearing perfect.

Holiness is about embodying God's love.

Friends, you may not feel salty today.

You may not feel bright.

You may feel tired.

Worn.

Ordinary.

Unsure.

But Jesus is not describing your mood.  
He is naming your identity.

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You are salt, because Jesus has seasoned you with grace.

You are light, because Christ shines in you.

You fulfill the Law, because the Spirit dwells within you.

You shine, because God is at work in you.

Not because of who you are, but because of the One who  
has claimed you.

So go today as salt for a hungry world.

Go as light for a shadowed world.

Go as people who carry God's heart into every place you  
step.

Amen.