

“Mission Possible” (Matthew 5:13–16)

Have you ever failed to recognize something valuable? As Stan Caffy prepared for married life, he cleaned out his garage and donated many of his possessions to the *Goodwill*. One of the items he donated was a tattered copy of the *Declaration of Independence* that had been hanging in his garage for a decade. Stan’s trash turned out to be another man’s treasure. This particular version of the *Declaration of Independence* was a rare copy made in 1823. A man named Michael Sparks spotted it, and he purchased the document for \$2.48. Sparks later auctioned it for almost a half-a-million. Not a bad profit.¹

Just like this tattered copy of the *Declaration of Independence*, you and I are worth more than we think. Today, however, you may not feel like you are valuable. Perhaps you feel like you have failed God in your marriage or family. Maybe you are still suffering the consequences from a divorce or two. Maybe you failed to spend time with your kids and now that they are older they don’t have time for you. You wonder because of your mistakes if God truly loves you. Maybe you’ve never served in the church and you feel like there’s no way you could start now after so many years of inactivity. Due to your lack of spiritual commitment, you wonder how God can truly care about you. Perhaps you have wasted away your schooling or career. You had so much potential but you never lived up to it. Now it seems like you are just aimlessly going through the motions. You wonder how God could ever use you. I’m here to tell you that regardless of how you feel today, God considers you incredibly valuable. He loves you and longs for you to live out who you are.² So *give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.*³ In Matt 5:13–16, Jesus issues two exhortations to motivate us to fulfill this calling.

1. Season the earth (5:13). In 5:13, Jesus tells us that as disciples we play a valuable role in our culture. He begins by declaring, “**You⁴ are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.**” To discover the meaning of the salt metaphor, we need to understand the function of salt as it would be understood by Jesus’ original first-century audience. There’s only one problem: Scholars have identified no less than eleven different functions of salt in the ancient world.⁵ Salt had so many uses that it was highly valued. In fact, salt was so valuable that the Romans sometimes paid their soldiers with it. If a soldier did not carry out his duties, others would say, “He is not worth his salt.” That’s where we get the expression, “worth his salt.” Even today when we wish to say that someone embodies genuine quality and goodness, we say, “He [or she] is the salt of the earth.”⁶ So, we can safely say that the salt metaphor carries a general idea of value. Disciples, therefore, add value to the world in a broad sense.⁷ But we are still left to figure out specifically which of the valuable functions of salt Jesus had in mind.⁸

Salt can be a preservative, an antiseptic, a fire catalyst, and a fertilizer. Honestly, I can make a reasonably convincing case for several interpretations; however, it seems to me that the most likely usage of salt in this context is as a seasoning agent.⁹ Jesus’ mention of the *taste* of salt supports this interpretation.¹⁰ Salt imparts flavor and improves the taste of bland food.¹¹ If this is the function of salt Jesus has in mind, then how are disciples to be salty? Contextually, being salty is to live out the eight beatitudes previously listed in 5:3–12. If we live out these beatitudes we will make Christ attractive. Thus, to be “salty” is to be like Christ and live out His life. As we do so, we help those around us develop a taste for Jesus.

A young salesman was disappointed about losing a big sale; and, as he talked with his sales manager, he lamented, “I guess it just proves you can lead a horse to water but you can’t make him drink.” The manager replied, “Son, take my advice: Your job is not to make him drink. Your job is to make him thirsty.”¹² Are you making anyone in your life thirsty to know more about Christ? Is there anyone who is curious about your life because you showcase the life of Christ? Your lifestyle should exude such a flavor that it creates in others a hunger and thirst for the gospel.¹³

Some people put salt on tomatoes and watermelon. Yet, I have never heard such a person say, “Oh, that is great salt!” Now I’ve heard plenty of folks say, “That is a great tomato or great watermelon.” Why? Because the job of salt is not to make you think how great salt is, but how great the salted food is. We need to sprinkle salt all over our society. Tragically, we have been so withdrawn from culture that we have turned our society over to the unrighteous to rule. When Christians pulled out of public education, politics, and the media, righteous decisions left with them. We have been called to penetrate society. How are your neighborhood, your town, and your kids’ schools different because you are around? You and I are supposed to be the “spice of life!” We need to live out who we are. *Give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.*

Before I leave this discussion on the purpose of salt, it is worth mentioning that salt is also an antiseptic. Perhaps you’ve discovered this function of salt when you’ve waded into the ocean with an open cut. Salt is indeed a potent disinfectant. But whenever it is used for this purpose, it can be painful. Over the course of my life, I have had severe canker sores. I call this my “thorn in the flesh.” Whenever I have a severe batch, I gargle with salt water. As you can imagine, this is rather painful, especially when some of my canker sores are the size of a thumbnail! But after the pain subsides, I am always glad I took my salt like a man. Likewise, in the spiritual realm we need to remember that people will many times not understand or applaud our salty nature. They may plead for us to be more tolerant and understanding, or they may accuse us of being judgmental. But we are called to disinfect a dying world, and this means we cannot compromise on sin. We must love people enough to be honest with them, even if it hurts them...and us. Remember, Jesus calls His disciples “the salt of the earth” and not “the sugar of the earth.” Some Christians prefer to sugarcoat the Bible and the claims of Christ.¹⁴ This makes life a whole lot easier. No one will object if we quote passages like “Do not judge” or “Love your neighbor.”¹⁵ Yet, you and I are called to be “the salt of the earth.” And sometimes, no matter how gracious and sensitive you attempt to be, you will offend. After all, salt has a bite to it. But the tang of salt also brings healing from the infection of sin.¹⁶

After explaining the value and purpose of salt, Jesus continues in 5:13 with a word of warning: “**...but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again?**” Jesus’ words appear to present a problem for those who are scientifically astute. The question is frequently posed: How can salt lose its saltiness? Salt that loses its saltiness is a contradiction in terms like water that loses its wetness. If it is not salty, it is not salt. Strictly speaking, salt cannot lose its saltiness; sodium chloride is a stable compound. But the salt in Jesus’ day was seldom pure sodium chloride. The “salt” collected around the Dead Sea contained a mixture of other minerals, allowing the pure salt to be potentially washed out, leaving a useless residue¹⁷ that lacked the salty taste.¹⁸ While in the first-century it was possible for salt to lose its saltiness, in the spiritual realm this should be considered unthinkable! As God’s people we *are* the salt of the earth. We are not told to *become* salty; we are challenged to *stay* salty!¹⁹ Interestingly, the literal meaning of the word translated “tasteless” (*moraino*) is “to become foolish.” It is likely that Jesus is using a pun to suggest that if His disciples lose their saltiness, they are making fools of themselves.²⁰ Tragically, many Christians are like salt-free potato chips—their lives are a walking contradiction. Instead of flavoring the culture, they are polluting the culture.

In the final phrase of 5:13, Jesus states that tasteless salt “**is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.**”²¹ In the first-century, when salt became tasteless it was thrown on the ground where people wanted a hard path because salt had a hardening effect on the soil. People would then walk right on top of the salt and trample it into the ground. This metaphor does not mean that tasteless disciples lose their salvation. Instead, they are cast aside in the ministry of Christ. Tasteless disciples are not fulfilling the purpose for which Jesus called them.²² Because they are useless, they lose their testimony and influence. The consequences of such failure involve the loss of present usefulness and future rewards (cf. John 15:1–8).²³

The warning of 5:13 is also relevant to local churches as well. Since Jesus is talking to the disciples as a group (“you” plural) and they are later called the “foundation” of the church (Eph 2:20), this is applicable to every local church. As a corporate church, if we become tasteless and anemic we will be snuffed out of existence. We see testimony of this in church history. The seven churches of Asia Minor in Revelation are no more. The churches of Corinth and Ephesus are all but nonexistent. We look in vain for the church of North Africa where the great Augustine (354–430) ministered.²⁴ This can happen to our church as well. Even if we seem to be flourishing today, we may become tasteless tomorrow. The church of today has a tendency to brag about the size of our salt shakers (our church buildings) or the amount of salt we can put into our shakers (our worship attendance), rather than truly salting down our communities with the good news and good works of Jesus Christ.²⁵ The whole point of salt is to leave the shaker and hit the meat. We must impact our world with the life of Christ. *Give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.*

[As disciples we are called to season the earth. This requires us to recognize our value and fulfill our calling. In the next three verses, Jesus says...]

2. Light your world (5:14–16).²⁶ In this section, Jesus declares that we are called to shine the light of Christ. He begins by stating: “**You²⁷ are the light²⁸ of the world.**” People often get very disturbed because the world is dark. That’s because the world is not light. What else can a sinful place be but dark? The world is lost and without any direction because the world is not light. Jesus is the Light,²⁹ and we are to reflect Him.³⁰ As a disciple of Jesus Christ, it is not enough to have private personal holiness; we must also have public exposure.³¹

If we were to go into a building on a pitch–dark night, turn out all the lights, and even cover up all the windows, it would be so dark we would have a hard time moving around. There would be chaos as we ran into chairs, walls, and each other trying to get out of that building. But if in the middle of all that confusion, I stood on a platform, pulled out a huge flashlight, and turned it on, guess what? I now run the show. Whoever has the light calls the shots when it’s dark. That dark building describes this dark world pretty well. People are crashing into everything, trying to find a way out of the darkness. We Christians are the light. The tragedy is that we are not using the flashlight God has given us to give the world some light. Turn your flashlight on, Christian, so people in darkness can see. And after you turn it on hold it high so everyone can see it. Christianity is not a covert operation. We don’t go slinking around in the dark to get our work done. There is no room for “secret–agent” Christians. We are not the spiritual CIA. We’re “the light of the world.”³² What we need is a group of people who are unapologetically Christian.³³ Don’t apologize for being a Christian. No one else is apologizing. Homosexuals aren’t. Racists aren’t. If they can go public, so can we.

After making this general assertion, Jesus shares two parables in 5:14–15. First, He says, “**A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.**” In Jesus’ day, cities were often set on a hill for a number of reasons. It was cooler on a hill. In that arid, middle–eastern land, the only air conditioning they had was a breeze. Cities were also situated on hilltops for protection against attack. A city set on a hill was easier to defend. It is much more difficult to storm a walled city running uphill, and defenders have always known that victory must be claimed by capturing and holding the high ground. Jesus’ point, however, is not a city’s defense, but its visibility because of its elevated position. Most cities in Jesus’ day were constructed largely of white limestone and placed on a hilltop to reflect the bright sun rays, allowing visibility from miles away. At night the white marble mirrored both the moonlight and burning lamps, acting as a beacon for directing travelers toward the city.³⁴ Similarly, as disciples our light ought to make it easier for people to find their way to God. We are a city set on a hill that should be elevated and easily visible. We should give hope and direction for weary pilgrims in this dangerous and futile world. *Give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.*

In His second parable in 5:15, Jesus zooms in from the glow of a city to the glow of a household. He says, **“Nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.”**³⁵ In Jesus’ day, homes were lit by small clay lamps which could be held in the palm of the hand. These clay lamps were sometimes covered with a hole in the top in which to pour the oil, and a hole at one side for the wick. Since most Jewish homes were modest one-room structures, placing a lamp on a lampstand could give light to everyone in the house.³⁶ Jesus contrasts elevating a lamp on a lampstand to covering a lamp with a basket. People don’t light a lamp to hide its light under a basket, Jesus says. That’s silly! Rather, people light a lamp in order to shed light to everyone in the house. It is not that people *should* not hide their lights in their baskets, but that they *do* not do this.³⁷ Lamps were essential for finding one’s way in enclosed areas during the night and were placed under a basket only to extinguish the light.³⁸ Yet, many of us extinguish our lamp when we go to work, school, or into our neighborhood or community. We assume we need to blend in rather than bring a little heat. But in these two parables, Jesus says heat it up and lift it up. *Give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.*

Jesus concludes this passage with a powerful statement: **“Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father³⁹ who is in heaven.”** This verse is a command, not a suggestion. Jesus says, “Since you are light, SHINE!” We are not here to get used to the dark but to shine as lights. The light of Christ is to shine in and through us “before men.” In other words, this is a public exhibition of light. It is important to notice that the “light” is *not* equated with good works. Rather, the light illumines the good works in such a way that men notice them and glorify God. What is it that lights up our works to the glory of God? I believe it is our verbal testimony to Jesus Christ. Good works by themselves are not light;⁴⁰ they must be illuminated by *words* that direct attention and tribute to the Lord Jesus Christ.⁴¹ Sometimes Christians place a false dichotomy between words and deeds. They will say, “I testify to my faith in God by the way I live.” Others will say defiantly, “I don’t have to say anything.” The idea that we shouldn’t feel compelled to bring up the name of Jesus Christ as the explanation for our Christian character is born from either unbelievable arrogance or incredible naïveté. Our lives are not an adequate witness apart from our words. If you have your most spiritual day and your good works are clearly evident, your coworkers and classmates may just assume that you are a good Mormon. But if you name the name of Christ, people will know whose you are and where your works stem from.

Jesus expects good works and good words. Both are necessary to glorify God.⁴² The word “glorify” (*doxazo*) means to show off. That’s right—we’re supposed to show God off. Unfortunately, sometimes it is tempting to dazzle others with our good works so that we are glorified, not God. Yet, light functions best when it is least visible. If you are blinded by a lamp, you are not able to read. Jesus makes it clear that our good works should not direct attention back to us but to the Father in heaven. The purpose of shining our light is to point others to the God who is working in us.⁴³ When people see the full moon on a clear summer night, they are not going to say, “It’s wonderful that the moon is such a powerhouse of light energy for us.” The moon has no light. It merely reflects the light of the sun. That’s how it works with Christians, too. The world sees our works, but glorifies not us but the One who is the true source of the goodness that we exhibit in our behavior.⁴⁴ You could say we are like stained-glass windows. We sparkle and shine when the sun is out. But in the darkness, beauty is seen only if there is a light within.⁴⁵

Yet, you may still be thinking, “I’m just not very impressive. I don’t have a lot of gifts or talents. I’m not educated. I’m not rich. I’m not outgoing. I’m not even good looking. How can God use me?” Remember that Jesus’ disciples were the little people of the world. Jesus Himself was a carpenter/preacher who was not much older than thirty. His disciples were the same age. They were not political leaders. They weren’t well educated. Some spoke with country accents. They didn’t come from wealthy or aristocratic families. They came from what we would call today small business and “blue-collar jobs.”⁴⁶ So if Jesus could call His disciples “the salt of the earth” and “the light of the world,” He can say the same to you today. So *give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.*

In our master bedroom there is a glider chair. Next to the glider is a standing lamp. I often like to sit in this chair and read, before going to bed. Every night, I turn on the lamp so that I can see to read. But for the past several days the lamp hasn't worked because the light bulb has burned out. In my laziness, I keep neglecting to go into our garage and grab a new light bulb. Naturally, I instinctually turn on the lamp, but to no avail. I have the light bulb; I just need to use it.

Maybe this story describes your spiritual life. You are “the light of the world,” but you're not lighting up your world. Your life doesn't shed light, it casts shadows. Someone once phrased the issue this way: “If you were being tried for being for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?” For many of us, this is a very sobering question. This week you may see your next-door neighbor, your mail delivery person, your children's friends and parents and teachers, your coworkers, your server in the local restaurant, and on and on. Jesus says, “Shine your light!” *Give the world a taste and glimpse of who Christ is.* Let those around you know that you are a disciple of Jesus Christ. Show Him off to those in your life.

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Scripture References

Matthew 5:13–16

Luke 14:25–35

Mark 9:38–50

Colossians 4:2–6

2 Corinthians 3:4–4:7; 6:14

John 1:1–9; 12:35–36

Matthew 3:1–15

Study Questions

1. How do I fulfill my calling as “salt” in my school, workplace, neighborhood, and community (5:13)? What tangible examples can I cite? How has my “saltiness” been received? Have I been persecuted because of Christ (5:10–12)? Why or why not? How have I been able to ensure that my speech is “always gracious, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6)?
2. Am I making people in my life thirsty to know more about Christ? How has God accomplished this in and through me? When have I found people to be most receptive to Christ’s words and works? Where is God currently using me to bear fruit for Him? How can God use me to further exploit this opportunity?
3. Have I been guilty of expecting the world to be a place of “light” (5:14–15)? How can I change this faulty mindset? What is the darkest relational sphere in my life: family, friendships, work, school, or neighborhood? How can I bring the brightest light to shine in this darkest area?
4. Do people in my school, workplace, and neighborhood know that I am a disciple of Jesus Christ? In what ways have I communicated this to those who know me? How have I failed to let people know where I stand in my relationship with Christ? What can I do to be more public about my faith in Christ?
5. Is the focus of my life to bring God glory (5:16)? How have I let my light shine this week to the glory of God? Is it possible to simultaneously receive praise and still point people to Christ? How can I make sure that I do not share in God’s glory (Isaiah 42:8)?

Notes

¹ Preaching Today citation: Associated Press, “Sold! One Declaration of Independence Copy,” MSNBC.com (3/23/07); submitted by David Slagle, Atlanta, GA.

² The two images of salt and light involve “considerations less of what one does than of what one is.” Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 172.

³ Bob Kerrey, “What Is Our Role in this World as Christians?” <http://www.moonvalleybible.org/sermons.php>. This is an outstanding sermon that I found myself in complete agreement with.

⁴ Jesus emphatically says, “You—and you only disciples—are the salt of the earth.” The emphatic nature of the word “you” (*humeis*) is evident because (1) pronominal subjects do not need to be expressed and (2) the pronoun is placed at the front of the sentence. This is also the case in 5:14.

⁵ W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *Matthew*. The International Critical Commentary, vol. I, eds. J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield, G.N. Stanton (Edinburgh, Scotland: T & T Clark, Ltd, 1988), 472–73.

⁶ Haddon W. Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living* (Grand Rapids: RBC, 1991), 93.

⁷ A widely held view suggests that since salt had a varied use in the ancient world, Jesus is not pointing to one specific application but is using it in a broad, inclusive sense to refer to a vital necessity for everyday life. Sirach echoed such a perspective (Sir. 39:26), and Pliny commented that “there is nothing more useful than salt and sunshine.” See Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 213.

⁸ Hagner suggests, “The multiple ways that salt benefits the world may be the point of the metaphor.” Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*. Word Biblical Commentary series (Dallas: Word, 1993), 99. Nolland states, “Attempting interpretive precision is not wise here.” John Nolland, *The Gospel Of Matthew: A Commentary On The Greek Text*. New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 212.

⁹ BDAG s.v. *hala* a: “as seasoning for food or as fertilizer Matt 5:13b; Mark 9:50ab; Luke 14:34.”

¹⁰ *Contra* Blomberg who argues that it is unlikely that ancient Jews would have thought of the primary use of salt to be to enhance taste. Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*. New American Commentary series (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 102.

¹¹ Job 6:6 says, “Can something tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the white of an egg?”

¹² David Jeremiah, *Turning Point Daily Devotional*, 4/17/06.

¹³ A wonderful parallel is Col 4:6: “Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”

¹⁴ Paul calls this “tickling ears” (2 Tim 4:3).

¹⁵ See Matt 5:43 and 7:1.

¹⁶ David S. Dockery & David E. Garland, *Seeking the Kingdom* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw, 1992), 35–36.

¹⁷ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 174–75. Cason puts it like this: “But most salt in the ancient world derived from salt marshes or the like, rather than by evaporation of salt water, and therefore contained many impurities. The actual salt, being more soluble than the impurities, could be leached out leaving a residue so dilute it was of little worth.” Donald A. Carson, “Matthew.” *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelein and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1984), Electronic ed.

¹⁸ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 104. See also Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 99.

¹⁹ Frederick Dale Bruner, *Matthew: A Commentary. Vol. 1: The Christbook Matthew 1–12*, revised & expanded (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 160.

²⁰ Carson, “Matthew.”

²¹ Cf. Mark 9:50 and Luke 14:34–35.

²² R. Kent Hughes, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Message of the Kingdom*. Preaching the Word Series (Wheaton: Crossway, 2001), Electronic ed.

²³ See also Ed Glasscock, *Matthew*. Moody Gospel Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1997), 113; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 102; John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of Matthew*. John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 92.

²⁴ Eaton suggests that the thought in 5:13 “deals with something communal; it has nothing to do with personal loss of salvation. The parallels are Romans 11:19–23 and Revelation 2:5, both of which deal with communities.” Michael Eaton, *The Way that Leads to Life* (Great Britain: Christian Focus, 1999), 39.

²⁵ Hemphill, *Empowering Kingdom Growth*, 180.

²⁶ A great Pauline parallel to these verses is Phil 2:14–15: “Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”

²⁷ Once again, the word “you” (*humeis*) is emphatic. The idea is, “You disciples and nobody else are the light. You are it!” Jesus is saying that if this world is ever going to see His light and come to the knowledge of the truth, it will be because we let His light shine through us.

²⁸ The concept of light, enlighten, lamp, or lampstand occurs in nearly 300 verses in Scripture. Hampton Keathley III, “The Subjects of the Kingdom and Their Influence in the World” (Matt 5:13–16): <http://www.bible.org>.

²⁹ See John 1:4, 5, 7, 8 [2x], 9; 3:19 [2x], 20 [2x], 21; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35 [2x], 36 [3x], 46.

³⁰ Tony Evans, *Time to Get Serious* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1995), 179.

³¹ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 176.

³² When persecution hits (5:10–12), it is tempting to lay low instead of standing tall. It is natural to want to go into hiding instead of going public.

³³ Evans, *Time to Get Serious*, 179.

³⁴ Glasscock, *Matthew*, 114.

³⁵ It is often suggested our responsibility as light in the world is to expose the evil deeds of darkness in the world. This may sound similar to Paul’s words in Eph 5:11; however, Paul is talking about exposing evil among believers in the church. It’s not about exposing evil among pagans in the culture. Moreover, elsewhere in the Bible, it says our primary role as believers is not to judge those outside the church (1 Cor 5:12–13).

³⁶ Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 105.

³⁷ Dockery & Garland, *Seeking the Kingdom*, 37.

³⁸ Wilkins, *Matthew*, 215.

³⁹ The title “Father” (*pater*) is used in Matthew here for the first time, introducing the special relationship that exists between God and Jesus’ disciples. It is repeated incessantly throughout the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 4, 6 [2x], 8, 9, 14, 15, 18 [2x], 26, 32; 7:11, 21). Morris 106 notes, “We are so accustomed to referring to God as ‘the Father’ that we do not stop to reflect that this is a revolutionary way of thinking of ‘the high and lofty One who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy’ (Isa. 57:15). Jesus altered forever the way that we think about God.”

⁴⁰ Biblically speaking, good works are not the same as good things. Sinners can do good things. People can build hospitals and orphanages and feed the poor. But sinners cannot do good works. So what’s the difference? Good works are God–created, God–inspired works. Good works can help transform society because they have the power of God behind them. Evans, *Time to Get Serious*, 180.

⁴¹ Colin McDougall, “A Pinch of Salt in the Recipe for Persecution Matthew 5:13–16”: <http://www.bible.org>.

⁴² Talbert writes, “Be who you are so God will be glorified.” Charles H. Talbert, *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Ethical Decision Making in Matthew 5–7* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 56.

⁴³ Dockery & Garland, *Seeking the Kingdom*, 39.

⁴⁴ France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 177 suggests that the “good works” link back to the beatitudes in 5:3–12 and the practical Christian righteousness (5:6, 10). *Contra* Blomberg, *Matthew*, 103 who sees the good works as the “fruits in keeping with repentance” (Matt 3:8). The emphasis upon good works can also be paralleled in 1 Peter 2:10–11: “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.”

⁴⁵ Unknown, *Leadership*, Vol. 1, no. 2.

⁴⁶ Robinson, *What Jesus Said About Successful Living*, 93.