



BE the Church
Matthews 5:13-16
April 19, 2020

The word “church” means “assembly.” It usually refers to the assembly of God’s people, either all his people in the world (universal church) or all his people in a particular place (local church). Yet the church is still the church even when it is not assembled, say on Sunday afternoons or Tuesday nights—or during a quarantine! Since cannot assemble as a church right now, this is a great opportunity to learn to BE the church.

Jesus was speaking to his disciples (Matthew 5:1), when he said you ARE the salt of the earth and you ARE the light of the world (Matthew 5:13, 14). Being a disciple of Jesus certainly entails doing something, but it also entails BEING something. Disciples of Jesus ARE salt and we are light.

In context, the thing that makes us salt and light is having the distinctive qualities endorsed by Christ in the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). Though some people would think it undesirable to have those qualities and avoid them, Jesus says we are blessed if have them. Christ-followers with these qualities of being or character are salt and light.

Both salt and light have the ability to influence whatever is around them. Jesus stated this overtly in the case of light (Matthew 5:15b). So, a disciple who *is* salt and light will *do* good deeds that have a godly *influence* over others that can turn them toward God. (v. 16). It matters, though, how the deeds are done. The little word “that” (*hopos*) in v. 16 is used to describe the *manner* of something

(“in such a way” NASB). We can do good deeds in such a manner that people praise us or we can do them in such a manner that people praise God.

What, then, does it mean to BE the church? First, it is a matter of being. We need to spend time with God inviting him and cooperating with him as he seeks to transform our being (Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:17-18). As we change to BECOME more him, then second, good deeds will also emerge. If these are done in the right manner, we can influence others to praise God. We Do Be Do Be Do. (or is it Be Do Be Do Be Do?)

There are numerous specific ways we can BE like Christ and then Do like Christ. We should both ponder and also discuss with each other what possibilities there are during a quarantine. Here are two ideas for being and three ideas for doing that come straight from the beatitudes in Matthew 5:

1. *Humble prayer and introspection* (vv. 3, 6, 8). This is often unflattering and uncomfortable but is a necessary part of BEING different. Remember godly BEING is prerequisite to healthy doing.
2. *Mourning or lament* (v. 4). We can use God’s “how to” manual (the Psalms of Lament) to handle our own painful feelings in a healthy way. BEING a Christian does not mean being a pretender (Matthew 6:1-18).
3. *Meekness and Gentleness* (v. 5). Everyone has an idea about what we ought to be doing right now or how to handle the situation. Share yours with others, but do so with meekness and gentleness.
4. *Show Mercy to others* (v. 7). This is what God desires in us all the time (Matthew 9:13; 12:7). But none of us are at our best right now, so mercy is especially needed.
5. *Be a peacemaker* (v. 9). We’ve all heard about difficult living arrangements during quarantine, and domestic violence is up. How can we be peacemakers right now?

