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- I. My Notes... WWC message 12/9
- II. Series: Let's Live
 - a. Title: Be Distinct
 - b. Text: Matt. 5: 13-20
 - c. Quote: "Faith does not eliminate questions. But faith knows where to take them." Elisabeth Elliot (Missionary, Author)
- III. Introduction
 - a. Allow me to get reflective for a moment. Some might say its age or the place I'm at, but it just seems the days have gotten quite difficult recently. Now, I'm not in the poor me place. In fact, I would like nothing more than to help people understand that God's love and grace doesn't make things easier, but it does give us the hope and perspective. We need to not just live but to thrive each day. Pay attention people. We in this Country are being prepared for something – the World is being prepared for something. And if we don't keep God at the center of our lives, then we are in for some great difficulty.
 - b. In my opinion, we must be better about turning to Scripture and Prayer during the moments of life. Let me bring you some encouragement... "Just think—you don't need a thing, you've got it all! All God's gifts are right in front of you as you wait expectantly for our Master Jesus to arrive on the scene for the Finale. And not only that, but God himself is right alongside to keep you steady and on track until things are all wrapped up by Jesus. God, who got you started in this spiritual adventure, shares with us the life of his Son and our Master Jesus. He will never give up on you. Never forget that." (1 Corinthians 1:7-9 MSG). Don't doubt the Lord God – He hasn't

failed and He has **your best** as His focus. His grace, His gifts, His mercy and kindness are always there for us.

- c. I was talking to a friend the other day. He told me about a discussion he had with his son-in-law after a recent church service. It was about honoring God in your marriage. He said, "I understand that I am to honor God in my marriage. But they don't tell me how to do it!" Ministry, Preaching/ Teaching, needs to be both informative and practical. The Word of God applies to our lives today.
- d. I began learning to cook around 12. Over the last few years, I've been getting better at it – I can boil water without burning it (ok ... that's a joke). And it's not about punching a few numbers on a microwave to get a "proper" meal. One of the things that is essential to correctly making something to eat is seasoning. Anything can be prepared and cooked perfectly, if it doesn't have the right or enough seasoning it isn't very pleasurable. Now, I'm a fan of spicy things and of pepper. I have learned too much seasoning is just as bad as not enough. Learning to cook is a process – it is a series of small victories and epic failures. But in each step, there is a lesson, there is something we can take with us that helps us (ultimately) grow and mature. As in many areas, this can be applied to our journey as Christians. First, it's a process and we are going to have victories and setbacks. Maturity and Christlikeness is the goal. And with the guidance and comfort of the Holy Spirit we will get there. And in the process, we might just flavor a few lives.

IV. Our Call

- a. As believers we need to learn to be that example of Christ to the world we live in, to the community around us.
- b. There are many people that are looking for something – for an answer, a meaning, a purpose. In Christ we hold many benefits (see Eph. 1). And we

are part of a family that encourages, celebrates, supports, understands, and cares for others.

- c. The Apostle Paul tells the church "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." (ref. 1 Cor. 11:1 ESV). And he instructs the saints to "be imitators of God, as beloved children" (ref. Eph. 5:1 NASB)
- d. This requires something of us, it's a choice to live and be an example.
- e. There are many that desire the free gift of grace. But when it comes to becoming that Christlike example, they don't want that responsibility

V. Text

- a. Matthew 5:13-20 (CSB)

"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet."

"You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are 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 in heaven."

"Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your

righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.”

- b. The nature of our calling, as believers – as Christ followers, is to be distinct (different, dissimilar, diverse).
- a. The nature of our calling is to fulfill “the law” ... Love God, love others....
- b. If we keep our focus on the rules and regulations, then that's what we worship. If we focus on our choice to love the Lord God... that's where our worship lies
- c. It is a choice, to live obedient, to find the sweet spot of serving and caring for others, and to do our best to honor the Lord God in all aspects of life
- d. Just a thought here. The Disciples were being taught a life lesson by Jesus, the Messiah, and it took them a few years to truly grasp it. But it was this **small group** that was the “salt and light” for you and I today. It's not the size of the ministry (group) – it's the desire to honor the Lord and love others that makes lasting changes.

VI. What is Salt?

- a. When it comes to cooking, salt is completely different from the food being prepared. It provides flavor and even has preservative properties
- b. As believers, we have been called and designed to be salt to this world. To bring flavor (love and kindness) and to help preserve others (showing grace that leads to salvation)
- c. We do this through our actions and attitudes. Grace and forgiveness are not popular topics in today's world. This “me first” generation holds expectations of being owed something.
- d. We get to flavor lives thru meeting them right where they are and serving alongside them. There are people today that are passionate about helping

to improve their corner of the world. In that kind of action grace and understanding become essential

- e. In our walk, our character is salt to the world around us
- f. As I stated earlier, salt preserves. Our character – our behaviors, choices, and attitudes point people toward the Cross, toward the One who has saved His people.
- g. Another thing salt does, is it penetrates... It inserts new quality, substance, and life
- h. Jesus made this statement just after He finished “the Beatitudes”. Interesting timing
- i. Think about what He is saying here... real salt provides flavor. Salt is authentic, it is something that stands on its own, it is pure, and it adds – it provides help. Salt is distinctive, it has a purpose – it preserves and penetrates. Salt spreads and it has an impact, effect, on everything it touches
- j. So, was this really a talk about an additive to a meal? Maybe it was an example for how Christians should live.

VII. Light

- a. Light shines for all to see. Light attracts attention. Light allows for a different perspective
- b. Matthew 5:14-16 (MSG): "Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By

opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."

- c. Too often, (it must be part of human nature) we focus on the difficulty – the rough circumstance, instead of understanding that in the hard time... in the darkness our path is lighted
- d. We reflect the light of the Lord. Our best purpose is to be a moon... what does the moon do? It reflects the Son
- e. Light is clean, it is pure. You know the really cool thing is you and I are not the source of the Light
- f. Becoming more like Christ means you and I will reflect His light to this hurting world.
- g. It's simple... we don't have to light a stadium – we don't have to light a city. Know this, a small light – a simple influence - can change the course for many.
- h. Light penetrates the darkness. It eliminates it and brings hope and perspective.
- i. Light reveals the dangers and obstacles that are ahead.
- j. Ephesians 5:13-14 (TLB)

But when you expose them, the light shines in upon their sin and shows it up, and when they see how wrong they really are, some of them may even become children of light! That is why God says in the Scriptures, "Awake, O sleeper, and rise up from the dead; and Christ shall give you light."

- k. We must be aware of our inheritance and birthright as children of God. His promises are for our well-being and success
- l. The impact you have by simply living out your purpose, by using your gifts, and staying consistent to your faith will bring hope and help to those lives you touch, to those lives that are watching you

VIII. Practical

- a. Many believers are looking for a formula – for the steps to take so they “can get it right”
- b. Life is not a list, even in trying to plan and take steps toward a goal there are going to be instances that can take you off course for a time
- c. Christians can “flavor” their surroundings by choosing kindness over harsh words and actions, by showing love and compassion instead of judgement and criticism
- d. Forgiveness, it’s a great idea and action, until you actually have to do it. It can take all the internal strength and compassion you can muster and there are times it will still be difficult at best
- e. Being “salt” is making a choice to show the world around us the love we have come to experience
- f. Look at verse 16 again... “Let your light shine” – Open the door to your “house”, to your life, and let others see the goodness and grace that the Lord God
- g. You get to come to church, to celebrate, to listen and hopefully learn something
- h. Then you get the privilege to go out and live it in front of others.
- i. You probably don’t know it, but you are being watched. If others know you are a Christian, they are watching how you act, listening to what you say, and taking note. Let me say it again... You might just be the only Jesus someone else may see
- j. Let me tell you a story... for many years on Tuesday nights I used to lead a small group that met in a local café. It began with me and one other gentleman who was struggling with life and needed someone to buy him a

hamburger once in a while. Over time there were as many as 20 that came. There was a core group of about 7 people that were almost always there. This went on for several years. Just “doing life” and talking about the impact of God in our lives. About 2 years ago a gentleman, who I had never met, came up to me and said, “can I talk to you for a minute?” He began to tell me a story of how he was struggling with addiction and running from God. He used to come to the café and sit close enough to hear but would never want to be involved. He was ashamed. Finally, after hearing enough about God's love and grace he sought help, got clean and sober, got involved with a church, and eventually became the youth pastor to this small ministry. He has helped many lost young people. Pretty amazing, right???

Well, it doesn't stop there. During all this he had me over to his house several times to teach a bible study and I got a call from him last month. He just planted a church.

- k. What is your purpose? Is there a way you can see fulfilling it in your daily life?
- l. Let me tell you, it probably fits in with your interests, with your talents, with what comes easy and almost naturally to you.
- m. Over the years I have talked to many people who are hesitant to go “all in” with god because they are going to get sent to Africa or have to deal with people they don't like or on and on.
- n. God doesn't work that way. You are given gifts and talents. There are things that you are equipped with that others aren't. I often watch people who do simple things that have huge effects on others.

IX. Wrapping Up

- a. The Apostle John tells us that Jesus said "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also

love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35 NASB)

- b. How will the world distinguish you and I from other "good things"? it is a simple and practical solution
- c. Let me paraphrase the words Jesus shared with the lawyer.... LOVE GOD and LOVE OTHERS.
- d. Loving God means learning of Him, being obedient, taking time to worship and pray. Many believers do that in some form – we all could get better about those steps
- e. Loving others is where the challenge really rises up. See, it's easy to love those that love you and it's simple to be kind to those you agree with. What about the person who has wronged you? The person whose lifestyle or actions go against you in every step, in every way. What about the person who does everything they can to hurt you and criticize you? According to the words of Christ you are supposed to LOVE THEM too.
- f. Let's Pray
- g. The blessing today might be more direct... Be salt, be Light, share the blessings of the Lord. And choose to be the hands and feet of the Lord God... this honors and glorifies Him