

## **Jesus' Hilltopper: Salt and Light**

Jesus Says: A Series on the Sermon on the Mount Part 3

*Matthew 5:13-16*

Hilltoppers for Christ | Worship Wednesday | 9.6.17

### **What does it mean to be a Hilltopper?**

- Think back to your high school days when you were trying to decide where to go to school. What made you choose WKU?
- When people ask, "What is a Hilltopper?" what do you say?
- When someone asks you what is WKU like, or what's it like being a Hilltopper, what do you say?

### **We are called to be Hilltoppers**

- Jesus says in *Matthew 5:14*, "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden."
- We are Hilltoppers as WKU students. We are a part of Hilltoppers for Christ. Jesus also says that we are called to be Hilltoppers.
- Jesus says that we are like a city upon a hill that cannot be hidden.
- Tonight we are going to see what Jesus' Hilltoppers are really like. We will see that Hilltoppers are good for the world. Hilltoppers are nonignorable. Hilltoppers spread the gospel. And Hilltoppers good works bring glory to God, and Hilltoppers are in the world.

### ***Matthew 5:13-16***

#### **Hilltoppers are good for the world. (5:13)**

- Salt was used for two main purposes: for preserving and for taste.
  - In order to preserve meat they would cover it in salt.
- "You are the salt of the earth" means you are to be beneficial for the earth. You are good for the world.
  - Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, "Jesus calls [his disciples] the salt of the earth--salt, the most indispensable necessity of life. The disciples, that is to say, are the highest good, the supreme value which the earth possesses, for without them it cannot live."<sup>1</sup>
- In the Sermon on the Mount we are going to see many commands of Jesus. We're going to see the way members of God's kingdom are really supposed to act.
- All of these commands are beneficial to the world.
  - It would be beneficial for us to be peacemakers and to love our enemies. It would be beneficial for our yes to be yes and our no, no. It would be beneficial for there to be less worrying and anxiety in the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), 115.

- But there is a way for us to be useless. Salt can lose its saltiness. Jesus says that if salt loses its saltiness it's no longer good for anything.
  - Salt if it is mixed with many impurities will in fact lose its saltiness.
- Jesus doesn't tell us to *be* salt and light. We *are* salt and light.
  - Charles Talbert says, "The disciples are not challenged to become salty--their saltiness is a gift of Jesus. They are challenged to stay salty."<sup>2</sup> Randy Harris adds, "[Jesus is] not saying you ought to be salt. He's not saying you ought to be light. Jesus is saying you *are* salt. You *are* light. You are."<sup>3</sup>
- Jesus is saying that this is what you are. When you come to Christ, Christ takes you (no matter your past) and he transforms you into salt and light in this world.

### **Hilltoppers are nonignorable. (5:14-15)**

- They are right on the Sea of Galilee. The Sea of Galilee is actually a relatively small body of water. It is only 4 miles wide and 12 miles long. From where they were when Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount, they could easily see across the water. At night they could have easily seen the city of Tiberias across the water from where they were.
  - When Katelyn and I were in Israel earlier this year, we were staying right on the Sea of Galilee, and we saw that city light up. [PowerPoint Slide]
- The way I hated my dad waking me up more than any other way was when he came into my room, turn on the light, and left. My friends and I would always play tricks on one another when we would leave the table at a restaurant. One day we put half a shaker of salt in a friend's sweet tea with a bunch of ketchup. Both of those are nonignorable.
- We are to live our lives in a way that makes people notice. Not in a way that draws attention to us to build us up (Jesus addresses this in the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 6), but it is to glorify God.
- People will notice the way you live. Almost everyone in the world lives selfish "me first" lives. When they see people who put others above themselves, they notice.
- When a light switch is turned on in a dark room, you notice. When salt is added to food, you notice.

### **Hilltoppers spread the gospel. (5:14-15)**

- "This Little Light of Mine" is a song that almost all of us sang growing up. We shine "this little light of mine" "all around the neighborhood," "put it under a bushel? No!" and we definitely won't "let Satan blow it out."
- Shining our light means sharing the gospel.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making in Matthew 5-7* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 55.

<sup>3</sup> Randy Harris, *Living Jesus: Doing What Jesus Says in the Sermon on the Mount* (Abilene, TX: Leafwood Publishers, 2012), 44.

- In the Old Testament, especially in Isaiah, the image of “light” is often connected to Israel telling the Gentile nations about their God.<sup>4</sup>
  - “Listen to me, my people; hear me, my nation: instruction will go out from me; my justice will become a light to the nations (Isaiah 51:4)
  - “Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your dawn” (Isaiah 60:3)
- We want to spread the good news of Jesus to others! We are to tell others of the wonderful grace of God, good news of the Kingdom of God, that Jesus is our Christ and King, and that we are saved from our sins.
- If Jesus has changed your life from experiencing the grace and love of God, you should want others to experience the love and grace of God, too.

### **Hilltoppers’ good works bring glory to God. (5:16)**

- We also shine our light through good works. Good works bring glory to God. Not only by us, but by those who see our good works.
  - We do not do good works so we may be built up; we do good works so God will be built up.
- This passage is very similar to a passage in *1 Peter 2:12* (Peter quotes from Jesus here. He heard this from Jesus first handed and relayed it to some churches) - “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”
  - There is an argument made by some biblical scholars that says the point of 1 Peter is to tell the church that what is overlapping between the pagan values and Christian values, that those values the church needs to outperform the pagan culture in good works.
  - Pagans are made in the image of God, so even if they do not accept the teachings of God, there will be some overlap in values and ethics.
- Outperform the good works of the dominant, secular culture, and even when people try to talk bad about us (Christians), they can’t say anything about our good works. One day, they might even glorify God.
- What are some common values shared by today’s secular culture and Kingdom culture?
  - Social justice
  - Care for refugees
  - Care for the poor
  - Clean water for the world
- We should outwork the culture. Christians should be the ones to care for refugees, poor, and others

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<sup>4</sup> Scot McKnight, *Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 58-60.

**Hilltoppers are present in the world.**

- Being salt and light means we are to be present in the world.
- Charles Talbert says, “The role of disciples in verses 13-16 is seen in term of mission: both of *being* (you are salt, light) and of *doing* (good works). Disciples are to act in line with their nature. Jesus is saying, ‘I made you into something, now be it.’ The scope of their mission is universal (of the earth or world). Its goal is to glorify God.”<sup>5</sup>
- Light and salt affects and transforms what it touches. Light makes darkness not longer darkness. And salt makes bland food no longer bland.
- Randy Harris asked this interesting question about the application of this passage in the church today: “Do you think our problem is that we have too much world in the church or too little church in the world?”<sup>6</sup>
  - In what ways do you see the world being too much in the church?
  - In what ways do you see the church being too separate from the world?
  - Follow up question: What are ways for the church to be more active in the world without being influenced by the world?

**Let's go out and be salt and light.**

- This campus needs salt and light. There is darkness on this campus. Our campus needs salt.
- In your circles, how can you be salt and light?
  - Serve someone, start having a Bible study with someone, be a friend
- When you think about being a Hilltopper for Christ, think about about this verse. We're a “city on a hill that cannot be hidden.”

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<sup>5</sup> Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount*, 56.

<sup>6</sup> Harris, *Living Jesus*, 46.