

Kingdom Impact

Matthew 5:13-16

Series: The Kingdom Project

Pastor Jarrett Stephens

I hope you have enjoyed this sermon series, *The Kingdom Project*. We are bringing it to a close today. We have spent the last seven weeks talking about the Kingdom of God – what it is and why it's important...and these last two weeks are all about putting what we have learned into practice!

Now, by way of review, I want us to think about all that we have covered up to this point:

- The first week, we defined the Kingdom of God as the rule and reign in our life and talked about there being an “already/not yet” element to the Kingdom. We also spoke in this message about how one becomes a citizen of the Kingdom, and it was Jesus who said for this to happen, “We must be born again.”
- We talked in the second week about “Seeking the Kingdom” and how the Kingdom of God should be the ultimate priority in all of our lives. We said there is nothing more valuable and nothing more powerful than the Kingdom of God and used the “Kingdom parables” of Matt. 13 to make our point.
- In week three, we pulled from what has been termed as Jesus’s “Kingdom Manifesto” – the Sermon on the Mount (that’s actually where we are going back today). We worked this image out...what we called The Kingdom Heart (**SHOW IMAGE**) and what we reflected upon in that message was how a Kingdom heart or having Kingdom character via the Beatitudes was the key to living out a kingdom life...it’s this idea of being leads to doing and not the other way around.
- Week four was about “Bringing people into the Kingdom”. Jesus related the Kingdom life to that of a big party...a banquet. And as his servants he encourages us to go out and invite people into the Kingdom and he tells us that our focus should be on inviting the broken, the lowly, the blind, the crippled...this is who the good news of the Kingdom is for (BTW – that’s all of us!) and we should be “compelling” people...urging people to come into the Kingdom party so that God’s house will be full.
- Week five, we called “Kingdom Conflict”. And just as there is a kingdom of light, there is a Kingdom of darkness and we talked about the weapon at our disposal called prayer that God has given us to call down resources from above as we seek to advance the Kingdom.
- Then last week, we talked about discovering our “Kingdom Purpose”...finding our sweet spot, and that we’d be held accountable for all God has entrusted to us. And

we showed this image (**SHOW IMAGE**) explaining that our “sweet spot” is probably going to be a combination of these four areas of our life: education and skills, passions and interests, spiritual gifting and personal experiences.

And what we encouraged you to do is to text the word, “**Kingdom**” to **77069** and we have provided via our church software an opportunity for you to take a spiritual gift inventory/assessment as well as be informed regarding various ministries both inside and outside the church that you could potentially serve and live out that “sweet spot” that God has designed especially for you.

That inventory and assessment are still up and so if you were not here last week or not able to take the assessment, we encourage you to text “Kingdom” to 77069 and you can do that this week...don’t do it while I’m preaching!

Now, for today’s message we’re going to bring EVERYTHING that we have talked about in this series to a culmination. I’m calling the message: **Kingdom Impact**

THIS is the dream, Champion Forest. Kingdom citizens with Kingdom character who have discovered their Kingdom purpose...it’s these kinds of people that make a Kingdom Impact.

illus. Ripple effect – I used to love when I was a kid throwing a rock into a pond...how big could the ripple effect be? That’s a good image for what we are talking about today.

I don’t know about you, but I want to make the biggest impact...I want to have the largest ripple effect for the Kingdom that I could possibly have with my life.

I’m reminded of the quote by **C.T. Studd** (played Cricket for the England’s national team in 1800’s and became an evangelist, and missionary – he wrote a poem by this name) “**Only one life, ’twill soon be past, Only what’s done for Christ will last.**”

We’ve got ONE shot at this gift of life...the average person in America today is living to the ripe old age of 76. Do the math – that’s 27,740 days. This is how long we have on the average to make a Kingdom Impact...to have a ripple effect with our lives that continues long after we are gone.

Today’s passage that we are looking at is going to show us the way:

Matt. 5:13-16 – “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. ¹⁴“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶In 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.”

Illus. Lanier Lecture – Friday and Saturday, the Irish Theologian, Alister McGrath was in town lecturing at the Library and spending some intentional time with our residents. Amazing our

residents are getting to rub shoulders with one of the most keen theological minds in the world today.

On a panel Friday afternoon, Dr. McGrath along with several other theologians were talking about the role and influence of C.S. Lewis and how he used imagery and imagination to capture the heart and minds of his readers.

One question that was asked of the Theologians was, “What was their favorite metaphor that C.S. Lewis used in his writings?”

Keep in mind this is coming from a man that thought up Narnia. This is the man that wrote *The Screwtape Letters* and introduced us to Uncle Screwtape and his nephew, Wormwood. It was interesting listening to their answers, and it got me thinking about the message today because in this passage of scripture, Jesus uses two metaphors to describe citizens of the Kingdom.

He says we are to be salt and light. Now, I can’t think of a better two images to use to describe HOW we are to make a Kingdom impact than salt and light.

When you think of these images, IMPACT is the word that comes to mind. Let’s look at both of these metaphors in detail, see what we learn from them about impact and then we’ll come back at the end and talk about three areas of our life where Kingdom Impact matters the most.

Let’s look first at this idea of being: **Salt**

We know that salt in the early centuries was extremely valuable. Sometimes people...soldiers in particular were at times paid in salt. We get our word “salary” from the Latin word “salarium” – “sal” – meaning “salt”.

You’ve heard and maybe even used the phrase, “that person is not worth his salt” – what are we saying? He’s not worth his pay!

Salt in the times of the Bible was mainly used as a preservative. There was no refrigeration and so people would take salt and rub it into meat or fish and it would preserve it! This would keep it from rotting or at a minimum delay the decay - that’s impact!

The parallel of course is that as followers of Jesus, as Kingdom citizens, we ARE salt – and as salt we preserve society from the decay of sin.

Sin is the problem. Sin is what distorts and ultimately brings destruction and death to everything it touches. As followers of Jesus and citizens of his Kingdom, we should not be living in a way that is contributing to the decay of this world – that kind of salt according to the scripture, has “lost its taste”...it’s lost its impact.

In the words of Jesus, if we are NOT preserving the culture around us from decay, then (v. 13b) - we’re “no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and be trampled under people’s feet” because we are not serving the purpose for which we have been created.

God designed us for impact...to be salt! I'll work this out more in just a moment, but notice what the text does NOT say!

- It does NOT say, "Act like salt".
- It does NOT say, "Try to be salt".
- It says, "You ARE salt!"

When we become citizens of the Kingdom, our identity changes – and impact is **SHOULD** be an inevitable result...it should come simply by way of **WHO** we are!

- No one puts salt on food and says, "add some flavor!"
- No one when they have an ulcer in their mouth, rinses with warm salt water and says, "burn like the devil!"

Why? Because you don't have to tell salt to **DO** anything...it does what it was created to do – it makes an impact!

So, Christian...Kingdom citizen, if you are not making a Kingdom impact with your life, it's a sure sign that something is off because salt is going to do, what salt does – if not, we've lost the very thing that makes us distinct!

Let's look at this next metaphor: **Light**

Matt. 5:14-16 – "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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 mainly meant to preserve, then light is mainly meant to expose. Isn't this true?

Light exposes the darkness. It's why we have light.

Gen. 1:1-3 – "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. ² The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light."

Jesus refers to himself in **John 8:12 – "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."**

Light exposes the darkness and Jesus in Matt. 5 is underscoring something important about light, and that is it's not meant to be hidden! Its purpose is to expose darkness! No one puts it under a basket, but instead on a stand where all can see!

“Hide it under a bushel?! “NO!” I’m going to let it shine! Jesus says, a city on a hill, can’t be hidden – you’ll see light emanating from it...it exposes it!

Again, we are talking IMPACT! Light impacts the darkness!

Illus. Houston Rodeo – LOVE it! Second most wonderful time of the year next to Christmas! King and Country had us turn on our phones! Bam...lit up NRG Stadium.

I want to emphasize once again here, this is who we ARE! You ARE the salt of the earth. You ARE the light of the world – this speaks to our identity.

Just as if we are not preserving culture from decay as salt, if we are NOT exposing the darkness of our culture around us as light, it’s a sure way to know something is wrong...something is not right...something is amiss!

By its very virtue, as citizens of the Kingdom, we are to be making an impact – we ARE salt and light.

Now, let’s transition and talk about three areas that as citizens of the Kingdom, we must do whatever it takes to ensure we are living out our identity and being salt and light. In these three areas of our life, we can’t afford to NOT make a Kingdom impact.

1. Impact your family

When it comes to being salt and light, it starts at home. We’re talking about making an impact...having a ripple effect...it starts in the home! And it starts with being a Christian! (gospel)

And so, let me ask you mom...dad...grandma...grandpa...IN the home, are you by your attitude and actions preserving the faith and preventing decay? Are you letting your light shine in the home, so that darkness has no place to reside?

Eph. 5:8-1 – (this precedes the verses that talk all about the home!) **“for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰ and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹ Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.”** We talked about this a couple of weeks ago...there is a Kingdom of darkness, led by a prince of darkness that has forces of darkness that wants to keep you and your children and grandchildren in darkness...

And let me start with the dads in the room, and just exhort you today to holiness! Don’t flirt with ANYTHING that is dark! “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, instead expose them!”

- Get the software that blocks pornography...
- Make sure you are checking your kid’s phone...

- Get nosy and get in their business...

They may not like it now, but they will appreciate it down the road, and if you have small children, now is the time to start so they don't know better!

Make sure, you are bringing God in your home through prayer. Parents, let your children see you reading your Bible. Tell them what you are praying for them and over them. Model sharing your faith, blessing your neighbor, working as unto the Lord.

Let them see a commitment to Christ and his Church over sports and travel and activities

- They need to see mom and dad seeking first the Kingdom.
- They need to see mom and dad bringing others into the Kingdom?
- They need to hear mom and dad talking about spiritual things?

THIS is being salt and light, and this is how you can ensure you are making a Kingdom impact in your home.

2. Impact the lost

God has put people in your path every single day that need to know Jesus. They are in your circle of influence...and they are there for a reason!

- It's no accident you live in that neighborhood, next to that person that doesn't know Jesus...
- It's no accident that you work in that office complex...cubicle up next to that lost person...
- It's no accident you go to school and have that class and just so happen to sit next to that person who doesn't know Jesus...

God has put people directly in your path so that you could be "salt and light" and impact them for the Kingdom! And the best way you can impact them is simply by letting your light shine.

Matt. 5:16 – "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."

Warren Wiersbe – "Good works are simply works motivated by love, energized by the Spirit, and done to the glory of God."

What "good works" could you start doing to influence someone...impact someone for the Kingdom?

Illus. Empower Conference – Talking about a “Sending Church” – was asked where God put it in my heart to be a “sending church”, and it all started with Pastor Curtis Cook and Hope Fellowship Church (granola bar – card – “good work”).

Last year, we had our BLESS initiative, where we simply asked you to be praying for your neighbors and how you could BLESS them:

- Begin in prayer
- Listen

Col. 4:5-6 – “Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time.⁶ Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.”

Some of you could make an impact simply by cleaning up your conversation in how you talk to those far from God!

Listen, I get that sometimes salt by its very nature is going to agitate. Simply by the way we live and the way we make decisions...the way we operate, we are going to rub the kingdom of darkness wrong. Our values are different.

There’s a reason Jesus said in the verses immediately preceding these that you are blessed when you are persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

Jesus knew that if we had a Kingdom heart, and we found our Kingdom purpose, we’d make a Kingdom impact, and the world won’t like it!

But please notice WHAT Jesus said – it’s blessed when you are persecuted (Matt. 5:10-12) for righteousness’ sake NOT blessed when persecuted for being a jerk! There’s a difference!

I harp on this because I see it more in more in this social media world – we pop off at the mouth...at the keyboard and some of us are losing our distinctiveness as salt and ruining the impact we could be having on the very people God has called us to reach!

Some either don’t realize what they are doing OR it may be you are wearing criticism as a badge of honor thinking you are standing up for righteousness when in reality you are speaking truth, but it’s not in love and therefore it has no chance of being heard. As Paul wrote whatever is not in love is just a clashing cymbal...you’re just making noise.

We can stand for righteousness and do it with character...with honor...with sincerity...and speak to those who believe differently than us with “salt”...that’s how Kingdom impact is made.

Phil. 2:14-15 – “Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...”

illus. Fair Werewolf woman – that difference makes the difference!

Kingdom citizens should look different...and act different BECAUSE they ARE different! We are salt and light! Let your light shine...your good works be seen!

- Begin in prayer
- Listen
- Eat
- Serve
- Share

One of the things I love about this passage of scripture the most is that the word, “YOU” is in it’s emphatic form – meaning, “you and you alone”, but it’s also in the plural, meaning, “together, you.”

As we seek to make a kingdom impact in the lives of those that are lost, we’re not in it alone...we are in this together!

Illus. Salt Shaker – I’ve painted the picture like this before!

- Neighbor that has never gotten it – you faithfully pray for them, talk with them, you find ways to serve him or her...they see your Easter sign in the yard each year and watch you pull out to go to church on Sundays...
- Neighbor goes to work and guess what? – he works in the cubicle next to this Kingdom citizen over here. And you help them out on a project, you listen to them, don’t agree with some of his standpoints/viewpoints, but you don’t judge him or look down on him, you simply love him...
- Neighbor/Co-worker goes to the gym to workout, and runs into you, another Kingdom citizen over here. You give him a spot...you create conversation and simply in the way you interact with him, he knows that you are different. You invite him to church, you bring up spiritual topics with him...
- And then this neighbor has children and happens to be on the same team as your child over here. You have his boy or girl over to play with your children. You invite him over for dinner, begin to ask questions, be involved in his life....

And typically, what happens is a big boulder called a trial or trouble will fall into the person’s lap. Whether or not it does or not, doesn’t really matter because one day something will cause this person to start doing the math.

His neighbor who loves and serves him, he always sees headed to church. He catches his co-worker reading his bible during his lunch break...that guy he works out at the gym with who has a pleasant demeanor has invited him to church on numerous occasions...this family that has

invested in his children and had them over for dinner that are so fun to be around and normal...they are all believers!

And all of the sudden, this man figures out that the God of the universe is pursuing him and calling him to himself through ordinary Christians being the salt and light they were created to be!

And please notice in this illustration, it was not about trying to be salt and light. The believers in this story WERE salt and light and simply lived out who they were in their daily life – people saw their good works...how they lived...their everyday activity and together they influenced...impacted someone who was lost for Jesus!

THIS is the kind of impact I'm talking about. Kingdom impact...impact your family...impact the lost...and third and finally:

3. Impact our church

Our FOCUS statement is as follows: **Champion Forest advances the Kingdom by making disciples** (FOCUS priority #1), **loving our community** (FOCUS priority #2) **and strengthening the Church** (FOCUS priority #3).

You want to make an impact in your church. It's starts with joining...membership is important! (Just had a membership class).

It's important because you need community AND accountability. You need a place where you get recharged...we've been saying it all series long...the local church is an outpost for the Kingdom (explain).

It's amazing the church...because here you have a family...it's a big family and like in any big family you have some strange uncles and cousins, but they are family...and you love them.

You need the church...it's called in scripture, the buttress of truth. It's here that we preach and teach God's Word...that we worship together...that we give and serve so that needs are met.

Jesus calls the church, his bride...and he loves his bride. And therefore we should to. Listen, there is NOTHING better going than the church! We're NOT perfect...we have our issues...BUT there is NOTHING better!

And just think about the Kingdom Impact you could make as give your life first to Jesus and then to his church.

- You can make disciples (students, kids, life groups)...
- You can help love your community (local missions, school partnerships, CMC)...

- You can strengthen the Church at large by giving and going on mission all over the world...

And when we do this, we are letting our light shine and making a Kingdom impact...we are advancing the Kingdom of God.

So, Champion Forest, these three areas of your life, you can't afford to miss on: Be salt and light and impact your family, the lost and our church.

The Kingdom Project...what would happen if every member of our church decided today, THIS is what I want...the difference we could make in our world. May it be so.

Let's pray.

Please Note: This document is not meant to be a published, cited, annotated research paper. It is simply a transcript of a spoken message, provided as a resource. Many commentaries, articles, and other sermon helps were likely studied and contributed to the forming of this message.