

Speaker : Assoc Pastor David Seah
Sermon Title : Warning: Contains Photons
Text : Matthew 5:14-16

We are salt. I would like to suggest that **salt is to food** what **meaning is to life**. Without salt, the food would taste bland. Without meaning, life would be directionless. Purposeless. Hopeless.

We have been given a mission to bring meaning to the seeking & the hurting. That's what we are supposed to do on earth.

And the ultimate goal is so that the lost might discover the purpose for which they were created for i.e. to know Jesus whom God has sent, to worship Him in spirit & in truth.

"¹³Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

"¹⁴⁻¹⁶Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine!" (Matthew 5:13-16)

Why did Jesus bring in another metaphor (of the light)? Isn't the metaphor of the salt adequate to convey our purpose as believers in this world?

If salt is to food what meaning is to life, then light would have a similar usefulness too in that it gives meaning, vision and hope. But why did Jesus give another metaphor?

By now Jesus' point is quite clear, grains of salt inside a container will always be salty while light, wherever it is put, will always be light, it will always shine.

So Jesus is not asking believers to manufacture their own brightness, because believers, by their very nature and identity in Christ, ought to be light.

So, what Jesus is actually saying is this: that what is of greater importance is WHERE you are shining from. I would like to sum it in 3 words: **Strategy Is Everything**.

Just as light must be placed at the right place, our lives must be strategically lived. Jesus was a strategist. From day one, when he began his ministry, He strategized.

- i. On recruits, first He [Jesus] had 12 disciples. He then expanded and the number grew to 72. At the Upper Room in Acts 2, He had 120. Then in Acts 3, 3000 was further added to the Church.

Two millenniums later, today, 2 out of 6 people we meet, acknowledge themselves to be believers of Christ. Quite an obvious strategy to build His church, wouldn't you think?

ii. Then, note the platform he used to speak:

- In Luke 5, we find Him speaking from Simon Peter's boat.
- In Matthew 5, He spoke from the mountain side, where the multitudes were.
- In Matthew 9, he went through towns & cities, teaching in the synagogues where people go to seek and worship God.
- In Mark 11, he spoke at the temple courts & addressed the questions of the religious leaders.
- In Luke 23, He spoke from the cross to the dying thief. Jesus chose to be on the cross, and spoke hope to the dying thief.

iii. Thirdly, on the timing to reveal himself.

Remember the occasions He warned those He had healed, "don't tell anyone..., the time has not yet come." What was he doing? Following His strategy.

Matt 16: 20 – "Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ."

Mark 8: 29 – 30 – "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him."

Luke 8: 55, 56 – "Her spirit returned, and at once she stood up. Then Jesus told them to give her something to eat. ⁵⁶ Her parents were astonished, but he ordered them not to tell anyone what had happened."

What was Jesus doing? Following His strategy. Jesus lived strategically in terms of his associations, his decisions and acted according to His Father's time-table.

We need to learn from Him by following His example. And there will be no problem following Him. Others may fail us, or mislead us. But not Jesus. Jesus said in John 8:12 - "I am the world's Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in."

There will always be clarity with Jesus.

Not confusion. Brightness, not darkness. Freedom, not bondage. We follow Jesus. It is a constant choice. Jesus is not behind us, pushing us. We are behind Jesus, willfully, consciously following Him.

In our desire to fulfil our life's mission, we need to learn from Jesus as to how to strategically live.

The call this evening is not to do more or shine harder. But that regardless of the brightness of our flame, place it strategically.

Some of us have big flames – mature in the Lord, full of experiences with God, stable A spiritual leader

Some of us have small wick – just accepted the Lord, about to be baptized in water. Started attending LG.

Many of us are in between.

Regardless the size of our light, our photons, shine! We need to be strategic by:-

- Choosing who will influence us

From the way we dress, the lingo we carry to the way we make decisions, the values we hold, the lifestyle we adopt – reveals who is influencing us.

Popstar, footballer, businessman, a TV program, a website, the hollywood culture, a politician, uncle, teacher, bigger brother, parent?

They could be personally close to us or they could be impersonal, some one far, someone we don't know, but could still have as much influence on us

So, what have we been observing & who have we been listening to?

Is their influence strengthening the sense of our life's mission ? Is their influence causing us to be a more effective as Sodium Chloride of the earth? Or otherwise?

They could be Christians, or otherwise. They could be alive, or otherwise. They could be near, or far. The issue is not all of this. The issue is this : Is their influence helping us to place our photons strategically?

Jesus was constantly influence by His Father in heaven. Though he was in a culture that was religious, biased, discriminating, antagonising to who God is, yet he was not swayed by them. He chose to only allow the Father to influence Him.

Do we have Fathers in our lives? – people who will speak into your life without fear or favour? Could be your spiritual leaders in the church. A pastor. A LG Sect Ldr. A LG Leader. Someone more matured in the Lord.

- Secondly, choose whom we are influencing

Pastor Lee Peng & I find ourselves not saying somethings or making a comment on a situation or on a person, in front of Natalie. We may not be wanting to say anything bad or negative necessarily. But what we want to say is not helpful to Natalie. So we don't say it while we are with her. Why, we are mindful that we are to be a good influence to her.

We do certain things and we do not do certain things out of our choice to want to influence.

Jesus knew who He wanted to influence – 12, 72, 120, 3,000.
He was intentional.

The call to live strategically is a call to live intentionally Intentionally channelling the godly influence we have received into the lives of others.

This evening, as I stand here, guess who are the people I have chosen to influence. You! Because I've chosen to influence you – my dressing is intentional.

My message is intentional. 6 hours were spent – praying over the thoughts, typing, retyping, looking at the slides, praying again. Talking with the programming team, etc.

And because I have chosen to influence you, the 6 hours were strategically used. I didn't spend them aimlessly or involved in idle leisure that benefits nothing. I spent the 6 hours (or more) productively because I chose to influence. I didn't choose to just deliver a 40 min sermon. My delivery of this message comes from my determination to influence 400 people this evening.

You've got your 400. You've got your 40. Or you've got your 4 whom you want to influence. People are looking at us. We are light. And I believe people want to follow us, as we follow Christ. There are people waiting, whose lives we can speak into. People whom you guide so that the God given purpose in them can be realised because of you.

Note: sometimes, the people whom we want to influence, reject our influence.

It could be due to various reasons. For one, light can be very painful for those in darkness. It can be extremely uncomfortable. But sooner or later, they adjust to the photons that enter into their cornea and they become comfortable (they also realise with light, comes sight and colors. Comes wonder. Comes real life!)

The point is : Be consistent with the people whom you choose to influence. Consistency is a vital aspect of a strategy.

- Using our resources – time, relationships & skills

Time

Relationships – marriage, kids,

Talents & Skills – only to secure an employment and receive salary ?
Or is there more?

Money – Spending, investing wisely? Giving sacrificially?

Holes in the pocket. Oil leak. Late for appointments. We abhor wastage.
Guess where we got this trait from?

God is reminding us to live strategically. No wastage of our lives!

I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.”

Note the double emphasis on where Jesus is putting us. Jesus is the One Who puts us. And where He puts us, He doesn't waste.

Where we are, friends, is a divine placement.

The Great Strategist placed us. And where He has placed us, whether it is in our family, our neighbourhood, among our friends & colleagues, we are to shine.

Conclusion

“But, I can’t. I don’t have resources. I am weak. I lack.” If it is God who has placed us, then wherever we are, is a blessed state in spite of challenges!

Earlier verses of Matt 5, in Matthew 5: 3- 5 says ³“You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule. ⁴“You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you. ⁵“You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.