

Sermon on the Mount Sermon Series

Sermon 11: Salt of the Earth

Then the LORD appeared to him by the terebinth trees of Mamre, as he was sitting in the tent door in the heat of the day. Genesis 18:1.

"The LORD appeared to Abraham." What an awesome event. In scripture, Abraham is called, "the friend of God." God communicated with Abraham in an open way. What an incredible privilege that was!

Why did the Lord appear to Abraham? He told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a child. Then the Lord said this:

Genesis 18:17-21. And the LORD said, "Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing,¹⁸ "since Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?"¹⁹ "For I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the LORD, to do righteousness and justice, that the LORD may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him."²⁰ And the LORD said, "Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave,²¹ "I will go down now and see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry against it that has come to Me; and if not, I will know."

God had promised Abraham that he would be a blessing (Genesis 12:2). How would Abraham be a blessing? He would do righteous and justice and keep the way of the Lord and then his children would do the same. Abraham's righteousness would influence others to do justice. The world would be a better place because Abraham lived. His presence would preserve goodness in a wicked world.

God was going to visit Sodom and Gomorrah because of their great wickedness. Abraham understood that the visitation God would make to Sodom and Gomorrah would be to destroy it. Let's read Abraham's response to what God said.

Genesis 18:22-26. Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, but Abraham still stood before the LORD.²³ And Abraham came near and said, "Would You also destroy the righteous with the wicked?"²⁴ "Suppose there were fifty righteous within the city; would You also destroy the place and not spare *it* for the fifty righteous that were in it?"²⁵ "Far be it from You to do such a thing as this, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous should be as the wicked; far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"²⁶ So the LORD said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes."

Abraham begged the Lord to spare all the wicked people in Sodom to spare the lives of fifty righteous people. God promised that He would not destroy the city if there were even fifty righteous people.

The presence of righteous people preserves goodness in the world. The presence of righteous people preserves the wicked from immediate destruction.

Abraham thought more and wondered if there were even fifty righteous people in Sodom. So he bargained with the Lord for some time. He bargained down to 10 righteous people.

Genesis 18:32. Then he said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy *it* for the sake of ten."

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said,

"You are the salt of the earth;" Matthew 5:13.

In Jesus' day there were no Arçelik refrigerators. If you wanted to keep your food from becoming rotten you put salt in it. Salt kept it from spoiling. It was a preservative. You are the salt of the earth. The subjects of the kingdom of God are not here just to be the friends of God. They are to preserve righteous, justice and the way of the Lord in the earth. They are to influence others so that goodness exists in the land. The lives of the wicked are even preserved by the presence of the righteous even though they don't know it. Just as Abraham would be a blessing to the world so you are to be a blessing to the world.

In order for salt to preserve something, it must be added to it. It must penetrate in order to preserve. The good news that brings salvation and eternal life to all people comes by personal contact and association with them. We are not saved because we belong to a certain nation or religious group. We are saved as individuals when we are renewed by God's power. Personal influence is power. We must come near to people in order to save them.

Jesus continued:

Matthew 5:13. But if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

The flavor of the salt represents the unselfish love of God. We cannot share what we do not have. The natural human heart is cold and unloving. We must receive the love of God in our hearts. We must be transformed.

Matthew 5:3-4. "Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴
Blessed *are* those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.

Matthew 5:6. Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

Those who will enter eternal life recognize that they do not possess the righteousness necessary to enter there. Those who will be members of the kingdom of heaven mourn

because of their sins and feel spiritually poor. They recognize that they are defiled and cannot clean themselves with religious activity. They hunger and thirst for a righteousness that they do not have.

John 3:3. Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

If you want to be a part of the kingdom of God, you must spiritually be born again. You must receive a power of unselfish love in your heart. If you do not have this you can never enter heaven. You are like salt that has no flavor.

Someone may be very religious but if their religion has no self-sacrificing love, that religion is worthless in God's eyes. You must be born again.

You ask me, "How can I do that? How can I be born again? How can I receive this love from God?" Those are good questions and, not me, but the Bible will answer those questions.

Jesus said,

John 3:5-9. Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.⁶ "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."⁷ "Do not marvel that I said to you, 'You must be born again.'⁸ "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit."⁹ Nicodemus answered and said to Him, "How can these things be?"

The Holy Spirit transforms the life. It is the Holy Spirit working in a mysterious way upon the human heart that changes the life. This is God's work and not man's work. A human being, a religion, a government cannot change hate to love, anger to forgiveness, selfishness to service. You must be born again.

You ask me how we receive the Holy Spirit. I will let the Bible explain.

John 3:16.-17. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."¹⁷ "For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Jesus is the only person who never sinned. God sent Jesus into the world to save the world. When you believe that Jesus is not just the savior of the world but your savior, God gives you the Spirit in your life. Then the Spirit changes you. Then you can influence the world as salt because the love of Jesus will be in your heart.

Many people think that by doing religious activities and keeping laws of their religion that they can transform their own lives. This is a mistake. On the outside it may appear righteous

but inside it is still full of selfishness and sin. This is because a person has no righteous or goodness of their own. The apostle Paul asked a group of people once if they received the Holy Spirit by doing works of a law or by believing in Jesus. Here is what he said.

Galatians 3:2. This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

Galatians 3:5. Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, *does He do it* by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? --⁶ just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."

Abraham believed God and God counted him righteous. Abraham was transformed by God. God provided your sin offering in Jesus. If you believe and accept Jesus as your sin offering, He will give you the Spirit who will transform your life. You do not receive the Spirit because you did some prayers or went to the house of worship or because you went on a pilgrimage. You will receive the Spirit by believing in Jesus as your savior. Then you will be the salt of the earth.