



Message Discussion Guide Week of March 5, 2023

Message: 18 Minutes, Part 2: Visibly Different

Key Scripture: [Matthew 5:13-16](#)

Preacher: Tom Parkinson

Message Highlights:

While Christianity is on the decline in America, Americans are not less spiritual. Many believe in God, but feel their faith is a private matter and don't feel the need to be part of organized religion.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches that Christian faith is personal, but never private.

- Faith is personal because faith starts with an individual encounter with Jesus.
- Faith is not private because it calls us to be in community with other disciples and to be in mission to the world.

The Church exists for the sake of those outside it.

Jesus describes the role of Christians in the world as being “salt” and “light.”

- Salt is used to preserve meat from decay and to enhance the flavor of food. So Christians are called to preserve and enhance life in the world by testifying to the truth of God.
- The purpose of light is not to draw attention to itself, but to let things be seen as they are. We are not to call attention to ourselves, but to help others see the truth of Christ.

How will our community be different if we take seriously the call to be salt and light?

Discussion Questions:

1. Pastor Tom said that Christian faith is always personal but never private. What does it mean for faith to be personal? How is this different than being private? Why do we treat faith as a private matter in our society today?

2. "The church exists for the sake of those outside it." What does this statement mean? In what ways do you see our church existing for others? What role can you play in helping our church be outward-focused?
3. Read [Matthew 5:13-16](#)
 - What does it mean to be the salt of the earth? What are some tangible examples of Christians "being salt?"
 - Why does Jesus warn about the danger of salt losing its saltiness?
 - What does it mean to be the "light of the world?"
 - In what ways are you tempted to hide your light under a bowl? Do you find it challenging to make your faith public? If so, why?
4. Consider our community and the wider world. What challenges do you see where there is need for salt and light? How can we work together to make a difference?
5. What is your primary takeaway from this message?

Abundant Life Tip: Our faith in Jesus is always personal, but never private. Jesus calls us into relationship with himself and then sends us into the world to be salt and light. Our lives should be visibly different because of Jesus, and we should be unafraid to allow others to see it.