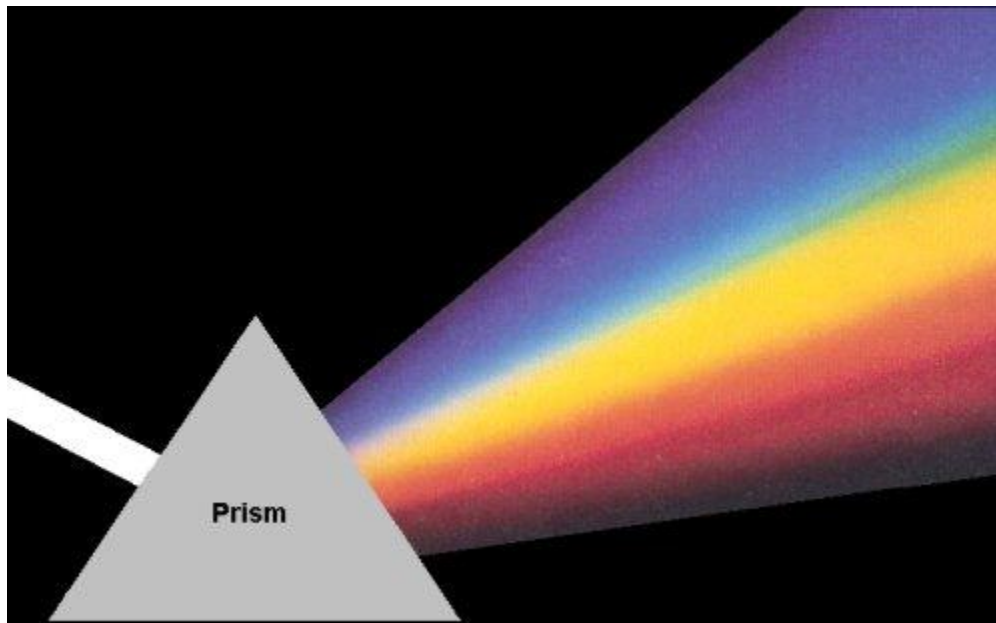


“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH; YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD; REJOICE; LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE”

When He had finished announcing the Beatitudes, Jesus gave two statements: “You are the salt of the earth; you are the light of the world.” (5:13, 14) Common table salt is made up of two elements in equal proportions: sodium and chloride. Common sunlight is made up of the rainbow. What appears as one thing to the eye is in reality an incredibly complex combination of elements or color.

The disciple who is both salt and light has at the core of his life a new character being formed. As we bend the elements through the prisms of experience what emerges are the eight facets of the Beatitudes.



http://www.chem.purdue.edu/gchelp/cchem/prism_spectrum.jpg

What makes the disciple so distinctive is not any one facet but the vast interrelatedness of the eight. In that interrelatedness the disciple demonstrates his distinctive flavor as salt and his appearance as light.

For example, one who mourns takes a personal responsibility for his own sins and the sins of the community. This leads to taking steps in making peace. Yet the strength needed for peacemaking demands a high level of meekness. The agenda of peacemaking is determined by the righteousness for which he is hungering. He will not be easily distracted if there is an inner purity of focus. It is the poor in spirit who have a chance to be pure in heart. Only the merciful can endure persecution without bitterness. Leave out any of these elements and the distinctive flavor of the Christian is lost.

As “salt” the disciple is one of the basic necessities for life. He is “benevolent infection: that preserves the world. He is that which adds flavor to life. He is the antiseptic – healing even while hurting. Our world “salary” comes from the ancient practice of paying wages with salt. i.e. we are valuable.

The disciple is the light of the world. In the physical world, without light there is no life, as light, the disciple provides a steady source of illumination in darkness, refusing to demand focus on himself, thus blinding you. He is both the light by which light flourishes and the hurricane lamp which refuses to be extinguished no matter how fierce the storm.

Jesus also gave two commands: "Rejoice: (5:12) and "Let your light shine: (5:16). The disciple rejoices because he is blessed with this new character. There is joy even though the counterfeit is actively threatening the authentic. It is the joy of belonging to the brotherhood of prophets who also were persecuted. It is to be exceedingly glad because our security is not in earth. This rejoicing is the joy of knowing the lost have been found (18:13) the only other use in Matthew).

The disciple *lets* his light shine. It is not a matter of *making* but *allowing* the light to shine. The light shines because of what God in Jesus Christ is doing in us. He is changing us in order that others may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven, Our responsibility is to give light by allowing what God is doing in us to be seen. We are to remove the bushel baskets, throw open the shutters, open the drapes.

The best argument for Christianity is Christians: their joy, their certainty, their completeness. But the strongest argument Christianity is also Christians – when they are somber and joyless, when they are self-righteous and smug in complacent consecration, when they are narrow and repressive, then Christianity dies a thousand deaths. But, though it is just to condemn some Christians for these things, perhaps, after all, it is not just, though very easy to condemn Christianity itself for them. Indeed, there are impressive indications that the positive quality of joy is in Christianity -- and possibly nowhere else. If that were certain, it would be proof of a very high order. (C.S. Lewis quoted in *A Severe Mercy* by Sheldon Vanbauken (Harper and Row, 1977, p. 85)

"FOR I AM CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL PERFECT IT UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS." (Philippians 1:6)