

Different People

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[0 : 00] If you have Bibles, could you open them at Matthew chapter 5 at the passage that Cori read to us? Just before I start, it's good to be here. Thank you for your warm welcome.

We're here on Thursday night. We got fed. We've come back today. We're going to get fed again. So maybe you want to stop doing that, or you'll see us every weekend. But it's good to be here. I want to talk to you, your different people from those around you. We sang Psalm 4. It said, Know that the Lord has set apart the godly for his own, or as his own.

That's who you are. You are God's people. So you are different. A few weeks ago, I was at a conference, and there was lots of people like me at it. At lunchtime, I went for a walk, and at the end of a street, I saw a sign for the Harley Davidson garage, and it said that there was an event on. So I walked into the Harley Davidson garage, and I thought, there's lots of motorbikes here, and I thought, what do you do with these things? I had to look at them, and I didn't know how to work them.

[1 : 10] I saw there were other people there, and most of them didn't look like me. I was worried that somebody would ask me which was my favorite Harley Davidson.

I'd give an answer. I'd hate to hear somebody say about a car and say something like the blue one. I was different in that place. I stood out as different, and so I went away from there.

You are different. You are different from everybody around you, and the sermon on the Mount starts to teach us that. We are different from every other religious and secular culture.

We're different as Christians in Scotland. Christians are different in Africa and in America and India. They're different from everybody else. You are different at work and at school and at college.

You should be different. Now when we are different, we start to worry, don't we? We think, well actually the more we are like people, the more they are likely to like us, and so we don't want to stand out.

[2 : 18] And I get that we're not to be objectionable. We're not to be weird. We're not just to be different because we wear clothes that people could maybe say, he looks like a Christian because he's wearing something.

Well that's not how we're to be different. Jesus tells us that we are different here, and he tells us that we not try to be different, but be what I have made you to be.

He tells us first of all that we're different people, and we're going to look very briefly at the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount and see how we're different people.

Now I know that when you think of the Beatitudes, you could have a whole sermon series on each Beatitude, but we're just going to go through them quite quickly and see how we are different.

The setting is that Jesus has gone up a mountain, brought his disciples with him, and he's opened his mouth, and he has begun to teach his disciples.

[3 : 17] They know they're in a special place when they come down from this mountain. When Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he has teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes.

Let's listen to Jesus speak authoritatively into our lives and understand that we are different. How are we different? Well, we're made happy by God.

We're blessed in lots of different ways because of what God has done, and it's our characteristics that have been changed as we have come to Jesus Christ.

What are we like? We realize that we are not the people who the world centers around. We are poor in spirit. We are not self-important.

We have looked at ourselves, and we've understood a smallness, and we've looked at a great big God and seen we are very different from him. And as we have done that, we have realized that we

need him.

[4 : 22] So we mourn, we mourn because of our sin and our sadness and our hearts because of what we have done, and we turn to God.

We sometimes sing of him in Rock of Ages, there's this line that says, Nothing in my hands I bring simply to thy cross I cling. That's what poor in spirit mourning Christians do.

They realize they had nothing, they go to God and they ask Him to change. And as they're changed, they don't come with pride but with meekness, understanding that they need to be changed by God, and so they hunger and thirst after righteousness.

They're not satisfied with themselves just the way they are. I took an assembly in school in Thursday, and we sang a song. If you've ever been in school assemblies in the last ten years, you've probably heard this song.

I'm not going to sing it but the words are, you, I'm nearly saying it, you are a star just the way you are. And I like that song because as a podgy ginger-haired child, I wish everybody knew that when I was in school, that you're a star just the way you are.

[5 : 33] But the message that they're giving is, you don't need to be changed. You're fine just the way you are. Everybody should accept you just the way you are, and we understand that.

But we need to be changed. We need to be people who hunger and thirst after something that we don't have. And so we go to God and ask for that.

Then as the Beatitudes move on, we start to see a different attitude towards other people. Blessed are the merciful and blessed are the pure in heart, that we're merciful to other people because we have received God's mercy.

We don't hold it against them because God doesn't hold things against us. We're pure in heart, and that has an idea of being single in our attitude towards God, devoted to Him, but also just of purity. The message from Hollywood has been over the past few months that men need to start treating women properly. You've heard it. We should have known that. We don't always live like that, but the pure in heart don't objectify like that.

[6 : 41] We shouldn't, and we ask forgiveness if we have. We seek peace because we have been given peace with God. He's taken away our sins.

We were at war with Him. We were enemies with God, but now we have been brought near to God through Jesus Christ.

And so we are different people. It might mean that not everybody loves us though, because blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

When we live differently, people are going to see something as different about us, and they will not always like it. So you might ask, well, is it worth it?

I hope that if you've been looking at the Bible, you've realized that I haven't preached and the Beatitudes have said how you're blessed or the characteristics, but I haven't said what all the blessings are.

[7 : 38] You are different. You're different from everybody around you, because yours says Jesus is the kingdom of heaven. You will see God says Jesus Christ to you.

You will be comforted. You have an inheritance. You are going to receive God's mercy. You are the children of God, your sons of God.

You have the kingdom of heaven. This is who you are. This is what you have. Hold on to it. Look for it. Live as people who have it. Be different.

Perhaps you're not a Christian yet, and if that's you, then it's good you're here. And I want to tell you that it's worth being different.

They might persecute you. It's going to be hard sometimes at work or at school or wherever you are, but it's not worth not having the kingdom of God.

[8 : 37] It's not worth not being called a child of God. It's not worth turning away from God. You have to want to see God. And if you're not yet a Christian, then how do you become a Christian?

You turn to God. You become poor in spirit. You realize who you are, who He is, and you see that He has sent His Son, Jesus, to be your Lord and Savior.

So you come to Him. You are different people. And if you doubt it, let's listen to Jesus as He tells us that we should have different actions as we are different people.

You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It's no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

Let's see what Jesus says. Jesus says you are the salt of the earth. He doesn't say try to be the salt of the earth or become the salt of the earth. You, His disciples, are the salt of the earth.

[9 : 43] God, have you got any salt in Edinburgh? I suppose the council might be asking that today. Have you any salt in Edinburgh? On Sunday mornings and Sunday evenings, it gathers in one place.

It comes together as a body, but then throughout the week you will see my salt scattered in schools and homes. It's everywhere in Edinburgh because my people are the salt of the earth.

That's what we are. And salt, some of you know more about salt than me, but I understand it has three uses. It preserves, it cleans and it tastes.

Salt is a preservative. Some of you like me have lived sheltered Scottish lives and then some American comes to you and says, hey, have you tried jerky?

You, what's that? And they let you taste it and you say, back to my sheltered Scottish life. What have they done with it? Well, I don't know everything they've done with it, but one of the things that they've done with it is they've put salt in it to preserve it so that it will last.

[10 : 53] And if you see meat hanging in a bag, move to the refrigerated meats and put them under your grill or something. But this is what we are.

We are the salt of the earth. We are to be some sort of preservative on the earth. We're to keep it from going wrong. We are to keep it pure as much as we can.

That's why Derek's prayer and bringing our attention to abortion this morning is important.

Everything that needs to be done, who will God have to do it?

Where is his salt? It's in us, we are the salt of the earth and he wants us to be the people who do these things. So be a restraint where everybody is their own God doing what they want to do and most of it dismissing what he wants us to do.

You are to be a restraint. Is everybody going to love you for it? No. But because it brings glory to God and it is good for them because you love people, you will do it.

[12 : 05] Second use of salt is that it cleans. It cleans. In chapter 164 there's talk of newborn babies being washed in salt or with salt water.

The idea that it might cleanse them, prepare them for life and some people think that this is what Jesus would have in his mind as he spoke and told them that they were the salt of the earth.

But we have to go where there is dirt and we have to become a cleansing agent. You've heard of the expression to rub salt in a wound, where did that come from?

Well, the idea is that when you put salt in a wound it's going to sting a little but it's going to stop any infection from coming, it's going to stop more harm being done.

Oh, is that what we have to do? Rub salt in a wound, that means it will sting or something.

[13 : 01] But you will stop harm from being done. When you see somebody living their life as if God doesn't exist and you do something different then you're bringing glory to God and you're helping them.

You're helping them to be different, to be changed in that way. So you have to try and do these things.

Imagine you'd never tasted salt. Imagine salt was something new to you and you arrived at a table and you saw this stuff and you poured it all over your food and you might say, well, some of us are a bit unhealthy and we'd say, oh, that's nice.

But you take too much and it's not going to be too nice, is it? But we are the salt of the earth and we are different to what's around us. We're very different to what's around us.

You hunger and thirst after righteousness. You want something different from what they want.

When people hurt you, you're able to forgive them because you have received God's mercy.

[14 : 10] Some will be changed by it and warm to others may not. But the difference will have been noticed. You notice where there is salt and you notice where there is not salt.

So it all goes wrong if salt loses its savor, doesn't it? How does salt lose its savor? Well, if it's harvested with something else, if it's contaminated by what it grew beside, if there's been water around it, it starts to become diluted.

It's different. I didn't know this till recently, but you get this stuff called, I think it's pink Himalayan mountain salt. Some of you know it, but it's transformed my salt life.

It's really good. It's not even white. But it tastes much saltier than what I've used all my life. Salt is different.

You can be different to others around you and you shouldn't stop being salty. You should try your hardest to be salty.

[15:13] Don't try and be like everyone around you. You're to make the difference to the taste. Think about where you live. Think about where you work.

Do your colleagues notice that there is something different about the way that you live your life? Do the people around you need salt?

Do they? Or have they got just enough salt? Are you to be what God has made you to be? This week you might have heard of two politicians who have been described by journalists or by other politicians as being useful idiots because they didn't speak out against the Kremlin in the accusations about the poisoning in England.

Now time will tell who the useful idiots are, but the question I ask myself is, am I a useful idiot for the devil because I refuse to speak out?

Because I don't say what I think is true. And I don't want to be that. I don't want you to be that either. You're the salt of the earth.

[16:22] Jesus, there are lovely people in St. Columbus. Why didn't you tell them that they were the honey of the world? Or the wine? Or the sugar or something sweet that everybody would love?

Well, he didn't, did he? He didn't say everybody's going to love having you around. Hopefully they will. Maybe they will be changed, but we are the salt of the earth.

For years people have told us we don't need any more salt. This isn't about our diet. This is about our world, and it needs God's people to be salt.

Well we are different people who have different actions, and we have a different purpose. You are the light of the world. A city set in a hill cannot be hidden. More do people light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. You have a different purpose, that God would work through you through the way you live your life, and that others would see what you are doing, and that they would give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[17:40] Now sometimes we know we fall short of being people who have done a good example and lived a life like that, but this is what we are to do.

I used to live in the Highlands and would drive home late at night, and one of the happiest things you would see would be the orange glow of the street lights of your village. You were coming home, you saw the light, and the light was a safe place.

It was a relief to get there. We are the light of the world, and we are able to bring some sort of relief into people's lives as we shine, as we show the glory of God, as we do good works that would bring people to God so that they would put their trust in Him.

The light shines, it contrasts, and we are to let that light just shine out. We don't try and hide it, but we have to be that city on a hill that we don't want to hide what God has done for us.

Why would we? Why would we want to hide that we have the Kingdom of God and that we will see God and we are going to receive mercy? Why wouldn't we want other people to know about that?

[18:52] Well, we are different. We are different from people around us. We like light, John and his gospel speaks about people who in the light shone, they hated it because they liked the darkness better, because their deeds were evil, so they refused to come to the light because they were afraid that their deeds would be exposed.

Light shows what's wrong. That's one of the things that light does here. That's what Jesus is telling us. And when people see a light, they understand something's changing.

They can do something about it. Jesus coming into the world. I say in chapter 9, the prophecy, the people who are living in darkness have seen a great light, and then it goes on to tell us, to as a child is born, a son is given, and all of these things, the light comes with Jesus Christ.

God's word is a light to our path and a lamp to our feet. It shines something. I'm telling you today that you're different. Telling you that you are to be something different.

I don't think it's something that you haven't heard before. It's something we often need reminded of, but we don't always want to know that we are different.

[20:09] We don't always want to see that this is what we are to be. We don't want to be challenged. Lord, is the answer to abortion really?

Is it lying with us? Have we to do something? It'd be easier not to, wouldn't it? Is the answer to lots of lost people in Edinburgh at work, in my street?

Is it something to do with me? Might be easier if it wasn't, but it is to do with us. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

When my boys were wee, I'd put them to bed at night, and they used to be cute wee things, and they would say, Daddy, leave the light on, leave the light on because they wanted to go to sleep securely knowing that they were still in the house and not in a big black hole, so that's what you must have worried about.

Now I go into my boys' room in the morning, and I turn the light on to wake them up, and it's carnage. It's not nice. They'll close everywhere, and the boys themselves will put their heads under their doovies, and they'll stay in the darkness because it's easier.

[21 : 24] It's easier than facing up to the reality of a new morning. You are the light of the world, and when you go around and shine that light, some people will not want to see it, will not want to know what you are exposing.

Sometimes you will be able to bring great comfort, because that's what light can do. It can show where we're going, where we need to go, and so we will follow the light.

Other times people won't like it, but Jesus still said, you are the light of the world. And as long as you try and be that, there's going to be an end result, says Jesus.

Maybe He doesn't say maybe, in the same way, let your light shine before others so that maybe they may see your good works, and maybe give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

If you are the salt of the earth, and if you are the light of the world, people will see, and they will give glory to your Father who is in heaven. So you want to be people like that.

[22 : 33] You want to show people that there is something they need. You want to tell them your story of how you were poor in spirit, that you mourned for your sin, and you turned in humility to God, and you hungered and thirsted after righteousness, and you didn't have any of your own, and you got it free from the Lord Jesus Christ.

And so now you are different people. Don't be people then that hide your light under a ball, but people who let it shine. That light does a great work of change, instant change, quick change comes through the light.

Who are you? You're different. You're a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His glorious and His wonderful light.

Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. You are different.

You have come to God. All these blessings are yours. You preserve, you clean, and you taste the world that you live in. You're different.

[23 : 49] When people around you try to be something they're not, it annoys you. Look at Him. He's trying to be something He's not. Look at you. Don't try and be something you're not.

Be what Jesus has told you to be. If you were being that person, would you make an impact? If you were the salt of the earth and the light of the world, well, you are, so do it.

If you want to make a difference, be what Jesus has made you to be, what He has said that you are. Let's pray.

Lord, these are your people, and you have bought them with the precious blood of your Son Jesus Christ.

And you have put your Holy Spirit in them so that they are able to do things that would please you. So help them to live the blessed, made happy by God life, where they are the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

[24 : 57] We pray that you would help them, that you would help this church to be a light on the hill. And we ask, oh Lord, that people would see the good deeds of the people here and glorify you in Jesus' name.

Amen.