

Salt, Light, and Persecution

Matthew 5:10-16

July 16th, 2017

Big idea: In living out the beatitudes, Christians will be salt and light but they may be persecuted.

Intro

Pattern in Matthew of alternating narrative and instruction. 5 major messages. We are in the first and most famous – the Sermon on the Mount – from chapters 5-7.

How should Christians interact with the world around them?

Some argue that Christians should totally withdraw from the surrounding culture in order to be faithful to the Lord.

John 18:36 Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world.

2 Corinthians 6:17 "Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,"

1 John 2:15-16 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

They see the dangers of compromising. They see the value of distinctiveness as Christians. And they are right.

Unfortunately, impact on others is minimized because there is so little contact.

This view can also minimize the danger lurking in our own hearts.

Temptation is viewed as something that is "out there" rather than also "in here."

Issues of personal preference or conscience can be made into issues of "separation"

One person this week writing that men shouldn't be wearing shorts and referenced 2 Cor 6:17 as his support.

Historical examples: monastery movement

Others react the opposite way and say we need to accommodate to the world. Christians should evolve with a changing culture to relate to the culture in order to reach people.

Jesus attended the world's parties and interacted with sinners. Mark 2:15

Paul addressed the people Athens at Mars Hill by quoting their own poets and starting where they were already at. Acts 17:22

Paul became all things to all men to win them. 1 Cor. 9:19-23

They argue that we must immerse (rather than separate) so that we can have real connections with people to point them to Christ.

Unfortunately, impact is minimizing because there is so little contrast.

The motives may be good, but the method is flawed.

Tends to reshape Jesus and Christianity to reflect cultural values.

Downplays whatever is culturally unpopular.

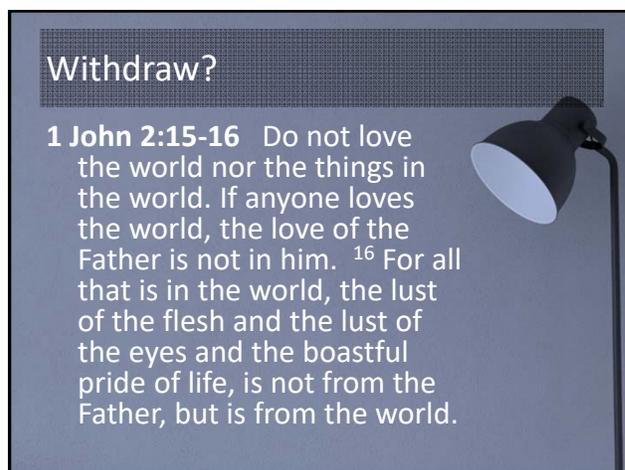
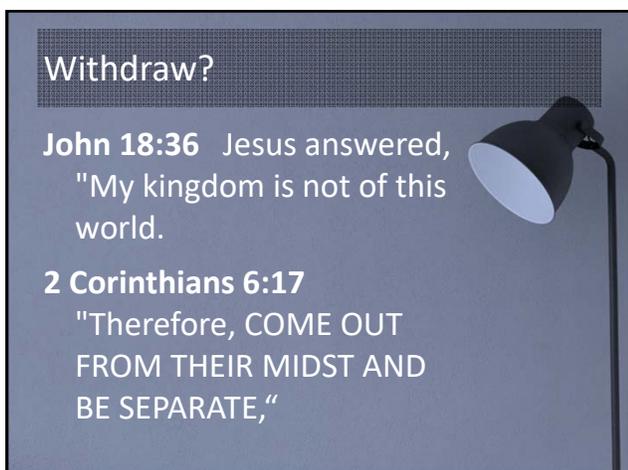
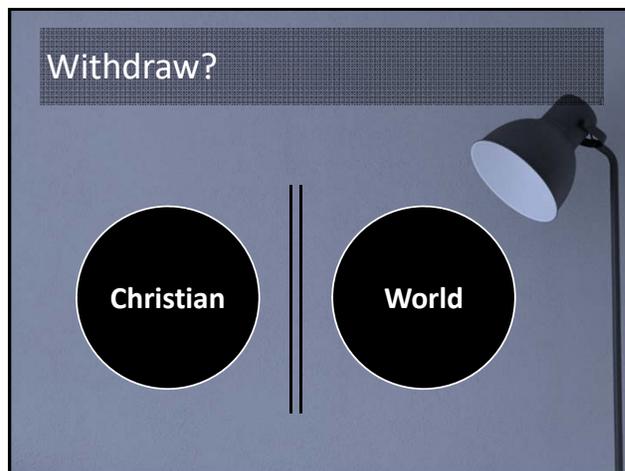
Historical examples: Early 20th century liberalism – rejecting miracles, inspiration of scripture, etc. that “modern minds” might find unpalatable.

1. Christians should **engage** with the world instead of **withdrawing** or **accommodating**.
 - a. Jesus describes His people as salt and light who engage with the world while not conforming to the world.
 - i. In but not of the world, influencing but not mimicking the world, contributing but resisting, engaging and disengaging, aligning yet distancing, loving some things but hating others, serving yet confronting.
 - ii. Living as resident-aliens
 1. This world ultimately isn't our home, but this country, state, city, neighborhood, job, school is my present home and I should work for its good.
 2. We are the King's Ambassadors
 - iii. **John 17:15-19** "I do **not** ask You to **take them out of the world**, but to **keep** them from the evil one. ¹⁶ "They are **not of the world**, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "**Sanctify** them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have **sent them into the world**.
 1. Best application of **all** these elements – no taken out but kept, not of but sanctified and sent into
 - iv. **1 Peter 2:9** But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
 1. Notice the purpose clause – “so that you may proclaim. . .”
 2. Distinctiveness and mission
 - v. Maintains the need for holiness and the call for impact.
 - b. Sometimes the world will **mistreat** us for following Jesus. (5:10-12)
 - a. Variety of terms to describe a range of mistreatment – persecute, insult, falsely say all kinds of evil.
 - i. **Luke 6:22** Blessed are you when men **hate** you, and **ostracize** you, and **insult** you, and **scorn** your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.
 - ii. Ranges from the children being bombed in Sudan to the awkward social exclusion by family to neighbors not letting their kids play with your kids.
 - iii. Peter listening to this was a real person. He didn't know then that he would publicly deny Christ at one point to evade persecution. Later, he would repent and then in his first letter encourage other Christians to stand strong in persecution. He would later be killed for following Christ.
 1. **1 Peter 3:14a** But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed.
 2. **1 Peter 4:14** If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.
 - b. This mistreatment is because of Jesus.
 - i. “for the sake of righteousness” and “because of Me”

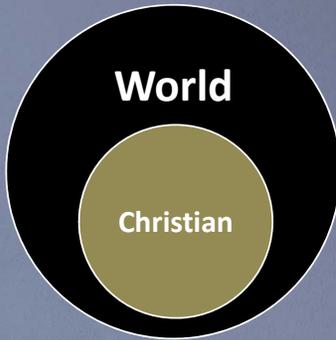
1. **1 Peter 2:20** ²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.
 - a. Not referring to suffering because you are lazy on the job, rude in your responses to people, harsh
 2. **John 15:19-21** ⁹ "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. ²⁰ "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.
 - a. Jesus said this in first recorded sermon. He said it again on His last night before His death.
 - ii. Culture says – personal autonomy is king. Christians say – Jesus is king.
 - iii. Culture says – be true to yourself, “you do you” – “hey, that’s not my thing but you do you.”
 - iv. Christians say – Jesus is King. Vast diversity under the king in styles, preference, personality, conscience in grey areas, etc. but when the King has spoken, that’s the authority.
 - c. Blessed not because the mistreatment is enjoyable, it’s a bad thing.
 - i. Not for the mere sake of persecution, that is always something to be regretted.
 - ii. **1 Timothy 2:1-2** First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, ² for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity.
 - d. How can we respond with joy when persecuted?
 - i. Look to the future – your eternal reward (v. 12a)
 1. Reward – father could simply tell his son to do a chore because of his authority. However, he may choose to say, “do this chore and as a reward I’ll take you to the movie.” Is it wrong of the father? Would it be wrong of the son to take the reward?
 2. Tells us where the reward is located – heaven
 3. Tell us that it is great
 4. Doesn’t tell us what the reward is.
 5. Reward referenced in Mt 5:46, 6:1, 2, 4.
 6. Reward is not salvation – that’s given freely to those who realize they don’t merit a “reward” but come with empty hands.
 - ii. Look to the past – God’s followers have experienced this before (v. 12b)
 1. Believers are to look both backward and forward to place their suffering in context. It’s not unique, it’s not forever, and it’s not ignored by God.
 2. The prophets would surely have been told – you’re on the wrong side of history!
3. As Christians follow Jesus and engage with the world they act as **salt** and **light**. (5:13-16)

- a. Indicative not imperative – You are the salt of the earth, not BE the salt of the earth.
- b. Salt of the earth
 - i. Up to 11 different uses for salt that have been suggested as the meaning behind this – preservation, sacrifice, peace, friendship, wisdom.
 - 1. Key seems to be in Jesus’ statement about it becoming “tasteless.”
 - 2. Used as a distinctive seasoning – add a little bit to soup and it dramatically improves the flavor.
 - a. Making chicken broth, add carrots, onion, spices, but the key seems to be the right amount of salt.
 - ii. We are to have a distinctive influence on the world.
 - iii. How can salt be made tasteless? Only if it is mixed with impurities or diluted
 - 1. If it is indistinguishable from the rest of the food, why add it? It has no value?
 - 2. Salt in Jesus’ day was often not pure but contained other minerals. The true salt could be leached away, leaving the other minerals. Useless for food but would apparently be tossed on paths to keep down weeds.
 - 3. Not a passage of judgment warning Christians that if they are not “salty” enough then Jesus will reject them eternally.
 - a. The point of the passage is influence. There is zero influence if there is no distinctiveness. But there is also zero influence if you are not in the world.
 - b. Revisit withdraw, accommodate, or engage models
- c. Light of the world
 - i. “Are” not “BE”
 - ii. Israel was to be a light of the nations
 - 1. **Isaiah 42:6** ⁶ "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,
 - 2. **Isaiah 49:6** ⁶ He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
 - iii. Now Jesus’ followers have that role as they reflect Jesus, the true light of the world.
 - 1. **John 8:12** Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."
 - iv. Purpose of the light is to be seen, folly to cover the light. Just like the point of salt in food is to add taste, pointless if no flavor.
 - 1. Can’t hide a city on a hill, folly to cover a lit lamp. That’s isn’t the purpose of the lamp.
 - v. Command – “Let your light shine” – is based on your identity as “lights” reflecting the true light of the world.

1. It is a borrowed light, a reflected light made clear by the fact that the end result is they would glorify your Father who is in heaven.
 2. Book, *Fool Moon Rising*.
- d. They may see your good works –
- i. Living out the beatitudes – humility, mercy, peacemaking
 - ii. Assumes they are living in close enough proximity to observe these areas of your life.
 - iii. Not advocating for self-righteous boasting
4. Applying the key ideas
- a. Build **relationships** with people who don't know Christ while maintaining **fellowship** with believers.
 - i. Work, neighborhood, soccer team, school.
 - ii. Not so consumed with outreach that you neglect fellowship – recipe for compromise – but not so consumed with fellowship that you neglect the world.
 - b. Practice moral discernment to distinguish **compromises** and **connections**.
 - i. Which movies to watch, which music to listen to, etc.
 - ii. But trivialize if we make it only about these things.
 - c. Influence the culture one **person** at a time.
 - i. Befriending the lonely and outcast, neighbors over to dinner
 - d. Don't assume mistreatment means you are doing something **wrong**.
 - i. We all want to be liked and it hurts to be ostracized and lied about. Evaluate to consider whether they are in fact reacting not against Christ but against your abrasiveness.



Accommodate?



Accommodate?

Jesus attended the world's parties and interacted with sinners. (Mark 2:15)

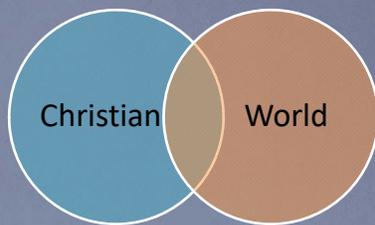
Accommodate?

Paul addressed the people Athens at Mars Hill by quoting their own poets and starting where they were already at. (Acts 17:22)

Accommodate?

Paul became all things to all men to win them. (1 Cor. 9:19-23)

1. Christians should ***engage*** with the world instead of ***withdrawing*** or ***accommodating***.



1. Christians should ***engage*** with the world instead of ***withdrawing*** or ***accommodating***.

John 17:15-18 "I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. ¹⁶ "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. ¹⁷ "Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. ¹⁸ "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world.

1. Christians should ***engage*** with the world instead of ***withdrawing*** or ***accommodating***.

1 Peter 2:9 But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;

2. Sometimes the world will ***mistreat*** us for following Jesus. (5:10-12)

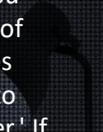
Luke 6:22 Blessed are you when men **hate** you, and **ostracize** you, and **insult** you, and **scorn** your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man.

2. Sometimes the world will ***mistreat*** us for following Jesus. (5:10-12)

1 Peter 2:20 For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer *for it* you patiently endure it, this *finds* favor with God.



John 15:19-21 "If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. ²⁰ "Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also. ²¹ "But all these things they will do to you for My name's sake, because they do not know the One who sent Me.



3. As Christians follow Jesus and engage with the world they act as ***salt*** and ***light***. (5:13-16)

Isaiah 42:6 "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,



3. As Christians follow Jesus and engage with the world they act as ***salt*** and ***light***. (5:13-16)

Isaiah 49:6 He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."



3. As Christians follow Jesus and engage with the world they act as salt and light. (5:13-16)

John 8:12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."



4. Applying the key ideas

- a. Build relationships with people who don't know Christ while maintaining fellowship with believers.
 - b. Practice moral discernment to distinguish compromises and connections.
- 

4. Applying the key ideas

- c. Influence the culture one person at a time.
 - d. Don't assume mistreatment means you are doing something wrong.
- 