

2019 New Year Message Pt. 3

Pastor James Foley – Shared Sunday, January 27, 2019

Main Theme – Beginning 2019 with a word from the Lord re: adjusting our expectations in Christ.

WORSHIP & PRAYER

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Men's Breakfast – Saturday, February 9, from 9–10:15am
- Women's Ministry – Tuesday, February 12, from 6:30–8:30pm
- Workshop – Biblical Principles of Finance w/ Ginger (Feb. 22–23)

MORNING OFFERING

At this time, I want to call forth our ushers.

-Thank you for your faithfulness in giving to the Lord/His work

-Your giving fuels the work of Christ in and through this church

May the Lord bless you as you give! May you experience His faithfulness in kind!

ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The 2018 Annual Business Meeting will be held TODAY following service. Pizza will be provided for those who plan on attending (brief lunch). Parents with children, you are invited to observe and participate in the Annual Business Meeting from the Community Room (live-stream). May the Lord bless our deliberations!

• CHILDREN DISMISSED FOR CHILDREN'S CHURCH

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INTRODUCTIONS

As always it is wonderful to see you. I look forward to these moments of corporate worship and instruction. I pray that you are ready to receive what the Lord has for you today (as we move further into 2019). Please have your Bible at the ready and be prepared to take some notes.

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 1

I trust that you enjoyed your snow day last Sunday. As we assemble once again, I want to pick up where we left off. i.e., Considering a word that the Lord laid on my heart at the dawning of the New Year. Consider:

“My people suffer from low expectations of Me, what life can be in Me, and from low expectations of themselves” (REPEAT).

NOTE 1 – Three weeks ago I addressed our low expectations of the Lord and life/living in Him. O we anticipate so little when He has so much in store! If you were not here for that message, please listen online/obtain the notes, as any meaningful summary is well beyond our time today.

NOTE 2 – Two weeks ago I began to address the low expectations we have of ourselves in Christ. This message—which is also posted online—addressed the reality that far too many believers are far too comfortable with low standards of Christian morality and commitment. We are quick to excuse, diminish and dismiss sinful/immature living. This should not be, as we are called to live according to His calling and in a manner worthy of the Gospel (cf. Eph. 4:1; Phil. 1:27).

SETTING THE STAGE PT. 2

This morning I want to advance in our discussion of the low expectations we have of ourselves, (another angle). i.e., We expect too little of ourselves in terms of Christian witness and service. Allow me to explain. I want to ask a Q that will set the stage for the remainder of our time:

Q. To what degree do you believe God can use you to effect change (i.e., change the world)?

Q. Why do you disqualify and/or downplay yourself when the Lord calls you a ‘world-changer’?

KEY – Perhaps it is necessary for us to first consider the reality that God has called us to be agents of change (world-changers). We are to be a people of spiritual influence and impact. There are many texts/biblical accounts I could use to defend this premise, but let’s consider the words of Jesus Christ Himself (from what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount).

TO THE WORD

Matthew 5:13–16 (NIV)

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

DELVING IN...

Herein the Lord employs two terms (images) in relation to His followers: 1) salt and 2) light.

KEY – These images are meant to describe and define our role in the world as His followers. Please note that Jesus often used every-day elements that were familiar to His audience (e.g., wheat, nets, fish, seed, bread, shepherds/sheep, etc.) to articulate deep spiritual truths. Herein Jesus uses salt and light to define and describe you (individually) and the church (collectively).

Q. What does this imagery mean?

Q. What impact should it have on our lives?

NOTE – Great questions! I am so glad you asked. Let’s take some time to consider salt and light!

SALT OF THE EARTH PT. 1

Jesus likens the Christian to salt in v. 13a.

Mathew 5:13a

13 “You are the salt of the earth.

KEY – In order to understand the spiritual principles at work, we must first understand the underlying earthly realities. Please note that salt had two primary purposes in the times of Christ (1st-Century).

1) It was used to enhance the taste of food (seasoning)

2) It was used as a food preservative (no freezers, etc.).

NOTE – Let’s explore these two points one at a time and consider their applications...

SALT OF THE EARTH PT. 2

Firstly, salt was used to enhance or enrich the flavor of food. i.e., Salt functioned as a seasoning.

NOTE – Let’s be honest – we still use salt this way! How many in the sound of my voice have ever reached for the salt shaker at mealtime to improve the flavor of your food? It is so commonly used to this end, it is hard to imagine a table setting—at home or in a restaurant—without salt!

APP – Christians are called to enhance and enrich the world around them. Spiritually-speaking, we are designed to add “flavor” before the Lord. As one author writes:

Christians, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to Christ, will inevitably influence the world for good, as salt positively influences the flavor of the food it seasons. We bring enrichment. Where there is strife, we are to be peacemakers. Where there is sorrow, we operate as ministers of Christ, binding up the wounds. Where there is hatred, we are called of God to be agents of love and harmony, returning good for evil.

NOTE – Consider how believers have enriched this world through nearly two-thousand years of Christian service. How many orphans have been cared for and found loving homes? How many orphanages have been erected? How many widows and the throwaways of society have been cared for (as though they mattered just as much as anyone else)? How many have been educated and how many schools have been founded in the Name of Christ? How many prisoners have been visited and rehabilitated by dedicated believers? How many poor men, women and children have been housed, fed and cared for? How many addicts have found treatment? How many sober houses have been founded? How many sick have been tended to? How many hospitals built in His Name? How many lives have been positively impacted for Christ?

-I can take you to the most destitute points on the globe – there you will find the salt of the earth
-I can take you to any local in the US (rich and poor alike) – there I can show you salt of the earth

KEY – I can show you men, women and young people who are laboring to make their world a better place by putting into practice the teaching of Jesus Christ and demonstrating His heart of love.

The secularist dreams of a world without the church – I wouldn’t want to live in such a place...

KEY – Let us never forget our obligation to enrich and enhance the world around us...

James 1:27

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

SALT OF THE EARTH PT. 3

Moreover, salt was used as a preservative.

NOTE – For reasons that are beyond our time this morning, salt has the capacity to hinder and/or restrain decay and putrefaction. In a world of extreme heat and no refrigeration, salt was a vital element for life and living. It was the means by which the ancients kept their food from decomposing quickly. If tomorrow we lost all means of electrical power, salt would become among the most precious of commodities! Worth more than your 401-k and iPhone!

APP – Christians have a salt-like role. i.e., We work to hinder and restrain the spiritual and moral decay of the world in which we live. We function to preserve the truth and the ways of the Lord in an ever-decomposing world. If you think the world is dark now, imagine it without the Holy Spirit's restraining work in and through the Church of Christ! It would decay all the more readily!

-I can take you to the farthest points on the map/globe – there you will find the salt of the earth
-I can take you to any local in the US (rich and poor alike) – there I can show you salt of the earth

KEY – I can show you men, women and young people (clergy and laity alike) who stand for the truth and the standards of the Lord. A people who declare God's Word and who will not be swayed by the fear of man or the sinister forces (earthly and spiritual) that stand arrayed against them.

NOTE – Because the church must stand firm against the spiritual and moral decay of the world, functioning as salt will never be easy or popular. The world is continually working to redefine truth and/or the standards of morality. Did you ever think you would see a day where walls are deemed immoral but terminating a child up to and even past the due date is celebrated with standing ovations and lit buildings! How blind can we be...

KEY – Declaring that God's truth is fixed (v. relative) and His ways are immutable (v. malleable) will never win the true Church any popularity contests. Serving the Lord—in this sense—is difficult. It will always be easier to compromise and cave in to the whims of the masses.

Q. Why do you think so many churches have? Ours is an age of moral compromise!

You can find a church that will condone and celebrate any deviate behavior/sinful lifestyle...

We live in a time when the world is influencing the church much more than the church is influencing the world. But this is not our calling. We are called to be salt (to restrain and hinder the decay). Our participation in the decay is only hastening the judgment of God (if we are not careful).

SALT OF THE EARTH PT. 4

NOTE – Perhaps that is why Christ offered His cautionary word in Matthew 5. Consider:

Matthew 5:13

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

KEY – In one sense, pure salt cannot lose its saltiness. However, salt can become contaminated with other minerals and cease to be effective. What is to be done with salt that is contaminated and ineffective? It is to be cast aside as worthless. What become of the church that is contaminated and rendered ineffective. Consider this warning – it was offered for a reason!

1 John 2:15–17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father[a] is not in them. 16 For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

James 1:27

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD PT. 1

Moving along, Jesus likens the Christian to light in v. 14.

Matthew 5:14

14 “You are the light of the world.

KEY – Darkness & light are rich images that appear through the whole of the Word (and beyond).

-Darkness is often connected with ignorance/deception and wickedness

-Light is often associated with truth, clear spiritual perception and purity (godliness)

Let’s take some time to explore the nuances of this imagery (biblical perspective):

LIGHT OF THE WORLD PT. 2

To begin, the Church is to function as a shining beacon of truth to a lost and dark world.

NOTE – I have been studying Christian apologetics recently (i.e., learning to defend and articulate Christianity in relatable, effective ways). Much of Christian apologetics centers upon four fundamental questions that we—as humans—have wrestled with from the ancient times:

- 1) ORIGIN – How did I get here?**
- 2) MEANING – Why am I here? Purpose?**
- 3) MORALITY – What is right and what is wrong?**
- 4) DESTINY – What happens to me when I die?**

NOTE – These are questions that everyone—at one time or another—struggles with.

KEY – What is amazing is the wide array of answers fallen humanity has put forth in response! If you were to go out into our own neighborhood and ask the man on the street these four questions, you would be amazed at the disparity of the results!

Most people struggle through life with no clear answers, ignorant and wandering in darkness...

KEY – But the Church—as the light of the world—serves as a vehicle to illuminate the way. We possess the truth of the Word and—with it—work to shed light on such things! We can speak to these questions and offer biblical answers that are sound and promote life abundant and eternal!

Simple & Summary...

- 1) ORIGIN – You were uniquely made by and for the Lord**
- 2) MEANING – You exist to know the Lord and make Him known**
- 3) MORALITY – God has given you His ways that you might live rightly**
- 4) DESTINY – There is an afterlife and God has opened the means to Himself**

In an age of confusion, ignorance and deception, we are to be vanguards and heralds of the truth!

Jude 3

3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith [i.e., complete body of Christian teaching and truth] that was once for all entrusted to God's holy people.

Q. If you won't defend the truth of God's Word, who will?

Q. How can you hope to defend God's Word if you don't know it?

KEY – Ours is the most biblically-illiterate generation of Christians in the history of our republic...

LIGHT OF THE WORLD PT. 3

Moreover, the Church is to function as a shining beacon of godliness in a dark world.

Q. What is godliness? What is true religion (in the highest sense of the word)?

James 1:27 (Emphasis Mine)

27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: 1) to look after orphans and widows in their distress and 2) to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

KEY – Let's tackle these in reverse order:

1) We are to be beacons of personal holiness (resisting evil/sin).

"A godly life testifies to the transforming power of God." – John MacArthur

When we live in a holy manner (per the command of the Lord), we expose the sinfulness of others and point the way to renewed living in Christ. We are to be in the world, but never of it! So often the Church feels pressured to live in a worldly manner to reach the world – this has never brought about a genuine conversion!

-Story of Chris Henchey/UMass Amherst...

2) We are to be beacons of God's love

People come to understand the kindness, compassion and mercy of the Lord as they experience it in and through you! Your loving actions and words (i.e., good deeds) reveal God to a world in dire need, leading others to come to Him (to the glory of God the Father).

KEY – You may be the only Jesus some people ever see!

This is EXACTLY what Jesus was talking about in Matthew chapter 5...

Matthew 5:16b

16 . . . let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

NOTE – You and I often forget the tremendous impact the smallest actions can have. How many people have literally come to faith in Christ because a believer took the time to listen to them, write them a card, cook them a meal, or offer an encouraging word! Only eternity will tell!

LIGHT OF THE WORLD PT. 4

NOTE – Perhaps that is why Christ offered His cautionary word in this text. Consider:

Matthew 5:14–16

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

KEY – His call is for us to let the light (a life of true religion/godliness) shine in this dark world! His will is not for us to hide away, denying and diminishing His light in us. We are not to keep it all to ourselves! Such an act would be an affront/offense to the goodness of God and His work in your life!

Let your light shine!

We need believers who will live holy and charitable lives – that others might see/come to Christ!

SUMMATIONS & FINAL REMARKS PT.1

Matthew 5:13–16

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

NOTE – This text defines and describes the role of the Church (individually & collectively):

- The Church is to bring enhancement and enrichment
- The Church is to hinder the moral decay/decline of the world
- The Church is to be a beacon of God’s unchanging/immutable truth
- The Church is to be a beacon of true godliness (Christian purity and love)

SUMMATIONS & FINAL REMARKS PT. 2

Q. What happens when the Church fails to function as salt and light? Your living the result...

Q. What can happen when the Church functions as salt and light? The world is changed...

NOTE – Consider how a handful of believers changed the world in the days following Christ's life. These men and women were world-changers and the world has NEVER been the same!

Q. Why can't the same be said of us? Why do we settle for/expect so little from yourself?

KEY – If we will...

- 1)** Recognize our calling
- 2)** Work to accomplish our calling
- 3)** Consider the noted cautions of Christ

...We can change the world (at least our part of it). Who knows the impact we can have on our Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and uttermost parts of the earth! But we have to know who and what we are in Him.

- 1)** It is time for greater expectations of the Lord
- 2)** It is time for greater expectations of ourselves