Have you ever found yourself under the microscope? I don’t mean being examined by the doctors at the hospital or at the dentist’s office, but in our everyday lives. As Christians, it seems that we are constantly being monitored by our behaviors, by the way we live our lives, how we raise our family, perform in school or at work, or how we interact with our friends who may or may not be Christians.

 We are often being compared to and measured up by series of ethical and moral codes. *“How can she be doing this or that, and she still calls herself a Christian? How can he be hanging out with those people last night? Or that’s a very un-Christian thing that you said, you really shouldn’t have said that.”* Unfortunately, often times these comments are made by another fellow Christian also.

 There seems to be a very fine line, leaving little room for margin of grace, when it comes to our Christian identity and ethics, as reflected by what we say, what we believe and what we do.

 The passage that we just read earlier is the continuation from our passage last week, based on our lectionary calendar. As you recall, we were looking at the opening of Jesus’s famous Sermon on the Mount, specifically known as the Beatitude. We examined the relevance of **what God’s blessings means for us** and **how we, in turn, may be a blessing to others.**

As Jesus was standing before a huge crowd, who came to listen to what He had to say…. some may be a bit skeptical or they just wanted to check Him out. Jesus cut right through the chase and didn’t waste any time to let everyone know of what His earthly mission and purpose was all about. His message was a very simple one – **Love God** and **Love Others.** Essentially that’s how Ten Commandments were summed up to us, as the first part of the Ten Commandments was dealing with our relationship with God and the latter with our relationship with one another.

 As followers and disciples of Christ, we are being held to a much higher standard, but is that fair? We were given the Law and the Commandments to follow, and now Jesus was saying that all things are irrelevant if we do not believe and do what we say. Whatever we do or say, how we live our everyday lives are being measured up because of whom we represent. Just like the Olympic Athletes who walked out of the stadium wearing their respective country’s team uniform and under their country’s flag, all eyes are upon us as Christians. We are no longer who we are once put on Christ, not only on the outside but on the inside as well. We have been given a new identity as the **“Salt of the Earth”** and the **“Light of the World”**. No longer are we marching for ourselves but we are representing Christ. We need to be at our best behaviors and best performance because all eyes are upon us everywhere we go.

**Salt**

 Jesus said, we are the Salt of the earth! We are to be like Salt that lifts up the taste and the flavor of who God is. Without salt, everything would be tasteless and bland. Salt can also be used as a preservative by keeping food fresh (such as fishes, meats, or even vegetables) for an extended period of time.

 But the salt that Jesus was referring us to was more than the salt that we consume in our diet. Like salt, we have the capacity to influence those around us, affecting the way we taste and experience things. One time I had to the opportunity to visit one of the City’s salt storage facilities on the East Side of Manhattan. It was a HUGE facility!!! This was in the middle of the summer, one would think why we’re stockpiling so much salt in the summer. Well, in days like these, we know why. As I was walking around the facility, the thought of our passage today came to my mind. What does it mean when Jesus referred us to as the Salt of the Earth?

 If we are like the salt that’s stored up in the stockpile and make no efforts to be used and to impact the world around us, we are of little value to the world. We would just sit there and eventually it may become liquefied. If we’ve lost our saltiness, we missed out on our God intended purpose and potential to affect change around us. We have become worthless in God’s sight.

**Light**

 Jesus said, “We are the Light of the word” because the world is still living in the darkness and is in need to be exposed and awakened by the Light of Christ. As prophesied through the prophet Isaiah, God called Israel to be a light to the nations (that is including ALL the Gentiles). They were to set an example to others and take the lead in guiding others to the Light of Christ.

 **As Christians we are called to illuminate the light of Christ by our actions and in our everyday lives.** Others may see us by the fruits that we bear as the Salt and Light of the world. In our passage today, Jesus compared us as the ***“city on a hill that cannot be hidden”,*** meaning we do “stand out” in the crowd wherever we go. We are under the spotlight, under the microscope. Undoubtedly people will look at us differently and we need to be vigilant of everything we say, believe and do.

 One of my personal fascinations is lighthouses. Whenever I get the chance, I would go out of my way to drive to extreme ends of the shoreline to visit some of the lighthouses. Locally, I’ve been to the one on the Eastern tip of Long Island (at Montauk), the Jones Beach lighthouse. There’s also one at Sea Gate at the western tip of Coney Island. In New Jersey, I’ve been to the one in Sandy Hook, the one all the way at the Southern tip in Cape May and in Atlantic City. The Statue of Liberty, of course, also serves as a lighthouse guiding the vessels coming in and out of the New York Harbor.

 I love visiting these lighthouses, especially the ones that are opened to the public that you can climb inside through the spiral stairwell. I am quite fascinated by the light that was radiated and reflected all around through the little lamp that was inside the beacon. On a good clear night, the beacon of light that radiates from the lighthouse can be seen for miles in all directions. It serves as a navigating reference for nearby vessels while keeping the mariners safe as a ray of hope.

 By comparing us as the Light of the world, what Jesus meant was that we are being called to **penetrate into the society** by **identifying some of their needs** and **be a part of the solutions**. The world is full of darkness and many people are still lost without such Light shining in their hearts. Many are disoriented, lost out in the open sea and are in need to be rescued or a point of reference in order to navigate themselves back onto shore. Jesus is the main source of the light and we’re just the reflectors of this light of Christ.

 As this beacon of light, we may find ourselves in a spotlight because of who we are, the way we look and by our beliefs. Often times we live as incognito Christian, as we try to blend in with the rest of the world. We’ve become silent when we should speak against the world of injustice. We’re afraid to let people know of our faith root fearing rejections or it might offend others. Although it may be true that in an ecumenical and multi-faith microcosm such as New York and in America, it is not uncommon that we find ourselves at a clash with those of other faiths and cultures, while we preach God’s love, practice tolerance and accept one other with an open arm.

 Our passage today reminds us that despite all of our challenges and obstacles that we face in society, **we must not let our personal faith be compromised.** Sharing with someone about our faith should never been a “Taboo” with our friends and neighbors. After all, we are NOT the light that will out shine to others, but we are merely a reflector of the Light of Christ that illuminate the path of Christ of others. *“We’re called to be IN the world, but not necessarily OF the world.”*

 As the Apostle Paul reminded us that *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”[[1]](#footnote-1)*

 Jesus held His disciples and all of us today to a much higher standard. This is the Cost of Discipleship and the risks that we are often asked upon to take day-in and day-out. Jesus raised the bar high for all of us to emulate and follow. Somewhere along the line, Jesus knew that we would stumble and fall and He is prepared to stand by our side to pick us right up and carry us back on our feet once again.

 Furthermore, Jesus came not to abolish the old standard (or the Law), but he came to fulfill them. No one has ever come close to fulfilling the Law, except Christ. We’ve all fallen short of God’s glory and have violated every account of the Commandments in one form or another. The old Law remains in effect, but Christ has given us a renewed understanding of the Law.

 According to Luke, when a young lawyer came to ask Jesus about what he must do in order to inherit eternal life, Jesus answered him saying, “Whatever is written in the Law!” The young lawyer responded back to him saying, ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."[[2]](#footnote-2)***

 Jesus said to him, "You have given the right answer; **DO THIS, and you will LIVE.**[[3]](#footnote-3) **Saying it, Believing it and Doing it should not be exclusive to one another. Not only did God give us the Great Commandment but also the Great Commission, through Christ!**

 **“*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you…”[[4]](#footnote-4)***

 In the same way, the Mosaic Law (the Commandments) was there to set as a “measuring stick” to help us realize how far off we are and how we need to get back to the basic and be aligned with God once again.

 In verse 19, Jesus was referring to how some of the teachers of the law (the Pharisees) were instructing others of what the law means but unfortunately they do not put their teachings into practice themselves. They had become overly self-righteous and exploiting the law of God for their personal gain.

 Jesus gave us a warning not to be like those Pharisees and the scribes who were so outwardly focused onto following the law but have failed to internalize what the law means to them in a personal way. They’ve missed out on God’s bigger gift of the covenant. They were practicing their faith, for the sake of doing it – superficially….out of their obligation and for a show to others. What Jesus wanted us to be vigilant of is that we should strived to be a complete packaged Christian, both inside and out. Jesus came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it…..**Love God** and **Love Others, and you shall Live**!

 Today a number of us will be taking or renewing the vows of ordination and installation as officers of the church. This calling and commitment is not to be taken casually. As the chosen leaders, we are being asked to uphold even higher standards. We must realize that this is not OUR ministry as Elders or Deacons, it is God’s ministry and mission for God’s own people. **God has commissioned us to be the Salt and Light of this world so that we may infiltrate God’s love into the society wherever we are being sent.**

 This light is the light of the gospel, and it draws all people to its warmth and radiance.[[5]](#footnote-5)  Together, we shall unite our hearts in mission and purpose as we strive to further the Kingdom of God, by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God.[[6]](#footnote-6)

 *“A city built on a hill cannot be hid. Do not put your lamp under the bushel basket, but put on the lampstand and gives light to all in the house.”[[7]](#footnote-7)* Let your little light shine! Let It Shine! (3x)

1. *Romans 12:2-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *Luke 10:27(Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18)* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Luke 10:28* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Matthew 28:19-20* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Cook, Charles James, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1, P.335-6* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *Micah 6:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Matthew 5:14-15* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)