

**The Sermon on the Mount  
The Power of Your Influence (Part 4)**

**Matthew 5:13-16**

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Well, let me just begin by saying to those of you who might be our guests this morning, that this morning's going to be a little different than what we normally do. If you want a sort of taste of how we normally work our way through the scripture, go back and listen on the internet to last Sunday, or come back next Sunday, and you'll get a little more of a taste for that, as John is ministering here. Obviously, I'm not John MacArthur, but it's the same approach to the scriptures.

But today, I want to do something a little different. I want us to get a little broader biblical and historical perspective of this passage that we've been studying. I was reminded as I was thinking about where I wanted to go this week, that language evolves and changes, as does our understanding of that language. I think one of the most fascinating things is when, in a short period of time a word or a phrase drifts so much from its original meaning, that it actually ends up meaning the opposite. That's happened in our lifetime. When I was growing up back in the sixties and seventies, if something happened in the boy's locker room (which unfortunately often happens in boys locker rooms) that was really disgusting or you know just way out of touch with what should have been done, you said something like this. Oh man, you are sick. That is sick. And you meant disgusting, distasteful. Well, that has changed. A few years ago (and you can see this in the Oxford English Dictionary) there are four listings in the Oxford English Dictionary for *sick*. And the first three are really bad. They are things like, you know, physical illness, vomiting, mental illness. And Number four is 'excellent'. How did that happen? Well, a few years back somebody started thinking it would be a good idea to say, if something was excellent, oh man, that's sick. It's exactly the opposite, within my lifetime. As I thought about what happens with the language and with our understanding of the language, I was reminded of the fact that I think we as Christians are in danger of allowing that same kind of drift to occur in the meaning of the salt and light metaphors that Jesus uses in the Sermon on the Mount.

Today, what I want to do is back up and examine the drift that has already occurred pertaining to these metaphors, and I want us to consider how to correct it. Let me invite you again to read with me, as a starting place for our study, Matthew 5:13-16. After the beatitudes in describing what the people who are in His kingdom are like, Jesus says, in verse 13:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

As we have studied this passage together, I've reminded you that the basic thrust of these verses is this: If you belong to Jesus' spiritual kingdom, if you are truly a Christian, if you are His disciple, then God has given you an amazing power of influence on the world around you. And He summarizes that influence and its power with those two images, salt and light. He says in verse 13, we are the salt of the earth. Just as, in the ancient world, salt served as a preservative against rotting and decaying meat, Christians are a preserving, purifying influence in the world in which we live.

A second illustration that Jesus uses is in verses 14-16. We are the light of the world. And last week we learned that Jesus here teaches us here four very specific truths about the power of our influence likened to light. First of all, our influence is illuminating. It brings light into the darkness and allows the reality to be seen. It shows up that which is dirty and filthy, and by our presence we also show that which is good and desirable and attractive. Just as turning on the light in a room exposes that which is filthy and that which is beautiful, so our presence does in the world. We learned that our influence is inevitable. Like a city with all of its lights burning at night, built up on a mountain, can't be hidden. Neither can our influence as believers be hidden. It is inevitable. It will happen. If you're a Christian living as a Christian, you will have influence. Our influence is predetermined. Verse 15 says the person who lights a lamp does so to put it on the lampstand so that it lights the house. The person in the metaphor doing this is God. God has made us a light. He has put us in a dark place, in the place in which we live, the place in which we serve and minister, and He has the idea of our being light. That was His intention. He predetermined to put you in the dark place where you are with the intention that you would be a light. Our influence in verse 16 is prescribed. Jesus makes it very personal. He says, let me tell you what you need to do. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven." Now last week we worked our way through this passage and what it teaches. And if you missed that, you're welcome to go back and catch up on the internet with us.

This week, I want us to step back from this passage and take a more historical view of how this passage has been interpreted. Because over the last hundred and fifty years, this passage has been misused and abused in various ways. Let me give you just a few of the common ways it has been misused. First of all, we can say it's been misused to justify not sharing the gospel directly.

Well, I'm just being salt and light. I don't really need to open my mouth and share the gospel with people at work or school. I'm just going to be salt and light and it will be okay. That's not what this passage is teaching. Being salt and light is more than simply being somewhere.

Secondly, it's been misused to summarize the church's mission. People have come to this passage and said this is the mission of the church in the world—to be salt and to be light. A third misuse is, it has served as an apologetic for the church's political involvement in various cultural and ethical issues. We're to be salt and light, so the church needs to speak out on every ethical and every cultural issue, issue statements, be involved in politics. We're to be salt and light. A fourth misuse of this text is to urge the church to emphasize humanitarian causes.

And a fifth abuse or misuse of this passage for some is, they identify being salt and light—and frankly the entire Sermon on the Mount, as the basis on which we are made right with God. You need to do these things, and if you do these good works, then God will accept you. In Catholicism, in liberal Protestantism, and in all false religion, good works are part of the basis on which a man gains a right standing before God. For example, one anathema in the Council of Trent, which was a mid 16<sup>th</sup> century Catholic response to the Reformation reads like this. "if anyone says that the righteousness received in justification is not preserved and also not increased before God through good works, but he says that those works are merely the fruits and signs of justification already obtained, but not the cause of its increase, let him be damned" Couldn't be clearer. Good works are how we increase our right standing before God according to that.

Now, those are all misuses and abuses of this text, but what is the legitimate use of this passage in the context in which it occurs, and in the context of the rest of scripture? I want us to look at that this morning. Now, as we begin (and again put on your seatbelts) I want to give you a broader historical perspective. We are very easily tied to our times and subject to our times. But over the last 150 years, there have been three great historical shifts on the view of this passage and the church's role as salt and light. Let me just give them to you briefly. Now, I'm going to use some phrases and things that I will try to explain, but if you aren't with me on every step it's okay. You'll get the full sweep of what I'm trying to say.

First of all, the first movement that happened in the history of the church that affected this was the impact of liberalism. What's liberalism? Well, it began in the late 1800s. The prevailing philosophy of the time was rationalism. Rationalism says, by my reason—by human reason, we can get to the truth. And that gave birth to religious skepticism in those that were connected to Christianity. It began with several German theologians and eventually spread across the globe. These liberals, as they're called, were anti-supernaturalists. They believed God made the world, but that He never intervened in any miraculous way in the world in which we live. They rejected the possibility of all miracles. But they still wanted to hold onto some form of the Christian

faith, so they denied everything miraculous in the scripture. That included the miracles of the Old Testament, the miracles of Moses, of Elijah and Elisha. In the New Testament the miracles of Jesus, even the resurrection. They even denied the reality of the miracle of the new birth, or regeneration. Now, strip that all out and what are you left with? You're left with Christian behavior. You're left with what they call the ethics of Jesus—living like Jesus lived. That's when Sheldon wrote his book asking the question "what would Jesus do?" If spiritual salvation is not the goal of the Christian mission, what is? Well it simply became doing good. Doing good to your fellow man. Making the world a better place to be. So liberalism, then, became consumed with humanitarian causes. Liberal Protestantism came to believe that the church should change its mission from the salvation of individual souls to the salvation of society. Let's save the world. This new approach was called the social gospel. I think the best description of the social gospel I've read was that of H Richard Niebuhr, who wrote this: This is the social gospel. This is liberalism in a nutshell "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the work of a Christ without a cross". God isn't angry with sin, in fact men have no sin. You can get into the kingdom easily, and Christ came but He didn't need to die. That's liberalism. They denied everything miraculous about our faith.

In response to liberalism came the rise of fundamentalism. In the early 1900s, in response to liberalism, fundamentalism was born. Now in spite of the pejorative sound of that term today, fundamentalism began as a legitimate defense of the truth of the scripture. We stand on the shoulders of those men who in the early 1900s were fundamentalists. That's when men such as J Gresham Machen, the great Princeton theologian defended the scripture. But because of the flood of liberalism, a number of true believers who had defended the truth started other organizations. It was during the 1920s that a slew of Christian organizations were founded. That's when you had Christian colleges like Wheaton and Bob Jones and Los Angeles Baptist Bible College were begun. That's when Westminster Theological Seminary was begun, Dallas Theological Seminary, etc. They were all begun in defense of the truth, against liberalism. In fact, Machen left Princeton and in 1929 started Westminster Theological Seminary. In addition, the church in which he served left the denomination that he served in and started the Orthodox Presbyterian Denomination, which unfortunately today has followed in the same path as what they came out of. Men who were true to the scripture defended it against attacks in areas like the virgin birth, the deity of Christ, the inerrancy of scripture, the reality of biblical miracles—that's fundamentalism.

But as the years passed, fundamentalism broke into two distinct groups. One of those groups we call ultra fundamentalism. These were the men, who having fought the battle against liberalism, loved fighting, and just kept fighting everybody that showed up on the horizon. They began to fight other true Christians about all the issues on which they disagreed. They became ultra separatists. This is the fruit of organizations like Bob Jones and others. This view is still alive and well today—ultra-fundamentalism.

The other group that sort of broke out of that original fundamentalism, let's call evangelicalism. In the 50s and 60s and 70s this group was the core of orthodox Christianity. And as a whole, they maintained the biblical priority of the gospel. They defended the truth of scripture against liberalism without succumbing to the excesses of the fighting fundamentalists. But this has changed. You need to be very clear on this. We call ourselves evangelicals, and rightly so. But evangelicalism has become a huge umbrella that covers a lot of things that we would never be comfortable with. Over the last thirty years evangelicalism has completely lost its biblical and theological moorings, and a biblical understanding of its mission. And who knows, the time may come in the near future when some new response is necessary, and a J Gresham Machen of our age needs to stand up. But that's where we are for now.

Now the third historical movement on this issue has largely arisen within the last twenty years, the recent influence of the emerging church. From evangelicalism, from those who call themselves evangelicals, arose a young group of men who were very much at odds with the seeker-sensitive churches in which they'd grown up, and rightly so. But they also were heavily influenced by post-modernism--the idea that either there is no truth, or if there is truth, we can't know it. Typically, that's where they stand. The leader of the movement that was called the emerging or emergent church was a man named Brian McLaren. He became the spokesman, really. He has denied in writing the reality of hell, the substitutionary atonement of Christ, and other key doctrines that we all believe and love. So obviously, then, their Christianity couldn't be about doctrine, couldn't be about the truth. So instead, their Christianity became, again, about the ethics of Jesus. McLaren, for example, believes that Jesus' message is "about poverty, slavery, and a social agenda. It is not about justification from sin." For McLaren and others, they have fully embraced the theology of liberalism.

Many others in the emergent movement have embraced the ethics of liberalism. They have called their approach, and this is a keyword for you to know, they've called their approach *missional*. McLaren defines that word *missional* this way. It is a generous third way between the conservative personal savior gospel and the liberal version of it. "My *missional* calling, he writes, is blessed in this life to be a blessing to everyone on earth—to help our world get back on the road to being truly and wholly good again, the way God created it to be." Another major voice in the emergent movement has become famous through the Nooma video series. A man named Rob Bell writes this "...for Jesus the question wasn't how do I get into heaven, but how do I bring heaven here? The goal isn't escaping this world, but making this world the kind of place God can come home to. And God is remaking us into the kind of people who can do this kind of work." They change what was called the social gospel in liberalism into what is now called social justice.

Now although the emergent movement today has been fractured and splintered in a number of ways, their rebranding of the ethics of liberalism has remained. And here's the key, folks. The reason I trace all of that, is it has hugely influenced mainstream evangelicalism. If you listen to the radio, if you read Christian books, these ideas will be there and you may not even be aware of them. Let me give you a couple of quotes of voices that are attached to evangelicalism saying things like this today. Now, I'm not criticizing everything these men have said or written. Please understand that. All I want you to get is that they have been influenced, as we all can be easily by these ideas, that are relatively new in our day, and are really liberalism rewarmed. Francis Chan, in his book *Crazy Love*, which I know a number of you have read says the church should be "about alleviating suffering in the world. Much of the poor's daily hardship and suffering could be relieved with access to food, clean water, clothing, adequate shelter or basic medical attention. I believe that God wants His people the church to meet these needs". David Platt, in his book *Radical* writes "as we meet needs on earth we are proclaiming a gospel that transforms lives for eternity." As we meet needs—that's the gospel. Tim Keller writes "the purpose of Jesus' coming is not just to bring personal forgiveness and peace, but also justice and shalom to the world. The work of the Spirit of God is not only to save souls but also to care and cultivate the face of the earth, the material world." N.T. Wright, a British theologian who, frankly, is drifting further afield from classic orthodoxy writes this "the gospel is the announcement that Jesus is Lord—Lord of the world, Lord of the cosmos, Lord of the earth, of the ozone layer, of whales, and waterfalls, and trees and tortoises." Of course we agree that he's over all things. But here's the key. "As soon as we get this right, we destroy at a stroke the disastrous dichotomy that has existed in people's minds between preaching the gospel on the one hand and what used to be called social action, or social justice on the other." In other words, we need to see, that's the gospel, too. The practical result of all this has been to downplay the proclamation of the gospel in evangelical churches and to emphasize humanitarian causes. Today, for example, there are well-meaning Christians and churches who are busy digging wells in Africa to alleviate human suffering, which I'm fully supportive of, but they do so without ever directly sharing the gospel.

What does the Bible teach? How should we apply, as individuals and as the church, these salt and light metaphors? Well, we've seen the broader historical perspective and I've just given you a whirlwind tour of that, but let's move secondly to a deeper biblical perspective. Last time I gave you a broad outline of how we are to let our light shine in the world. Jesus says let your light shine. How do we do that? Well, in the New Testament, there are three primary ways that we as Christians serve as light to the world. First of all by our character. By being a picture of Jesus and the gospel. Listen, if you are the kind of person described in the beatitudes, you will be salt, you will be light. It will happen, because you will be so radically different from the people around you. So we are light by simply being who we are supposed to be in Christ. Secondly, we are light by our good works, by living out the implications of the gospel, by what we do. And thirdly, we are light by our message, by proclaiming Jesus and the gospel.

Now today, I want us to look just at the second of those in more detail. Because in Matthew 5:16, Jesus specifically refers to our light being our good works. Look at verse 16. "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven" Now, again, last time I showed you, throughout the New Testament, how all three of these are how we are light.

But here, Jesus specifically identifies one of them—good works. And I want us to look at that. We are to let our light shine by our good works, by living out the implications of the gospel. But I want to take that apart a little bit. And I want to begin by asking, what are good works? What do we mean? What does Christ mean by good works. Let me just give you a short list of affirmations. Number one. First of all, to be good works, they must be works done by one who is already a Christian. Here's the first place, frankly, that many Christians get confused. Let me ask you a question. In the sight of God (I'm not talking about how we judge each other) in the sight of God, can an unbeliever do anything that can properly be called a good work? Think about that question for a moment. The biblical answer to that question is no. Let me share several references with you. Jeremiah 13:23. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then you also can do good who are accustomed to doing evil." If a man can change his nature, his DNA, if an animal can change its DNA, then you can change your soul's DNA, and you who are accustomed to doing evil can do something good, God says. What's the point? It's not going to happen. It's impossible. We can't change our nature, who we are. In Matthew 7:18, (we'll get there in a while, I'm not making any promises) Jesus says a good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. It's impossible. The kind of tree you are, the kind of person you are, indicates the kind of fruit you bear.

But let me take you to Romans 3. Paul is indicting, in Romans 3:9, all of humanity--Greeks and Jews, all of humanity. They're all under sin. Notice what he says down in verse 12 of Romans 3. "ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE." From God's perspective, not a single person who is unregenerate does good. Now, Paul expands on this a little bit over in chapter 8. Look at Romans 8. Paul is drawing a contrast between those who are in the flesh, that is unregenerate, they're not believers, they haven't been changed, they don't have a new heart--and those who are regenerate, those who are truly Christians. Notice what he says in verse 6.

"For the mind set on the flesh (*that's an unregenerate person, that kind of mind*) is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so (*now watch verse 8*) those who are in the flesh (*that's all unregenerate people*) cannot please God."

They can't do anything good from God's perspective. In Hebrews 11, the writer of Hebrews explains that a little more. You remember in Hebrews 11:6 he says "without faith, it is (*what?*) impossible to please God. He who comes to Him must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him" Now, of course, this issue was at the heart of the reformation. Martin Luther argued that it is impossible for unbelievers to do anything that can be properly be called a good work. Why? Because to be a good work it must be done as an act of faith in the true God. Luther said good works are works that flow from faith, and from the joy of heart that has come to us because we have forgiveness of sins in Christ. So good works, then, can only be done by one who's already a Christian.

There's a second important thing to learn about good works. Everything a Christian does, and here's the important caveat, if it is done for the glory of God, is a good work. Now, obviously not everything we do is a good work. We sin. We do things for the wrong motive, the wrong reasons. But everything that we as Christians do with an eye to the glory of God is a good work. There's an interesting verse in 1 Peter 2:12 where Peter says we are to keep our behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that because of our good works, as they observe them, they may glorify God. What's interesting about that verse is, in context, you know what the good works are? The good works are avoiding fleshly lusts, and submitting to human authority in all its forms. It's not some great humanitarian effort. Everything we do, if done for the glory of God, is a good work. Again, I like Luther's take on this. He says, all the world talks about doing good, but do you want to know how you are to do good? "Fear God and be just. ( In his terms, in other words, be justified, be a justified man, a true believer.) And then do whatever comes before you. This way, all will be well done even though it is no more than loading manure or driving a mule." I love that. That's Luther, isn't it. You might be shoveling manure, but if you do it with a view to the glory of God, here's a way for me to serve my Lord in the place He's put me, doing this menial work--then it is a good work. He goes on to say "I would pick the work of a Christian farmer or maid even if it were very coarse, in preference to all the victories and triumphs of Alexander the Great, Julius Caesar, and other heathen. Why? Because here is God, there is the devil." So understand, everything a Christian does, if it's done for the glory of God is a good work.

Number three. Although that's true, the Bible specifically identifies certain types of work as good work. The Greek words that are translated *good works* in Matthew 5:16 are used a number of times in the New Testament. And I'm not going to take you to each passage because we don't have time to do that, but let me briefly survey them with you. You can jot them down in your notes if you want to and look them up later, but this will fill out your understanding of what the New Testament means by good works. Taking those same Greek words and tracing them through our New Testament, let me just give you the major part of them. These are most of them, not quite all of them but pretty close. Matthew 26:10, Jesus said to the woman who anointed Him, you remember, with the oil for His burial. He said she's done a good work. That



means worship is a good work. In John 10:32, Jesus says I've done many good works in My ministry. For which of these do you stone me? And of course their response was, we're not stoning you for the good works You've done, but because You claim to be God. But Jesus was saying, during My ministry in healing people, in caring for people's needs, I've done many good works. In 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul writes that the work of an elder is a good work.

But I want you to look at 1 Timothy 5 with me because Paul, here, defines some of what is meant by good works. 1 Timothy 5. He's talking about those widows that are to be supported by the church. Verse 9. "A widow is to be put on the list only if she is not less than 60 years old, having been the wife of one man, (*Now watch verse 10*) having a reputation for (*here's our expression*) good works." Notice the word *and* is in italics in the New American Standard. That means it's been added by the translators. So he just continues by saying, "if she has" so what you have here is a sort of brief list of what those good works are that she's to have a reputation for. Here they are: she's brought up children, she's shown hospitality to strangers, she's washed the saints feet. That doesn't mean a ceremony in the church; that means she's willing to do menial work on behalf of someone else. If she has assisted those in distress. Now the Greek word for *distress* describes a full range of problems and trials in life: caring for people who are sick, visiting them in jail, caring for them in the middle of the death of someone they love, etc. So, all kinds of distress. And if she has devoted herself to every good work. Now, the expression good work there at the end is different from the one at the beginning. You know what Paul's doing? He's saying, listen, this isn't an exhaustive list. Here are a few examples of good works, but if she's devoted herself to every kind of good work. So, things like these. So these are good works.

You go to verse 25 of 1 Timothy 5, potential elders are to have a pattern of obvious good works. 1 Timothy 6:18, wealthy believers are to be rich in good works. What that means is, they're to be using their resources to help others. Titus 2:7, we read it this morning, Titus as a pastor and a young man is to be an example of good works. And in the context those good works are listed: purity in doctrine, dignified, sound in speech which is beyond reproach. But I want you to look with me at Titus 2. Here's another key reference. Again, we read this a few moments ago. Titus 2 :14 says: "Jesus gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds." Now you tell me in context what are the good deeds? They are the opposite of lawless deeds, deeds that are out of keeping with God's law. That means, in context, good deeds are those activities and actions that reflect God's prescribed law, His word. In reality, the contents of the entire book of Titus illustrate what those good works are like. In fact, look over at 3:8. He says, I want those who have believed in God to be careful to engage in good works. Down in verse 14 of the same chapter, Christians must learn to engage in good works to meet pressing needs. In context, by the way, if you look at the preceding verse, in this context, good works—it's taking care of missionaries. Hebrews 10:24 says part of the reason we come together for corporate worship on the Lord's day is to

stimulate one another to love and good deeds. In other words, we encourage each other to love God, to love each other, and to do good works, like the ones we've seen in the rest of the flow of the New Testament. So, there's how the words *good works* are used in the New Testament.

Now there's a similar Greek expression that uses a different Greek word for *good*. Let me just highlight a couple of references, and again, I'm not going to go there. You can look them up if you'd like to on your own. One of them is in Acts 9:36, of Dorcas. You remember, the woman in the church who had faithfully served others. In the New American Standard it's translated deeds of kindness, or something like that. But it's really another word for *good*. She did good works. And in that text it's described as, she made tunics and blankets and things for other people in the church. In 2 Corinthians 9:8, good works are described as helping the poor Christians in Jerusalem who were suffering through drought.

I wanted to look at one other passage though, that really figures to what we're talking about this morning. Look at Titus 3:1. Because here, he's talking about unbelievers.

"Remind them to be subject to rulers, to authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good deed, to malign no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing every consideration for all men."

These verses have to do with how we as Christians are to interact with unbelievers. And one of the things we're told to do is to be ready for every good work. So, those are what are called *good works* in scripture.

Now, I'm going to come back to that. Let me move forward with one other point before we do. One other point about good works. Our good works are never inherently good. But they are indicative of true faith. The good in any of our works is always of God. In fact, I love what John Calvin says. "Not only our persons, but even our works are justified by faith alone." You understand that when we do good things, there're always defects in those things that we do? It's always mixed with sin. We can never have perfectly pure motives. I've never done a single thing in my life from a perfectly pure motive, and neither have you. They're always mixed with sin. And so, if God ever receives something you and I do as good, it is solely by grace through the work of Christ. But our good works are one of the ways our light shines in the darkness, and, and this is key. The presence of good works in our lives proves that we have truly become Christians. I wish I had time to take you to James 2, but read it or go back and listen to the series I did on James 2:14 ff, where James says, listen, you want to prove that there's real saving faith in your life? Lets look at your works. Works don't save, but the kind of faith that is not followed by works is not true saving faith. If you've made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ but your life is not characterized by good works, then it wasn't true saving faith at all. You're not a Christian. Again, Luther says, works are fruits and signs of faith. "God will not judge by your

name, whether you were called a Christian, but He will tell you if you are a Christian, tell me where the fruits are by which you can prove your faith." That's exactly right. So, then, we are the light of the world. We are the light of the world by our character—by being a picture of Jesus and the gospel, by our works--by living out the implications of the gospel, and by our message—by proclaiming the gospel.

Now that brings us to a crucial question that we need to answer before we're done here this morning. What is the balance between those different ways our light shines? How do we balance being the right kind of person with doing the right kind of things, with sharing the right message? And that brings me to one final point I want us to consider. Showing good works to the world is not the mission of the church. You say, wait a minute. What about Matthew 5:16? Well, the heart of this issue has to do with properly understanding the role we have as individual Christians vs the role and mission of the church as a whole. Let me say that again. You've got to understand the difference between your role as an individual Christian, and the role and mission of the church as a whole. We could ask the question this way. Are good works the mission of the church to the world? What does the Bible say is the church's mission to the world? Well, I did a message on that back a few years ago when we were going through a study of the church on Sunday night. You can go back and listen to that if you want. But let me just give you an outline. Basically, the church's mission is defined by a mission that is vertical, to God, it's horizontal, to the church itself, and it's outward to the world. To put it in its simplest terms, the church's mission includes God, the church itself, and the world. What is the church's mission to God? If you look in the New Testament, it's to worship and to guard this truth right here—to guard and pass on this truth. The church's mission to God is to worship Him and to guard His truth, and to pass it on the next generation. The church's mission to itself. Our mission to one another is to equip the saints, to practice the discipline of the church, to encourage mutual edification (that is to build one another up in the faith) and to practice mutual care. To take care of each other in all those ways we read about good works this morning. When believers are going through trouble of various kinds. That's our mission to the church.

What is the church's mission to the world? Simply put, it is to make disciples of Jesus Christ. Turn back to a familiar passage at the end of Matthew's gospel. Matthew 28. Within two weeks of Jesus' resurrection, he ordered that all of His disciples throughout the land of Israel gather in Galilee. Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 15 some 500 disciples gathered. And in that context, (the eleven were there as well) notice what Jesus said to them in Matthew 28:18.

“Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching theme to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Folks, that is the church's mission. That is repeated in other places in the gospel. It's also repeated at the beginning of the book of Acts, and that's what you see lived out through the church in the entirety of the book of Acts. That is the church's mission.

Now, in case you think I'm the only one saying that in a world where there are other voices, listen to a few other voices. William Hendricksen, the great commentator writes, "it is the business of the church to shine for Jesus. It should not permit itself to be thrown off its course. The primary duty of the church remains the spreading forth of the message of salvation, that the lost may be found". Martyn Lloyd-Jones. "the great hope for society today is an increasing number of individual Christians. Let the church of God concentrate on that and not waste her time and energy on matters outside of her province." D.A. Carson, a contemporary theologian. He writes "it's hard to ignore the many injunctions of the scripture to do good, to be concerned with matters of justice, to show mercy, to care for the poor, to be concerned with matters of justice. If all such responsibilities belonged to the church as a church, to the church as an institution, then surely the leaders of the church should take responsibility for them and direct them. But what we find in the New Testament is that the leaders were careful to carve out for themselves the primacy of teaching the word of God and Prayer." You know what Carson's saying? He's saying, look at the New Testament pattern. You don't see the New Testament pattern of the church involved primarily in humanitarian projects. John MacArthur writes "when people look to the church to end poverty, halt human trafficking, bring drinking water to Africa, or cure AIDs. They are looking in the wrong place. The church is not commissioned to do any of these tasks." In a book, a recent book, a contemporary book that has been written that I would strongly recommend to you by Kevin D. Young and Greg Gilbert called *What is the Mission of the Church* they write this. "In all our passion for renewing the city or tackling social problems, we run the risk of marginalizing the one thing that makes Christian mission Christian. Namely, making disciples of Jesus Christ. We believe the church is sent into the world to witness to Jesus by proclaiming the gospel, and making disciples of all nations. This is our task. This is our unique and central calling".

In fact, when we do good works as I showed you on our little journey through the New Testament, where are those works usually focused? On fellow believers. Galatians 6:10. "So then while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith" In Matthew 25, you remember the judgment where Jesus says, I was hungry and you fed me and I was thirsty and you gave me to drink. He says this, in verse 40. "Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of mine, even to the least of them, you did it to Me." That's the issue. In Hebrews 6:10, "God is not unjust to forget your work and the love which you've shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." Understand, the primary focus of our good works is to be other believers. But not exclusively to believers. There are Christians who believe that our good

works should be solely directed to other believers. But that's not the teaching of the New Testament. Listen again to Galatians 6:10. "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially those of the household of faith." In Matthew 5 (we're going to get there) in the end of Matthew 5 Jesus says I want you to do good to your enemies, because God does good to His enemies. In Luke 6:35. "love your enemies, do good, lend expecting nothing in return;" then you will be like God. You will be sons of the Most High. I Thessalonians 5:15. "Do good for one another, and for all people."

So, stay with me. Our good works to unbelievers (we are to do good works to unbelievers) It's to be primarily believers, but we are to do them to unbelievers, and when we do them to unbelievers, they are to be governed by two clear biblical principles. Number one. Those good works are never to be an end in and of themselves, but are always to serve as a platform for the gospel. Listen, does it really matter if you alleviate human suffering and watch their souls slip into an eternal hell? That's the point. Even in Matthew 5:16. You remember? Jesus says let your good works be seen. Let them shine. Why? So that they may glorify your Father. That's an evangelistic purpose. Bring them to the point where they glorify God.

The second caveat on our good works to unbelievers, is those good works are to be primarily the task (listen carefully) of individual believers, and not the overarching mission of the church. The mission of the church is making disciples of Jesus Christ, and equipping those who are. The church can be involved in good works. We're involved as a church in some good works in our community. But never in any way that diminishes its primary mission or that ultimately the goal isn't to share the gospel with those whom we're helping. Now, that doesn't mean that every time you help an unbeliever you need to immediately in that context share the gospel with them. You may—that'd be great. But that isn't necessarily what it means. What it does mean is this, though. In the context of your relationships with individuals, and in the scope of your entire Christian life, you ought to be attempting to do all of these things, and not just one or two of them.

We are to be light by being the right kind of person in our character, by our good works, and by our message. And there needs to be a balance of those things. Listen, if all you do is live your Christian life in front of other unbelievers, and occasionally do something good for them, but you never open your mouth and share the gospel, you have not been a light to them. If on the other hand, you walk around passing out tracts and sharing the gospel and you're a terrible worker, and you're pilfering from the company or your cheating on your tests, then you are undermining the very gospel you proclaim. All three legs of this stool have to be in place for us to truly be light. Christian, don't ever forget the power of your influence. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. May God help us to be it.

Let's pray together. Father, we've covered much ground this morning. But I pray that You would cause some of it to lodge in the hearts of Your people. Lord, may we be eager to learn. And Father, I pray that you would help us to be truly light where you've placed us—in our homes, in some cases where there're unbelievers present. In our jobs, school, in our neighborhoods, various organizations we're a part of. Father, help us to be light in all of these ways. May we be a picture of Jesus and the gospel in who we are. Help us to live out the beatitudes. Help us to simply be Christians and not hide who we are—not to be different with unbelievers than we are with believers here in the church, but simply to live out our faith openly and transparently. Father, help us to do good works as individuals. Help us to really be concerned about the plight and the suffering and the needs of others, and to be moved to meet those needs. Father, help us always to also open our mouths with the gospel. And Father, may You use our lives to be light in the place where You've placed us. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.