

Summary

In this sermon, Pastor Mike draws on the rich Christian heritage of Lancaster County to remind believers that the pursuit of godliness is the highest calling for followers of Jesus Christ. He traces the history of Swiss Mennonite pioneers and early church planters who settled the area, noting that they came not only to build farms and communities but to plant the Gospel and live fruitful, obedient Christian lives. Their commitment to godliness, He argues, was exactly what the young nation needed, and it is exactly what America needs today. Using Matthew 5:13-16, the pastor unpacks Jesus's call for His followers to be salt and light in the world. Salt preserves and slows decay, but it must come into contact with the world to do its work. Light exposes darkness, but it must not be hidden. Christians are called to engage their communities, workplaces, schools, and governments with integrity and love, letting the light of Christ shine through good works so that others may see Jesus and give glory to God. The pursuit of godliness, defined as living a fruitful and obedient Christian life, is the greatest gift believers can offer their nation and the generations that follow.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come before You grateful for the freedom we have both as citizens of this nation and as citizens of Your kingdom. As we open Your Word together today, we ask that You soften our hearts and open our minds. Help us to set aside our own agendas and preconceived ideas, and let Your Spirit speak clearly to each of us. Show us what it truly means to pursue godliness in our daily lives. May this time together draw us closer to You and to one another. In Jesus's name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one hobby, sport, or community activity you enjoy that has nothing to do with church, and how did you get into it?

Key Verses

- Matthew 5:13-16
- John 8:12
- Philippians 2:15

- Galatians 5:1

Questions

- Pastor Mike defined godliness as 'living a fruitful, obedient Christian life.' How would you describe what that looks like in your own daily routine?
- In Matthew 5:13, Jesus warns that salt can lose its saltiness and become useless. What do you think causes a Christian to lose their 'saltiness,' and how can we guard against that?
- The sermon compared Christians to salt that must come into contact with the world to do its work. Are there areas of your life where you feel you have been staying in the 'salt shaker' rather than engaging the world around you? What holds you back?
- Jesus says in Matthew 5:14 that a city on a hill cannot be hidden. Can you think of a time when you witnessed someone's faith shining clearly without them being preachy or weird? What made it so effective?
- Pastor Mike shared the story of the mission team in Spain, where consistent integrity over several years changed the town's attitude toward the ministry. How does this challenge the way you think about the long-term impact of small, faithful actions?
- The pastor was honest about nearly losing his temper during a frustrating phone call and admitted that Jenny had to step in. Why is it often hardest to let our light shine in small, everyday frustrations rather than in big, obvious moments?
- Philippians 2:15 calls us to shine like stars in a dark and crooked generation. What specific area of your community, workplace, or neighborhood do you sense God calling you to bring more light into this week?
- Pastor Mike said his highest hope for future generations is not just that they enjoy freedom as American citizens, but that they know the freedom found in Jesus Christ. How does keeping an eternal perspective change the way you engage with the culture and world around you?

Life Application

This week, identify one specific place in your life where you have been staying in the 'salt shaker,' whether it is a workplace, a neighborhood group, a school board, a sports league, or even a difficult relationship. Make a deliberate choice to engage that space with the love and integrity of Christ. It does not have to be dramatic. Treat someone with dignity, offer a kind word, or simply show up with a servant's heart. At the end of the week, reflect on what God did through that small act of faithfulness.

Key Takeaways

- The pursuit of godliness, defined as living a fruitful and obedient Christian life, is the highest calling for followers of Jesus and is exactly what our nation needs today.
- As salt of the earth, Christians must engage the world around them rather than retreating into exclusively Christian circles, because salt only preserves when it comes into contact with what it is meant to cure.
- As light of the world, believers reflect the light of Jesus Christ through their lives, and that light must not be hidden but allowed to shine openly through good works and integrity in every setting.
- Good works do not earn salvation, but they are the natural overflow of a life saved by grace, and they are the primary way the watching world sees Jesus in and through His followers.
- The little, everyday moments of kindness, dignity, and faithfulness often make the greatest difference in pointing others toward Christ.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank You for the time we have shared together around Your Word today. You have called us to be salt and light in a world that desperately needs both. Forgive us for the times we have hidden our light or stayed safely in the salt shaker. Give us the courage to step into the places You have prepared for us, to engage our communities, our workplaces, and our relationships with the love and integrity that reflects You. May the pursuit of godliness mark our lives this week and every week. Let our light shine so brightly that those around us are drawn not to us, but to You. We pray this in the name of Jesus, the true Light of the world. Amen.