

The Culture of Mission

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[0 : 00] Let's turn to Matthew chapter 5 for our Bible reading. Matthew chapter 5, beginning at verse 11. And if you have one of our big church Bibles, you will find that on page 810, 810.

Now, if you've been here in recent weeks, you'll know that Willie has been preaching through the Beatitudes, the first verses of Matthew chapter 5. And he's now going on to this second section in which Jesus, the Lord, begins to talk about the mission, the culture, the meaning of what it is to be a disciple.

So I'm reading from chapter 5, verses 11 to 17. Jesus says, Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 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.

[1 : 23] You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 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.

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.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. Amen.

This is the Lord's word to us, and may it be a blessing to our hearts today. Well, if you would turn with me to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5, page 810, if you have one of our visitors' Bibles.

And we're looking particularly this morning at verses 13 to 16. Our calling as Christians is, first and foremost, a missionary calling.

[2 : 28] Because with Jesus coming, God's people will at last begin to fulfill the true destiny that they were called for from the very beginning.

Now, in Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament promises that God would have at last, a people to bring his glorious light to the very ends of the earth.

A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, as Peter calls the church, quoting Moses' words from Sinai when God first called to himself a people Israel, to be a people to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And Jesus says, that is what my coming at last brings to fulfillment. Verse 17, don't think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets with all their great promises for God's people and their destiny.

Never. I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. And so, to fulfill through you, my followers, all who have faith in Christ, to fulfill through you the promise to Abraham that through his offspring, all the nations of this world will be blessed.

[3 : 49] God's people in Christ have a missionary calling. That is the purpose of all true Christians, according to the Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore, God's people must also exhibit to that whole world a true missionary culture.

Our very presence in this world is to have a radical countercultural witness to the reign of King Jesus.

And that is exactly what Jesus pictures for us in these images in verses 13 to 16 of salt and light. You see, he's saying that the climax of God's plan of salvation reaching all nations in Christ is fulfilled through the radical countercultural witness of the king's rule seen and expressed in the world by the ambassadors of that rule, by the church of Jesus Christ, as it lives out in this world so as to bring glory to God our Father in heaven in Jesus' name.

He's making the crucial point, isn't he, that the message of Christ's kingdom is inseparable from the messengers. Verse 13, you are the salt, not just the salt seller.

Verse 14, you are the light. You're not just the lamp stand. And just as Jesus' person is inseparable from his message, so it is with his people.

[5 : 17] I am the light of the world, says Jesus. Look at verse 14. You are to be light in this world. Don Carson, I think, puts it helpfully when he says, the norms of the kingdom, that is the Beatitudes, worked out in the lives of the heirs of the kingdom, constitutes the witness of the kingdom.

And you see, what Jesus is saying here is in a very real sense, the messengers are the message. Now, we know how real that is, don't we? Think about the world of politics, just for an example. The personal standing of a leader has a huge effect on his message, and on that message's credibility.

That's why the Parliamentary Labour Party today, or at least many of them, are aghast at having Jeremy Corbyn as their leader, because they feel that he's not taken seriously, and therefore their message won't be. Think of Mrs. Merkel, the Chancellor of Germany.

The events over recent months of the immigration crisis and so on has given her a reputation of battering among her public. And therefore what she says is now not taken nearly as seriously by the German electorate, because the messenger is intimately tied up always with the message.

Just think what message the American people are sending to the political elites in Washington by voting in their droves for Donald Trump. They're sending a message, aren't they? It's quite a rude and brash and in-your-face message, like the man.

[6 : 49] And in the same way, a country's ambassador becomes both the messenger and, to a large extent, the message of the sovereign and the government, taking it to another realm.

He's to conduct himself in word and in deed so as to convey the will and purpose of his sovereign and his government, and to pursue his sovereign's best interests in that sphere of responsibility that he's given.

And you see, in just that way, Jesus, the king, places his trust for his mission to the world into the hands of his ambassadors, that is, his people, his followers.

What is your plan for the advance of the message of your kingdom in this world, Lord, they ask, as it were. And Jesus says, you're the plan.

Now, don't misunderstand that. Jesus does not say that we as the church are somehow building the kingdom of God or that we are ourselves in any way remaking this world or saving this world.

[7 : 56] There are those in the Christian church who use that kind of language today. I think it's unhelpful. I was rather uncomfortable a few years ago when I attended the Lausanne Congress in Cape Town.

And the strapline of the conference, which was this, God in Christ reconciling the world to himself. Now, that sounds very good and biblical. But actually, I don't think it is.

It quotes from 2 Corinthians 5, verse 19, but it misses out one crucial word. Do you remember it? Was. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself.

If you leave that was out, all the focus moves from that past, from that once-for-all work of Christ in history, into the present, into what we as the church are doing today.

And that, in turn, very often tends to move the whole focus onto the temporary improvements in the world that we're able to make today, instead of the message of rescuing people from this passing world for an eternal world.

[9 : 01] So we need to be very careful. Paul is very clear when he's speaking to the Corinthians there. He says it was the work of Christ alone that was God's saving intervention in this world.

But it is to Christ's people, first through the apostles, then to the rest of the church, it is to Christ's people that this message of reconciliation is given and entrusted.

We are to be ambassadors of that message to the world. And that is our true calling. It is to proclaim the great day of salvation in the world. That is the mission of the church.

What does that mission look like then? And what will these missionary ambassadors be like if the world is to understand the message, to get the message from God? Well, verses 13 to 16 give us a picture.

It's a composite picture of what it means to be a truly missionary people. And it's a picture, isn't it, of a total counterculture.

[10 : 03] Utterly distinct, utterly conspicuous, standing out and visible to our world. That's just what we should expect, having read the Beatitudes, because we've seen, haven't we, that Jesus' kingdom is an upside-down kingdom.

And it will turn this world upside-down with its message. And that's what's pictured in these analogies of salt and light. Both are things that the world needs desperately to save it from decay, to save it from darkness.

And both are good and healthy. And yet, there are also things which are very often unpopular. And clearly, Jesus sees these two pictures as belonging together and having the same essential thrust.

So again, I think it's rather unhelpful the way these two things are often divided, as if Jesus was saying two very different kind of things to the church. And that the church is to have two very different and distinct focuses in its mission, each with its own importance.

I'm sure you've heard people speak that way. So to be like salt is for us to do good works so that people will see these good works. And it'll be a good witness to them. And then to be light is also whenever we have the chance to speak the gospel message when they have the opportunity.

[11 : 21] And that's just one other aspect of the church's mission. One obvious problem with that interpretation, if you look at verse 16, is you'll see, in fact, it's in verse 16 when Jesus is talking about letting your light shine, which in that interpretation is about speaking the gospel.

It's there that he says, in doing that, people will see your good work and glorify God. So it doesn't really make sense of the text itself, does it? But more concerning is that that kind of approach that wants to take the mission of the church and make it a careful balance between social work on the one hand and gospel ministry on the other, like two blades of the scissors it's sometimes put.

Well, in practice, nearly always, if not always, that has led eventually to the loss altogether of gospel ministry, leaving only the vaguest form of Christian philanthropy.

And so you hear people, don't you, quoting that saying which was supposedly made by St. Francis, I don't know if that's right or not, that saying that says, well, we must go everywhere preaching the gospel, but use words only if necessary.

You heard that? That's a lot of nonsense. We mustn't be taken in by pious sounding phrases, by pleasant feeling aphorisms.

[12 : 43] That is not something that Jesus or the apostles teaches anywhere ever in the New Testament. Come back here to Matthew 5 and let's get very clear. Any idea about different strands of mission or different emphasis in the church's task, it is nowhere in Jesus' mind at all in what he's saying here.

What he is saying, clearly, is that the church which will make any impact in this world, in what it says and what it does, is a church that is distinctive and conspicuous and counter-cultural in every way in this world.

That is the missionary culture that alone will have any effect in this world for time and eternity. That's the simple point that Jesus is making here. And both salt and light have the effect that they do precisely because they bring something distinct, something noticeable.

A distinctive taste and flavor. A distinctive light and viewpoint. That's the key. It is conspicuous Christianity that will impact the world and its culture.

Not inconspicuous Christianity that simply mirrors the world and its culture. And that's why, of course, real Christian ministry and real Christianity will always be divisive.

[14 : 11] Always. Look at verse 16. Yes. People will come to see the light through this gospel ministry and give glory to the Father in heaven through bowing in obedience to faith in Jesus Christ.

Hallelujah. That's what happens. But don't forget verses 11 and 12. Look. Many will also revile and slander and persecute both the message and the messengers.

Just read the book of Acts. That's what you see. Page after page. Witness that leads on the one hand to praise of God through Jesus Christ but also accompanied always by pain and persecution.

and it's no different today. So let's be clear. The point that Jesus is making here is a single unified point.

A missionary church and a missionary culture must be a conspicuous counterculture. That alone is what will lead to people coming to know the Father through Jesus Christ and bringing praise to his name.

[15 : 19] If the church is not distinct and conspicuous and different from the world in its belief in its behavior in its morality in its message and according to Jesus here it's no good for anything except to be cast out and trampled under people's feet.

Now that's sobering for us isn't it? Especially in a day when our culture has moved so far from its Christian moorings in the past that the kind of church that will be popular and acceptable in the world will be a church that is under great, great pressure to conform to the culture in the world.

To have the praise of the media to have the praise of the government by being true to British values whatever that is. And to have the approval of the gender and sexuality police that are so vocal today in our society.

What was it Jesus said though? Woe to you when all men speak well of you for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

No, my true ambassadors says Jesus will be useful and effective and fruitful only if that is not so. If their true light of truth shines unmistakably and uncomfortably exposing the darkness of this world.

[16 : 41] And if their salty flavor is unmistakable bringing a disinfecting sting in order to arrest the rottenness and the decay in this world. You see it is a great challenge what he's saying here to stand up and to stand out in this world in that way.

But there are two shades I think two shades of color in the picture he uses. He gives us these two images. And I think we can learn from each in turn. From salt that saves from decay and from light that saves from darkness.

So let's think about salt first. Jesus says we are salt to preserve and to disinfect a world that is in decay as a consequence of human sin.

Verse 13 You are the salt of the earth. That sounds a pretty daunting responsibility to be called to be anything for the entire earth.

But I think it's even more daunting when we actually understand the metaphor Jesus using in Jesus' day and still today in many parts of the world. The chief use of salt was as preservative.

[17 : 52] To preserve meat from decay from putrefying. And unless you preserve it like that in hot lands well left to itself it would simply rot. It would be destroyed.

And Jesus is applying that preservative idea to the needs of human society. And can you see how offensive that is to say that?

What he's saying is that our human society is just like that. It's rotting. It's decaying. Left to itself it is corrupt. It is putrefying. It's disgusting.

That's not at all a sort of anodyne image is it? That's not at all affirming the culture and saying oh the church must integrate with the world and cherish its culture. It's the opposite of that. He's saying this world is rotten and decaying.

But I don't think it takes us too much thought to realize just how true Jesus' words actually are. People have to blind themselves to it. Of course they do but they like to think that people are basically good at heart that society is just getting better and better.

[19 : 01] Things can only get better. Remember that one? But that is far from reality isn't it? Back here on the real planet earth that we all live on. Whatever the most optimistic liberal can say the truth is that there are no depths to which even the most civilized and advanced culture will not sink given the right circumstances.

That's what William Golding knew and was writing about in his famous book *The Lord of the Flies* just the reality of the fallenness and decay in the human heart. Recently I've been re-watching a long drama series a historical drama of World War II called *War and Remembrance* and it was almost unbearable at times to watch the depiction of some of the horrors of the wickedness and depravity of these Holocaust death camps in Germany.

perpetrated by a nation of high culture and intellect and engineering right at the very heart of European civilization.

Things perpetrated by educated people by progressive people by enlightened people but so debased and evil and cruel and vile. And the great scandal was that all around the world the allied nations dismissed reports of what was going on when brave people were smuggling out to tell them the terror of what was happening and asked them to help and people poo-pooed it and said oh that could never happen people could never do that even the German people could never sink to something like that and the world hid from the reality of the dark horror in the human heart and still today we have to face up to these realities don't we all the time the corruption the putrefaction of our human society left to itself whether it's the abuse of children in care even from those in religious orders never mind the perverts that stalked the BBC in recent decades or the elderly or those

I was listening to on the radio this week about people with learning difficulties being treated so shamefully by the very people who are meant to care for them and love them some of you perhaps heard on the radio this morning or this week in the today program of the diaries of the man living in Rakhine under Eisel and the terrible things that were happening in that ghastly dark part of the world today think of the endemic corruption the scandal of FIFA the Olympic Committee and on and on and on and on it goes everywhere is Jesus so wrong is he being gratuitously offensive about our world I don't think so remove the restraints of law and of accountability in human society and the results truly are frightening are they not think of what we see when countries descend into civil war and the rule of law is suspended it is anarchy and it's terrifying look at the chaos today on the borders of Greece and Macedonia look at the horrors in the camp there in Cali or just think back a few months to those terrible floods that there were mainly in the north of England in Cumbria do you remember those poor people having to leave all their houses and then going back finding not only had they been flooded but they had been looted and Jesus

[22 : 43] Christ says left to itself this world is rotten and it will only decay more and more morally and socially and spiritually but you he says to his followers the church you are my answer to that you are the salt of the earth to be a preservative and a disinfectant in the midst of a rotten and decaying culture and that sounds very very arrogant to many people today and if you are not a Christian you may think that is the height of arrogance but that is the word that Jesus is speaking and it is staggering but the answer to the world's decay through the consequences of human sin is to be the missionary culture and call of the church of Jesus Christ now again as I said not of course that the life of the church in the world alone can ever reverse the decay and prevent or reverse the consequences of sin of course not we're not the world's savior and clearly there are limitations the picture itself makes that plain salt can't totally reverse the decaying and rotting process but Jesus is saying that the church's task in this world is to help preserve this world from its self destructive tendencies so that

God will through the gospel of Christ call out from this world a people to the salvation that he has won for them in Christ's great reconciling work this world needs to be preserved in existence doesn't it so the gospel can do its work in the world for eternity think right back to Genesis think back to the covenant with Noah that's what it was all about wasn't it God must preserve the world so that his redeeming purpose can go on and be fulfilled in the world there has to be people in the world there have to be people coming to natural birth that God is going to call to spiritual birth for eternity and that is part of the calling of the Christian church and of every Christian disciple world preservation society preservation now again some people might think that sounds laughable but listen I think history itself bears witness to the staggering power of the church's witness in this regard both directly and indirectly go right back to the early church to the

Grisha Roman world just for one example the vast scale of rescue of abandoned infants when they just used to leave unwanted infants out in the cold to die off on their own when they discarded ones that were the wrong sex or the wrong shape or the wrong color or whatever and the church on a huge scale began to rescue these unwanted babies that led to the beginnings of the formation of orphanages and of caring for children and the church had such an impact on that Roman culture that in the end that whole practice died out and actually when you think about it the whole of the modern western world today owes so much in its institutions and its rule of law and so so much beside it owes so much to the fruit of the impact of Christianity in the Roman empire that's just simple fact as is the influence the vast influence over the last 500 years of

Protestant Christianity particularly in northern Europe and North America I think of 18th century Britain there are many many secular historians who readily admit that very probably it was the impact of the evangelical awakening through men like Whitfield and Wesley and others that saved this country from bloody revolution as happened in France and other places and of course also unleashed so many social reforms and penal reforms and many many other great goods the abolition of the slave trade under Wilberforce and the Clapham sect so many things as a result directly or indirectly of the Christian message taking a grip on society and culture the Christian faith impact as a as a disinfectant as a preservative in society has been simply huge over the last 2,000 years in our western world but it's not just on a national scale not just on a global scale these things are true it's true also on the level of individual congregations and churches a church can have a huge impact on its community

I remember an evangelical minister some years ago telling me about the impact that he had seen of 20 years of real gospel ministry in a church in an inner city place saying that the whole nature of the culture of that housing scheme had been impacted and changed and it was visible even in extraordinary things like the differences in people's gardens 20 years before they had just been filthy dumping grounds for rubbish 20 years on people were beginning to take care and tend their gardens as an expression of their Christian faith and the influence that that had had in their lives it can happen in a village in a small town the impact and the change of a real Christian fellowship in the midst it can happen on an individual level too a little salt can go a very long way can't it the kind of conversations that happen in an office or in a classroom or in a school staff room or in a shop floor can be changed whether even one or two or three

[28 : 36] Christian people there the bedside manor in a hospital the impact of a few Christian families all in one school can change the culture of that school can impact the culture of that whole neighborhood see we're not to think of preservation solely in negative terms stopping decay it's not as though Christians are to be like some kind of sterile antiseptic that leaves a bad taste in the mouth I think the image of salt implies something flavorsome Jesus mentions doesn't he that the taste is a key thing and when it's used properly salt brings out the very best it brings out the taste in the food and that is what the Lord wants his disciples to do wants indefinable perhaps but just right to our surroundings to our relationships he's not talking about in your face sanctimonious moralistic behavior not at all that turns anybody off too much salt gives you high blood pressure and too much of that kind of

Christianity certainly gives people high blood pressure that's not what he means now Jesus is meaning that his followers are to exhibit truly flavorsome Christianity just as the right use of salt draws attention not to the salt but to the flavor of the dish and Christians lives he is saying are to spread the flavor the fragrance of the Lord Jesus Christ that's the kind of distinctive missionary culture that will inevitably in the most natural of ways open up conversations open up questions we should give a reason for the hope that's within us Paul when he speaks to the Colossians in chapter 4 he says we have to be wise towards the outsider that means our speech must always be gracious and yet at the same time he says salty it's to be distinctive conspicuous noticeable is different that's what will provoke the inquiries but of course that is not always easy is it because the truth is that often salt will also sting that's what makes it distinctive and that's where this hits home isn't it because sometimes wholesomeness real goodness it will condemn evil just by its presence even without saying anything just by its existence it will offend it will arise opposition in those who hate the way of Christ and that's why Jesus precedes verse 13 here with verses 11 and 12 telling us that if we live distinctly for him we will also arouse slander and evil and persecution it's just as

Paul says in 2nd Corinthians 2 isn't it the flavor of Christ the fragrance of Christ to some is the aroma of life but to others it will always be the stench of death they hate it and yet often even though it is grudging people can't help seeing something that attracts when the church does live out its distinctive creed and culture unashamedly and it makes them even against their better judgment need to search for the light I was so very encouraged a few years ago when somebody who was in a same sex relationship was drawn to our church here at the very time when because of our stand on the biblical position on marriage and sexuality for the sake of Christ we were being pilloried in the press and held forth as homophobic and all of these insults and things and in the midst of that that person was drawn to this church here and to the message of

Christ and the light of Christ Christ and Christ and the God because they saw something and heard something that had a flavor and a fragrance of heaven because we were willing to be distinctive and conspicuous amidst the insults the slurs and so on and that brings us to the second image that Jesus says we are light to penetrate and dispel the darkness of a world that is utterly confused because of human sin and again just think how offensive that is to say that because Jesus is implying that without him this world is in utter darkness that it's blind that it's lost that it's helpless and the task of Christian mission according to Jesus is to bring light the light of the gospel of Christ into a dark and few confused and blind and helpless world that's what the prophet

Isaiah spoke of as we saw last week that in the Messiah at last God's saving light would shine to the ends of the earth and that it will be carried in that day by the people of Christ that's what Paul understood so clearly when he applied those words of Isaiah the prophet to himself and the apostles ministry we he says are lights to the Gentiles to bring salvation to the ends of the earth but this is very crucial that light be under no illusion that light is an offensive light and that's why no sooner had Paul uttered those words than people were trying to kill him and throw him out of the city and throw him out of the region because the true light of God will always offend this dark world because it confronts the world and shows it just how dark it really is listen to Paul explaining what his mission of salt and light was given to him by the risen Lord on the road to Damascus listen to Paul explaining in Acts 26 what it's really all about he says I am sending you says the risen Lord to open their eyes to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of

[34 : 54] Satan to God so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among the sanctified by faith in me do you see how offensive that is to be told that you are blind that you're in bondage to the devil that the only possible way you can have right standing with God is to repent and to obey the Lord Jesus Christ uniquely and his call upon your life but Paul says this is no more than what Moses and the prophets said would come to pass and he says so we go everywhere telling people to repent and turn to God and perform deeds in keeping with repentance and for this reason he says this reason people are always trying to kill me you see a true missionary culture is not not an anodyne culture of friendly philanthropy no one will try to kill you for doing that will they you start up a thousand soup kitchens and you'll get an OBE but stand up in our culture as a city set on a hill a lamp on a stand committed to shining the light of that offensive message to the world around showing the way to the light and sharing that way to rescue and to safety to come out of darkness into light to come out of the bondage of Satan to God only through the Lord Jesus

Christ and him alone spend your life doing that and people might try and kill you they will certainly revile you and hate you and slander you but friends our world is dark it is morally and socially and spiritually dark and that is why people are falling over and crashing into each other and injuring themselves that's what happens in the dark isn't it you get up in the dark and you fall over a chair and you injure yourself that's our society today marriages and families are crashing falling apart injuring themselves because they're in darkness and the social cost alone is enormous never mind the spiritual ethnic rivalries people are crashing into each other and destroying each other because they're in darkness confused and disillusioned young people in our culture turning to drugs turning to delinquency ending up in despair because they're in darkness so many people's lives are living in confusion but they're searching for light often they need the light but they don't know where to look so they look anywhere and everywhere go into the bookshops look at the spirituality sections they're full the books offering help for this that and the next thing utterly bizarre some of them utterly bonkers and the Lord Jesus Christ says to us to his people to his church he says that's what you're here for you are here to show the way to the truth and to the life you yourselves in your life as my church in your conspicuously different distinct missionary counterculture that shines light to this world notice Jesus doesn't say you've got to become this he says you are this

I've called you for this in the world and for the world so be what you are fulfill your calling be true disciples and he warns us doesn't he in verse 13 if we aren't fulfilling our calling if we aren't fulfilling our whole purpose for being on this earth we're no good for anything if something doesn't do what it's supposed to do on the tin it's no use we had the bread maker out the other week to make a loaf of bread and the yeast must have been old and useless and the bread came out like a brick had to go in the bin and so did the yeast have to go in the bin just like salt that's lost its saltiness it's no good for anything it's no longer conspicuous and distinct it's just the same as the dust all around but that's not what I called you for says Jesus I called you to be followers and fishers of men to shine brightly distinctly in this world to draw people to my light and if that is your calling you need to have a real conspicuous presence in the world a real missionary calling demands a real missionary counterculture that stands out that is distinct that's like salt it flavors but it also stings and it's like light which brings clarity but it's not always welcome when it shows up the dirt and the decay but only such a distinctive counterculture will stem decay and will give flavorsome wholeness to people's lives and will penetrate the moral and the spiritual fog and the darkness with the clarity of the true light of heaven and that will be noticed it will be opposed people will revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on

Christ's account yes just as all through the world this world has hated those who have spoken the true word of heaven on earth but friends that is the only way that the people of our world will be woken up and led out of darkness and pointed to our heavenly father as verse 16 says they will see our good works that true witness unashamed to witness to the uniqueness of God made known in Christ and then they will praise our father in heaven that's the good work that Jesus is talking about here not not philanthropy not not making men praise our goodness that's what Jesus goes on to slam the Pharisees for all the way through the Sermon on the Mount they had a great reputation their good works for the poor made them highly prized in society that's the very kind of religion that will be applauded by the government that will get on thought for the day that'll be a special guest on songs of praise of course no says Jesus but the good work the great work of a distinctive witness to the glory of God in heaven through his unique revelation in Jesus Christ his son and through his gospel that is what brings glory not to us not to us be glory given but to God and to his name we're called to be like concealed lighting not not drawing light to ourself but to the object of beauty that we want to honor and shine the glory of our wonderful God you are the light of the world that glory will come to your father in heaven well does that all sound very daunting does that all sound like an enormous challenge well friends yes it is but fear not because this is what God has called us to be salt and light for the world it's his doing and he will do it because Jesus himself who is the true light of this world Jesus has sent his

Holy Spirit into our hearts if we belong to him so that his own light will shine through us if we follow him and obey him and fish with him in this world because he came not to abolish the law and the prophets but to fulfill them in and through himself and in and through all who are united to him by faith think of that think of the spirit of fulsome vibrant perfect flavorsome winsome humanity the humanity of the Lord Jesus himself think of that coming into our hearts so that we can shine for him before men and women and bring glory to our heavenly father that is the wonderful calling that is the the wonderful privilege that we have as Christian believers and when we do shine yes there will be opposition and reviling and persecution and slander there will but there will also says Jesus there will also be those who come to see whose eyes are opened and who come to the light of the Lord

[43 : 57] Jesus Christ and find the glory of heaven and a heavenly father who loves them and it will save them from ever and ever so if you're finding it a struggle as I think we all do a struggle to live for Jesus day by day at school at work with your friends perhaps in in your home with your family with your husband or your wife with your children with your parents be encouraged remember our wonderful calling that Jesus himself has given forgiveness don't hide it rejoice in it think of these verses and take hold of this promise of the Lord in verse 16 let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who's in heaven and they will if that is how we live and walk and speak so let's encourage one another shall we to shine for the Lord Jesus

Christ unashamedly openly conspicuously distinctly to shine for him and to go on shining always amen heavenly father our desire is that we should bring glory to your great name and we thank you that you have chosen us and called us to follow your son the Lord Jesus Christ and so to receive the Holy Spirit of his perfect risen humanity into our hearts that he may shine even through us despite our sin despite so much in our lives that still would cloud the light of Jesus so powerful and penetrating and wonderful is his light of the world that even through us people might see the light of the glory of the gospel of Christ in the face of Jesus Christ and bow to him and bring glory to you oh help us Lord we pray and help us to encourage one another to withstand reviling insults and false evil to return it and meet it only with good and love and clear testimony to our Savior and so lead us we pray as a people of light to lead others also into that light for the glory of our Father in heaven and of Jesus Christ our Savior in whose name we pray

Amen harvest jig warm