

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany February 9, 2020

Lectionary Year A – the Gospel of Matthew

Living the Lutheran Lectionary

A weekly study of the Scriptures for the coming Sunday since May 4, 2014.

An opportunity to make Sunday worship more meaningful and to make the rhythms of the readings part of the rhythms of your life.

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https://faithlutheranokemos.org/th_sermon/sermon-matthew-5-13-20/

Hymn of the Day

Lutheran Service Book (LSB) 578 The Lutheran Hymnal (TLH) Not listed

“Thy strong word did cleave the darkness”

This is also the Hymn of the Day for those who follow the One Year Lectionary.

““The Light Comes from Above” is the motto of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The hymn “Thy Strong Word” is based on this motto. The motto is drawn from Matt. 4:16, part of a whole section of the Gospel where light is a prominent theme. The lessons for Epiphany 5A are focused on the same theme of light...

In 1954 Martin H. Franzmann, a professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, was asked to write a text for the seminary to use as a processional hymn at commencement. The suggested tune is now known as “Ebenezer.” He put into song the seminary’s motto “Light from Above,” writing four stanzas. But the hymn was not finished until 1959 after Franzmann had added two more. Its long and distinguished use by the seminary continues to the present day.

Strong images are characteristic of Martin Franzmann’s poetry. Compare this with another of his hymns, LSB 834, “O God, O Lord of Heaven and Earth.” “Thy Strong Word” unfolds like a story, each stanza building upon the other until it reaches its stunning close. Each stanza ends with a refrain that praises Him who sends us this light. What can we say in response to this gift of light? Only one word: “Alleluia” without end!”

- <https://www.lcms.org/worship/hymn-of-the-day-studies>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AeWq2_8JEr0 “John Behnke gives us a powerful new concertato setting of “Thy Strong Word” for SATB choir, organ, and congregation with options for handbell, brass, and timpani.”
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KijpAFL1Iss> Thy Strong Word - Thomas Williams / Martin Franzmann, lyricist / Carl Schalk (Litt.D. '17), arranger Concordia Choirs, Church Choirs, & Assembly / Concordia Brass / Tom Mueller, organ / Michael Busch, conductor / Text © 1969, Setting © 1974, 2006 by Concordia Publishing House
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X2bhHosLHmI> “Closing track on the new album, "With Heart and Voice." This festival arrangement was commissioned for the CUC 2010-11 Academic year. Produced and Released by Concordia University Chicago Wind Symphony, 2011. [Oxford Comma](#) “The other Concordias merely practice the music this Concordia composes.” *Guess which one I attended?*

Commentaries have been chosen because the author has written in a way that compliments the reading. Not all of the commentaries are from Lutheran sources. They have been edited for length and in some cases for additional content that is not in keeping with a Lutheran understanding of Scripture. Links are provided for those who wish to read the entire commentary.

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O.T.– “Then shall your **light** break forth like the dawn ”

Psalms – “**Light** dawns in the darkness for the upright”

Epistle – “that we might understand the things freely given us by God ”

Gospel – “**You are the light of the world.** ”

Isaiah 58:3-9a; Revised Common Lectionary (RCL), Isaiah 58:3-9a (9b-12) (Next week: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; RCL, the same reading or Sirach 15:15-20)

Given that the Gospel Lesson for this Fifth Sunday after Epiphany reminds us that Jesus did not come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets, we might consider one of these ancient, Hebrew Scriptures for our preaching focus this week.

Fortunately, the Revised Common (and Lutheran) Lectionary provides a powerful prophetic text from the book of Isaiah for our First Lesson.

Wouldn't it be ironic if we read the positive words from Matthew 5 about Jesus' understanding of his "Bible" out loud from our Christian lecterns and then continued our (typical) practice of sidelining the Old Testament lectionary readings? Matthew continues, "For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law [torah] until all is accomplished" (Matthew 5:18, NRSV).

So, what can we glean from the harvest of Isaiah 58?...

- https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=3153 [Tyler Mayfield](#)

A.B. Rhodes Professor of Old Testament, Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky.

True and False Fasting Includes verses 1-2

³ 'Why have we fasted, and you see it not?

Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?
Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure,^[a]
and oppress all your workers.

⁴ Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight
and to hit with a wicked fist.

Fasting like yours this day
will not make your voice to be heard on high.

⁵ Is such the fast that I choose,
a day for a person to humble himself?
Is it to bow down his head like a reed,
and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him?
Will you call this a fast,
and a day acceptable to the LORD?

⁶ "Is not this the fast that I choose:
to loose the bonds of wickedness,
to undo the straps of the yoke,
to let the oppressed^[b] go free,
and to break every yoke?

⁷ Is it not to share your bread with the hungry
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover him,
and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

⁸ Then shall your light break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up speedily;
your righteousness shall go before you;

the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.

⁹ Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer;
you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'

If you take away the yoke from your midst,
the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,

¹⁰ if you pour yourself out for the hungry
and satisfy the desire of the afflicted,
then shall your light rise in the darkness
and your gloom be as the noonday.

¹¹ And the LORD will guide you continually
and satisfy your desire in scorched places
and make your bones strong;

and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water,
whose waters do not fail.

¹² And your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt;
you shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
you shall be called the repairer of the breach,
the restorer of streets to dwell in. **continues through verse 14**

- a. [Isaiah 58:3](#) Or *pursue your own business*
- b. [Isaiah 58:6](#) Or *bruised*

Among the many things darkness may symbolize in the Bible, one of them is the silence of God...

The historical backdrop for Isaiah 58 is likely the period of fasting that followed the exile. Zechariah 7:3-5 indicates that Israel fasted on the fifth and seventh months for seventy years following the destruction of Jerusalem. For seventy years Israel would fast at least twice a year commemorating the fact that they had lost their home and their king. They fasted and prayed seeking a response, an answer to their troubles.

This scenario matches the people's outcry in 58:3, "'Why have we fasted,' they say, 'and you have not seen it? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you have not noticed?'" The people are clearly fasting in order for their prayers to be answered. The city of Jerusalem seems to be in ruins (58:12) and thus an exilic*, or possibly postexilic situation is likely.

The people are desperately seeking justice from God. In Isaiah 58:2 God observes that "they ask of me righteous judgments." This term "righteous judgments" is a form of the words "justice" (*mispāt*) and "righteousness" (*tsedaqah*), which feature prominently in the book of Isaiah...

Israel complains that God has deprived them of justice. God responds by demanding Israel to stop depriving those around them of justice and righteousness! Even though Israel has been attentive to the ritual ordinances of the Law, they have completely neglected the ethical demands of it. The people believe *they* are the victims, when in fact they are the victimizers...

Although they believe they are seeking God through their fasts, they forget that Isaiah had earlier clearly instructed that they were to "seek justice (*mispāt*)), rescue the oppressed, defend the orphan, plead for the widow" (Isaiah 1:17). To truly "seek the LORD" is to seek justice and righteousness for the poor and oppressed. They are willing to entrust their rituals and prayers to

God, but not extend their faith commitment to the social and economic spheres of their lives. Because of their social and economic sins they remain in darkness...

It is clear that the salvation God promises is conditioned upon the people's response. All the promises of Isaiah 58:8-9 are introduced by the word "then":

"Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly. *Then* you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am."

The promise in 58:10 comes in the form of an "if, then" clause:

"If you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, *then* your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday."

This conditional emphasis is an extension of the fundamental principle expressed earlier in 56:1: "Maintain justice (*mispāt*), and do what is right (*tsedaqah*), for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed."

Isaiah 58 verses 8 and 10 promise that light will break forth and healing will appear. In the book of Isaiah, light is a symbol for salvation...: (Isaiah 9:2 and Isaiah 60:1-2)...

**Adjective form of "exile"*

➤ https://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=1946

[Bo Lim](#) Associate Professor of Old Testament, Seattle Pacific University, Seattle, Wash.

Psalm 112:1-9; RCL, Psalm 112:1-9 (10) (Psalm 119:1-8; RCL, the same reading)

Psalm 112 was also read for Proper 17 during Pentecost, Year C in the Revised Common Lectionary. The Lutheran Lectionary for that Sunday is Psalm 131.

"There is no title to this psalm, but it is evidently a companion to the hundred and eleventh, and, like it, it is an alphabetical psalm. Even in the number of verses, and clauses of each verse, it coincides with its predecessor, as also in many of its words and phrases. The reader should carefully compare the two psalms line by line. The subject of the poem before us is--the blessedness of the righteous man, and so it bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above. God is here praised for the manifestation of his glory which is seen in his people, just as in the preceding psalm he was magnified for his own personal acts. The hundred and eleventh speaks of the great Father, and this describes his children renewed after his image. The psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with "Praise ye the Lord; "and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God."

➤ <https://www.christianity.com/bible/commentary.php?com=spur&b=19&c=112> Charles H. Spurgeon

The Righteous Will Never Be Moved

112 ^[a] Praise the LORD!

Blessed is the man who fears the LORD,

who greatly delights in his commandments!

² His offspring will be mighty in the land;

the generation of the upright will be blessed.

- ³ Wealth and riches are in his house,
and his righteousness endures forever.
- ⁴ Light dawns in the darkness for the upright;
he is gracious, merciful, and righteous.
- ⁵ It is well with the man who deals generously and lends;
who conducts his affairs with justice.
- ⁶ For the righteous will never be moved;
he will be remembered forever.
- ⁷ He is not afraid of bad news;
his heart is firm, trusting in the LORD.
- ⁸ His heart is steady;^[b] he will not be afraid,
until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.
- ⁹ He has distributed freely; he has given to the poor;
his righteousness endures forever;
his horn is exalted in honor.
- ¹⁰ The wicked man sees it and is angry;
he gnashes his teeth and melts away;
the desire of the wicked will perish!*

- a. Psalm 112:1 This psalm is an acrostic poem, each line beginning with the successive letters of the Hebrew alphabet *(So why did we leave off the end of the alphabet?)
- b. Psalm 112:8 Or *established* (compare 111:8)

Psalm 112 is an alphabetic acrostic that presents us, the readers, with a totalizing view of its subject matter: the happy life.

Our psalmist, in writing these twenty-two lines that correspond to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet, has attempted to be both artistic and thorough. That the psalm does not achieve the high artistry of its twin, the similarly acrostic Psalm 111, or the wide-ranging thoroughness of Psalm 119, also an acrostic, should not distract us from appreciating what it does achieve. The psalm gives us an admirably honest and yet optimistic understanding of life, attentive to the vicissitudes of historical existence and yet faithful to the ancient teaching of the Wisdom tradition that a life characterized by the fear of the LORD is ultimately a happy one...

The psalmist agrees with the Book of Proverbs that “the fear of the LORD” is the “beginning of wisdom” (Proverbs 9:10; Psalm 111:10) and also with the Book of Job which, in the surprising and beautiful panegyric to wisdom, affirms: “Truly, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom” (Job 28:28)... In short, the fearer of God belongs squarely in the company of the wise and conforms to the ideals of Wisdom...

But the little Psalm 112 does say about the path of the righteous is important. The psalm expresses concern for the poor as is characteristic of biblical literature and claims that wisdom and righteousness find their expression in the practice of everyday life:

It is well with the one who lends graciously;
He conducts his affairs with justice. (112:5)

At the heart of a righteous and wise life is the mundane matter of money and everyday business affairs... What is significant, however, is the assumption that right living, which leads to happiness, concerns money and the affairs of daily life. Wisdom, the fear of the LORD, finds expression not so much in pious religiosity but in the practice of everyday life, not so much in church and synagogue, but in schools and offices. This perhaps is no surprise to students of Proverbs and Wisdom literature generally. But it is a fine reminder nevertheless."

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2961

[Paul K.-K. Cho](#) Assistant Professor of Hebrew Bible, Wesley Theological Seminary, Washington, D.C.

1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16); RCL, the same reading (1 Corinthians 3:1-9; RCL, the same reading)

"The second chapter of 1 Corinthians contains two of Paul's "greatest hits" verses.

At the beginning of the chapter, he says, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (verse 2). At the end of the chapter, Paul declares, "We have the mind of Christ."

Both of these verses are about what Paul and his readers see and know, and what they can imagine. In a Word & World article...Alexandra Brown notes Paul's habit "wherever he mentions the cross to link it with the terminology of seeing, knowing, change of mind, transformation"... Paul speaks of the cross in order to speak about what can be perceived..."

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=2020

[Mary Hinkle Shore](#) Lutheran Church of the Good Shepherd, Brevard, N.C.

Proclaiming Christ Crucified

2 And I, when I came to you, brothers,^[a] did not come proclaiming to you the testimony^[b] of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men^[c] but in the power of God.

Wisdom from the Spirit

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”— [\[Isa. 64:4\]](#)

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ *And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.*^[d]

¹⁴ *The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.* ¹⁵ *The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.* ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

- a. [1 Corinthians 2:1](#) Or *brothers and sisters*
- b. [1 Corinthians 2:1](#) Some manuscripts *mystery (or secret)*
- c. [1 Corinthians 2:5](#) The Greek word *anthropoi* can refer to both men and women
- d. [1 Corinthians 2:13](#) Or *interpreting spiritual truths in spiritual language, or comparing spiritual things with spiritual*

“Paul rounded out the first chapter of this letter with a meditation on the glorious mystery that is the cross of Christ. The cross turns everything on its head in this world. Its weakness is true power, its apparent failure is galactic success, its utter folly as a source of hope is nothing short of the truest wisdom of God for all hope and new life. Now as Paul turns the corner into what we call the second chapter, he reflects on the message about all this mystery that he preached when he first came to Corinth years before. The message was something straight out of anything and everything the rest of society (then and now) would label as a non-starter, as foolishness, as a formula for going exactly nowhere in life.

“I came to you determined to know only Christ and him crucified” Paul writes. Think about that: that is ALL Paul wanted to know about. That was the full content of his mind and heart. If he knew that, he knew it all. If he could get others to know that and understand what that cross of Jesus means, they would know all they'd ever finally need to understand for eternal life, too. It was at once that simple and that complicated. Paul was an unapologetic one-trick pony if ever there were one. He was all one note. He sold exactly one flavor of ice cream.

But simple and consistent though his message was, it was no cinch for people to grasp it. It required a whole new set of mental software and only the Holy Spirit of God was capable of installing the necessary program components. Once this gift of faith is received and duly installed, everything would become clear. The apparent foolishness of the cross would become the wisdom of God, the dead-end nature of the proclamation would become the gateway to life. But it was

going to require a whole new way of thinking to get one's mind around this. Because it is finally a very great mystery..."

➤ https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/epiphany-5a/?type=lectionary_epistle Scott Hoezee

Matthew 5:13-20; RCL, the same reading (Matthew 5:21-37; RCL, the same reading)

"We're in the second of five weeks of passages from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as recounted by Matthew. And we are again faced with the insidious temptation to hear Jesus' words as requirement rather than blessing, as command rather than commissioning. But take note: Jesus doesn't say, "If you want to become salt and light, do this...." Or, "before I'll call you salt and light, I'll need to see this from you...." Rather, he says both simply and directly, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." It is, as with last week's Beatitudes, sheer blessing, commendation, affirmation, and commissioning.

I realize, of course, that he goes on to say that salt that has lost its saltiness is useless and that light wasn't made to be put under a bushel, which might imply for some that there is, indeed, a threat hiding amid this pronouncement. But I wonder. Can salt really lose its saltiness? Doesn't it just dissolve? And are candles ever put under bushel baskets? Wouldn't that snuff the flame or, worse, start a fire? Maybe Jesus is implying that one can lose one's status as salt and light. Or maybe he's just naming the absurdity of the possibility of losing one's character as salt and light in order to underscore the reliability and resilience of the gift he bequeaths. "You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world. That's the way it is and that's the way it will stay. Period."

➤ <http://www.workingpreacher.org/craft.aspx?m=4377&rp=blog53&post=1543>
David Lose Senior Pastor, Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, Minneapolis, Minn.

"The Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew, the 5th Chapter"

The Sermon on the Mount, The Beatitudes Verses 1-12

Salt and Light

13 "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. 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^[a] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

17 "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

18 For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not

an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ *Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.* ²⁰ *For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

**Anger Verses 21 – 26, Lust Verses 27 – 30,
Divorce Verses 31 – 32, Oaths Verses 33 – 37,
Retaliation Verses 38 – 42, Love Your Enemies Verses 43 - 48**

a. [Matthew 5:16](#) Or house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before others that

This is the Gospel of the Lord” “Praise to You, O Christ”

At this point, Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount turns to quotidian (*ordinary or everyday, especially when mundane*) imagery.

Salt. Cities. Light. These everyday realities become the ground for an important and potentially challenging theological conviction: righteousness before God is bound up in the call of the law and the prophets.

That is, Jesus is not inventing the shape of such righteousness but tapping into an ancient vein of divine revelation.

First, Jesus evokes the utility of salt but also the limits of its usefulness. Salt that has lost its salty essence is no longer salt. It is no longer fit for its previous uses so it is tossed onto the path to be trod underfoot... How is righteousness like salt exactly? And who or what exactly is that salt that has lost its saltiness?

Second, Jesus points to the utility of light, especially the way light spills over its surroundings. The lights of a city on a hill are a beacon to others. So, also a lamp is meant to light a room, not the diminished and truncated space under a bushel basket.

Jesus makes the connections between salt and light and righteousness explicit in verse 16. Jesus declares that we too ought to be light like that city on a hill, that uncovered lamp... Notice that the light in this metaphor does not belong to us but is an overflow of God’s call and grace...

So also, Jesus calls us to be salt, to serve in the way we were designed to serve. But what if we do not?... The call of the Sermon of the Mount is high and costly and risky. The darkening of the light, the loss of the salt’s saltiness is not without consequence.

After all, Jesus makes clear that he is not obviating or making moot the law and the prophets. He stands in the streams of righteous hope and transformative justice that both have reflected God for generations of faithful Israelites...

After all, when Jesus here refers to the law and the prophets, he is pointing to the trustworthy promises of God, to the affirmation at the head of the Ten Commandments that the God of Israel is a God who heeds the call of the enslaved and sets them free...

Jesus, however, has one more surprise to share in next week’s lectionary reading. As vital as the law’s commandments are, they may not ask enough of us. God authored those

commandments, not as a barrier around obedience or as a limit to our faithfulness, but as a starting point for righteousness, an opening into a life attuned to God's grace-filled will.

➤ http://www.workingpreacher.org/preaching.aspx?commentary_id=4372

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Christians Must Obey God's Law

Matthew uses Jesus' words in 5:17-20 as a thesis statement for the whole of 5:21-48 which follows. Jesus essentially says, "Look, if you thought the law was tough, wait till you see this. If you really want to be my disciples, give me your hearts without reservation" (see 5:17).

This passage seems to suggest that an uncommitted Christian is not a Christian at all (see 5:20). Like other Jewish teachers, Jesus demanded whole obedience to the Scriptures (5:18-19); unlike most of his contemporaries, however, he was not satisfied with the performance of scribes and Pharisees, observing that this law observance fell short even of the demands of salvation (5:20). After grabbing his hearers' attention with such a statement, Jesus goes on to define God's law not simply in terms of how people behave but in terms of who they really are (5:21-48).

Jesus' High View of Scripture (5:17-18)

Jesus' view of Scripture did not simply accommodate his culture... First, when Jesus says that he came not to *abolish the Law or the Prophets* but to *fulfill them*, he uses terms that in his culture would have conveyed his faithfulness to the Scriptures (v. 17).

Second, Jesus illustrates the eternity of God's law with a popular story line from contemporary Jewish teachers (5:18). Jesus' *smallest letter* (NIV), or "jot" (KJV), undoubtedly refers to the Hebrew letter *yod*, which Jewish teachers said would not pass from the law. They said that when Sarai's name was changed to Sarah, the *yod* removed from her name cried out from one generation to another, protesting its removal from Scripture, until finally, when Moses changed Oshea's name to Joshua, the *yod* was returned to Scripture. "So you see," the teachers would say, "not even this smallest letter can pass from the Bible." Jesus makes the same point from this tradition that later rabbis did: even the smallest details of God's law are essential.

We Will Be Judged by Our Response to God's Word (5:19)

Jesus here provides a graphic example of the law's authority. ..When Jesus speaks of *the least of these commandments*, he also reflects Jewish legal language. Jewish teachers regularly distinguished "light" and "heavy" commandments (as in *Sipra VDeho*. parasha 1.34.1.3; compare Mt 23:23) and in fact determined which commandments were the "least" and "greatest." Noting that both the "greatest" commandment about honoring parents (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16) and the "least" commandment about the bird's nest (Deut 22:6-7) included the same promise, "Do this and you will live," later rabbis decided that "live" meant "in the world to come" and concluded that God would reward equally for obedience of any commandment. One who kept the law regulating the bird's nest merited eternal life, whereas one who broke it merited damnation...

Other sages used such language to grab attention and emphasize the importance of the law. But like Jesus, they did not want anyone to miss the point: God has not given us the right to pick and choose among his commandments...

Jesus concurs: God does not allow us the right to say, "I will obey his teaching about murder but not his teaching about adultery or fornication"; or, "I will obey his teaching about theft but not about divorce." To refuse his right to rule any of our ethics or behavior is to deny his lordship.

In this passage Jesus also warns that teachers who undermine students' faith in any portion of the Bible are in trouble with God. This text addresses not only obedience to the commandments but also how one teaches others (*and teaches others to do the same*; compare Jas 3:1)...

Bible-Believing People Without Transformed Hearts Are Lost (5:20)

Like John the Baptist in 3:7-12, Jesus savages the false security of the religious establishment... Jesus challenges not their traditional ethics but the actual condition of their hearts (Odeberg 1964).

It is possible to agree with everything Jesus taught in this sermon yet fail to live accordingly (23:3). That is why Jesus indicates that the best of human piety is inadequate for salvation—whether it be Pharisaic or Christian. Nothing short of a radical transformation, what other early Christian writers called a new birth (Jn 3:3-6; 1 Pet 1:23), can enable one to live as a disciple (compare Mt 18:3).

- <https://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/IVP-NT/Matt/Christians-Must-Obey-Gods-Law>
InterVarsity Press.



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“You are the salt of the earth,” Jesus said to his disciples. (Note: Jesus did not say to become salt but that by virtue of being a disciple, each of us just IS salt.)... How foolish it would be to think that just having a box of kosher salt next to the stove will make a difference even if you never sprinkle it into the soup. If you ask a cook, “Did you add any salt?”, then the answer had better not be, “No, but I have a box of it close by. Isn’t that enough?”

That’s an absurd scenario, yet it seems pretty much to be the one Jesus has in mind. In verse 13 Jesus talks about salt losing its saltiness. Actually, however, in Greek Jesus wonders about salt becoming *moronos*, from which we derive our English word “moron,” or “fool.” If salt becomes foolish, Jesus asks, then what good is it?

To have salt but not use it, to have a shaker of salt sitting next to the stove but never to put any into the pot, is foolish. What’s the sense of having it there if you’re not going to add it to the food thoughtfully and with proper balance? You may as well toss it out the window for all the good such unused salt will do your dinner! Salt has a definite purpose and if you won’t use it for that purpose, then the salt becomes foolish to have around...”

- https://cep.calvinseminary.edu/sermon-starters/epiphany-5a/?type=the_lectionary_gospel Scott Hoezee

The Matthew Challenge February’s goal is chapter 7-9. Jesus will be busy and by Chapter 10 He will be ready to send out the twelve on vicarage. We will be ready to start Lent.