

Maximum Potency

Matthew 5:13-16

The Living Law (no. 4 in the series)

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/maximum-potency/>

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This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please Heather know. Thank you!

Song: Vincent by Don Mclean.ⁱ

Prayer:

So, Father, thank you for Vince and Alison and the rest of the band. And thank you for “Vincent,” and I pray that you would help us through the power of your Spirit to listen. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Message

Matthew 5:13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?”

In Jesus day, salt would usually come mixed with other minerals like gypsum, so when the salt leached out, all that was left was *Adamah*—that is “dust”.ⁱⁱ

Verse 13^bIt is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others [anthropon: men, humanity], so that they may see your good works [kala erga: “beautiful deeds”] and give glory to your Father (Jesus refers to God as their “father!”) who is in heaven.

Let your light shine that the world can see your beautiful deeds, and give glory to your father who is in heaven.

What deeds do you suppose those are? Why do the people of the world just spontaneously start thanking God for the work of the Moral Majority, the Christian Coalition, and the modern Evangelical voting block? Why do they do that? Or do they do that? What “good works” is Jesus talking about? And how do we become salt and light?

“You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world!”

I've been a professional pastor, of some sort, for almost 40 years. I graduated from the largest evangelical seminary in the world known for its studies in church growth. For a time, I was considered an expert in church growth. I was even asked to speak to the leaders of other churches about church growth. Back in the day, salt, light, and church growth meant Marketing, Management, and one other "M" word that I'll mention in a moment.

Marketing is all about doing what you do to be "seen by men—anthropon"ⁱⁱⁱ Someone once said,
"You're the only Bible that some will ever read."
"If you think you're saved, inform your face."

At my High School, we had a "Spirit Section" at football games. We'd chant "*Heritage, Heritage, Heritage High!*" Marketing is why we choose names for ourselves like: "The Heritage Eagles," "The Moral Majority", "Promise Keepers", "Focus on the Family" ... or "Happy Church", "Joy Land"... but not something like "Sinners Anonymous."

Twenty years ago, I was heading up a building campaign, and the consultants we hired said we needed a slogan, so I came up with:

"Where the World Drives By"

I still like that slogan—It means, *Where the world drives by—on I-70—and sees a monument to Jesus... and kinda, sorta, a monument to Peter Hiett who works really hard at glorifying Jesus.*

Marketing and Management--We had a staff of something like 35 full-time people, and the consultants informed me that we needed better management. So, we organized committees, held events, and I tried to inspire people without lying; and the truth is, we did need a new building. We had four services and were constantly turning people away. And it worked! We built and acquired a 12.8 million-dollar facility, and still had our old one across the highway on Lookout Mountain.

Marketing can be very good. And *Management* can be a spiritual gift—the gift of administration or even pastoring. But Marketing and Management can also be *Manipulation*—that's the third "M." So, when I hear "Salt and Light," I think *Marketing, Management* and *Manipulation*, all in the name of God, and I get sick to my stomach.

We live in a *market*-driven consumer society in which we constantly lie and hear lies called advertisements. We are constantly *managed* by powerful corporations and government institutions with an elaborate network of threats and promises. We constantly *manipulate* and are *manipulated*; it's how we get things done. So, when the institutional church thinks that we are to get things done, when we hear, "*salt of the earth and light of the world,*" we naturally think, "*Marketing, Management, and Manipulation.*" So, we end up saying stuff like:

"God loves you absolutely and unconditionally... unless you don't have faith that God loves you absolutely and unconditionally...In which case he will endlessly hate you absolutely and unconditionally. And you'll know if you have faith by whether or not you join this church. Trust me, I'm ordained, I'm a professional—I get paid."

Of course, we find very sophisticated ways to say that, so it's not so obviously *that*, but it is *that*; it's *marketing, management* and *manipulation*. But Jesus didn't say, "*market, manage and manipulate.*"

He didn't even say, "*Be salty.*" He said, "You are salt."
He didn't even say, "*Shine the light.*" He said, "You *are* the light; let it shine."

You know, I can't think of any place in the Scripture where people are told to "witness." The Greek word is *martyres*. It's where we get the word "martyr." Some are told to preach, which means "announce." But Jesus never says, "Go witness;" he says, "You will be my witnesses (*martyres*)." Not, "Be Salt. Be Light." But, "You are salt. You are light." You are the thing that makes everything taste better, like salt. Some people bring out the flavor in everyone around them, so the bread is better, the steak is better—every situation and person is better.

You are the salt; you are the light. When some people enter a situation, a group, or a crowd, their entrance is like a lamp that is suddenly turned on as you stumble through a dark room. You are the salt and the light that brings beauty and meaning to the world. You are like this masterpiece:



["Starry Night" by Vincent Van Gogh (1889)]^{iv}

This is one of the most recognized paintings in the world—"Starry Night" by Vincent Van Gogh. Its value is estimated at well over 100 million dollars. Hang this on the wall of a boring room, and the room will taste better. The light from this picture might even change a heart or two.

Jesus says, "You are the salt.... You are the light." *You!* So, who is he talking to?

Well it's not the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church...

And it's not the Graduating class of Fuller Seminary...

It's these people in Matthew 5:1-12, that we talked about last time.

None of them had been to seminary.

None had stepped foot in what we would call a "church," read the four spiritual laws, or said the "sinner's prayer."

They were Jews and gentiles that had left a crowd and followed Jesus up a little mountain to hear him speak. And this is what Jesus says these people are like:

³ **Blessed are the poor in spirit, [of them] is the kingdom of heaven.**

⁴ **Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.**

⁵ **Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.**

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

9 “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

10 “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, [of them] is the kingdom of heaven.

[Now Jesus switches to the second person plural pronoun.]

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account (*for my sake, righteousness’ sake*).

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

13 “You are the salt of the earth...

14 “You are the light of the world.

In the Greek, “you” is in the emphatic position.

You poor in spirit, *not* sitting in the spirit section advertising your spirit.

You who mourn, *not* manipulating with sorrow, but feeling the sorrow of a fallen world.

You meek, not demanding your rights, and yet, inheriting the earth.

You who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, *not* you who market your righteousness.

A few years ago, Donald Miller and his friends set up a confessional booth on their college campus, but they didn’t take confessions.^v They confessed to unbelievers that would line up to enter; they confessed how Jesus was all about love...and they had neglected the poor, refused to love, proud to be part of the group responsible for apartheid and the crusades. It started a little revival.

- Blessed are those who name their church “*sinners anonymous*” or maybe “*alcoholics anonymous*.” You are the salt and the light.
- You merciful, *not* demanding justice as if it were the opposite of mercy, but demanding the justice that is mercy. You are salt and light.
- You pure in heart, the pure in heart don’t manipulate and can’t be manipulated because they desire one thing: To See God, who is Love, and whose Word is Truth. They seek God and their reward is God.
- You peacemakers, *not* peace have-ers, but peacemakers.
- You that are reviled by the crowd for Me... *for Righteousness*, says Jesus.
- You are the salt of the earth and the light of the *cosmos*.

Why them?

Well, they don’t market their righteousness, do they? They don’t manage everyone around them, as if salt and light were an act, do they?

Years ago, when my little church was growing like gang busters and I was making a name for myself, a local Christian TV station asked me to come in for an interview. I remember sitting on the set while this bubbly TV host blurted out: “*Brother, your church is so wonderful! Tell me, what pops into your mind when you see a new vibrant young couple enter the doors of your building?*”

I froze, ‘cause I immediately remembered what popped into my mind when I last saw a vibrant young new couple walking into the building: I thought, “*Whoa! She’s hot!*” But I didn’t say that; I

swallowed, smiled, and then said something like “Well, God bless them.” I may have thought the second a bit later, but I didn’t speak the truth...It would have been too salty.

The people Jesus was talking to didn’t have much ability to *market* themselves, *manage* their environment, or *manipulate* those around them.^{vi} For some reason we think that we are most potent when we can market, manage, and manipulate; but Jesus seems to think just the opposite.

As a young pastor working at Bel Air Presbyterian Church in California, one of the students in my youth program took me aside and said, “*Peter, I want you to know you changed my life.*” His name was Billy—I considered him the poster child of “Peter Hiatt Ministry, Inc.” He was passionate about Jesus, a deep thinker, and in many ways my best friend, and yet he had come to our church as a seeker.

“You changed my life and I want to tell you how it happened...”

I figured it was a brilliant talk, an enlivening program, or some profound new insight of mine. He said, “I was pounding a nail in a house we were building in Mexico on our mission trip, and I bent the nail. I tried to cover it up, but you saw. I fully expected you to berate me in front of my friends and possibly hit me, like my father would. But you laughed, helped me straighten it, and acted like it was no big deal.” Then he said something like, “*That’s when I began to believe...*”

I remember thinking, I don’t remember that... and I had all kinds of selfish motives to be nice to you... but maybe, just maybe, a little light shone through the cracks in this fractured and insecure vessel of clay on that hot and exhausting day down in Mexico...

If I’m honest, that’s why I believe, too. I’ve studied apologetics, science, philosophy, and theology. I’ve seen healings and miracles that I cannot deny. But that’s probably not why I believe.

In high school, I actually told God that I didn’t believe in him, and only later realized that I’d been talking to someone I thought I didn’t believe in.

I believed because I encountered Him in my dad, the pastor...but not so much in his sermons—they often put me to sleep. Not even so much in his teaching and instruction, although it was brilliant. I encountered him in my dad’s eyes, his voice, his touch, his life.

- When Dad looked at me in my hospital bed and said, “Peter if there was any way, I’d take this pain for you, I would”
- When I’d bump into my dad in the dark at 3AM and say, “Dad, what are you doing?” and he’d tell me that, “Oh Peter, I’m just praying.”
- When it was clear that he could no longer market himself, manage his world, or manipulate those around him.
 - When I watched him get crucified by his church and his world...
 - When he couldn’t manipulate, but wouldn’t be manipulated...
 - When he continued to speak truth and bleed mercy, no matter the cost—in particular, the cost to his ego.

In my dad, I encountered Love; and God is Love.

God is Love, and his Word is the Light of the World.

To *market* Love is called prostitution.

To *manage* Love is to turn the Life into a law.

To *manipulate* Love is to nail the Life of Love to a tree in a garden.

But even so, Love will not be manipulated. Love will rise from the dead and romance you into His own image—not manipulate you.^{vii} Love may “manipulate” all things, but not you. Love will romance you into his own image.

Love is not an act that you can perform.
Love is not a program that you can follow.
Love will not be bought with threats and promises.

Love is a commandment; but not a commandment that you can fulfill. Real Love is God, and His Word is Truth... and both are the Light.

You can't make light, but you must “let the light shine.”

And just look at this: [verse on screen: Matt. 5:13-16]

Did you catch it? Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.” That’s like saying, “*You are me...*” or, “*The true you... is me.*” He is “the Light of the World.”^{viii}

You can't make yourself Jesus, but what if Jesus makes you Himself?

You can't make yourself salty, and you can't make yourself the Light. But maybe you can pour the salt out of the shaker, and maybe you can pour yourself out—even pour your spirit out. Maybe you can't *make* yourself shine; but you can *let* yourself—your true self—shine.

So, don't stay at home or in church; go to the office party—that's like shaking salt out of a saltshaker. But, don't *try* to be salty—for in this way, you'll lose your saltiness. The *false you* (the one you *market, manage* and *manipulate*) is not the real you.

Don't *try* to be salty, just be you—the real you—you are the salt. You—the vulnerable, authentic, individual, and honest— you are the life of the party; but the *false you* is the earthen vessel in which it is hidden.

“*How can its saltiness be restored?*” Well, only the Creator can create salt.
“*You are the light of the world.*” But Jesus also said, “*I am the light of the world.*”

He's talking as if these folks are actually his body. To them he said, “*You are the Light of the world...*”

You can't *make* yourself shine, but it appears that you can “*let* yourself shine.” So, if the *real you* is the thing that shines, what is the *you* that must let it shine but often doesn't let it shine? What's the basket? In Greek, the word is *modias*, also translated “bushel;” it's a unit of measure.

Scripture teaches that we each have false self which we have constructed:

- *whenever and wherever* we have measured ourselves and tried to redeem ourselves.
- *whenever and wherever* we have taken fruit from the knowledge of good and evil and tried to make our selves in the image of God.
- *whenever and wherever* we've tried to justify ourselves according to the law in the power of the flesh.
- *whenever and wherever* we've tried to market, manage, and manipulate ourselves in order to glorify ourselves in the sight of men—the *Anthropos...* “the crowd”.

The *modias* with which you cover the light of the world is your ego, “your flesh,” to use St. Paul’s terminology; it’s your earthen vessel. It doesn’t make you potent, but impotent; not important (that’s the lie), but impotent.

Well Jesus speaks his eight beatitudes, but on the eighth, he rephrases the beatitude and speaks it in the second person plural pronoun saying:

“Blessed are you, when they...”

(Who are “they”? Isn’t “they” the crowd, the *anthropos*, Humanity?)

“Blessed are you when they... persecute you... for my sake.”

“You are the light of the world.”

Paul wrote, “We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God.”^{ix}

It’s when the crowd assaults our earthen vessel, and even breaks that vessel, that the transcendent glory shines through the cracks and brings light to the world.^x

Our old marketing slogan—the one I invented—was:

“Where the world drives by.”

I think God has been laughing at me for years, and I’m beginning to laugh with him:

“Where the world drives by... and is reminded of Peter Hiatt’s failure.”

(I mean, I really find that to be rather hilarious; I mean, what happened was not at all what I intended to have happen.)

“Where the world drives by and is reminded of Peter Hiatt’s failure...and haunted by a thought: ‘Maybe there is such a thing as Truth, and for Truth someone was willing to suffer.’”

But now let me be very clear:

I’ve wanted to turn the Sanctuary into my new “basket,” my new ego booster. Just by using this as an illustration, I’m in danger of doing that. Yet I am doing that, because it wasn’t just me; it was you. And it still is you, even if you never set foot in our old 12 million-dollar facility.

I know that for many of you just attending the Sanctuary is damaging to your reputation, your ego.

On the left people think we’re “intolerant Bible thumpers.”

On the right people think we’re “liberal heretics,” for we confess that *through Christ God reconciles all things to himself, making peace by the blood of his cross*, (Colossians 1:20). We say that right on the cover of our bulletin.

I know that many of you suffer for that confession; but when you suffer and still confess, a light shines—You are the light. You don’t even need to defend the light, explain the light, or speak of the Light. You see, Love is the light, and it’s your Faith in Love, that allows it to shine... even when, especially when, your ego is cracked and damaged in the process; for then it reveals the King sitting on the throne in the sanctuary of your soul.

Understand? I may be able to explain the theology, but you *are* the theology—you are Love in flesh, the Body of Christ. And when it becomes clear that you are not *marketing* yourself, *managing* your world, or *manipulating* the people around you—when your ego is shattered, but you continue to love in truth, and speak truth in love— then you are more beautiful than you can comprehend.

“Of you” consists the kingdom of heaven, the Kingdom that is at hand.



[“Starry Night” by Vincent Van Gogh (1889)]

A few months ago, reading one of my wife’s art books in the bathroom on my throne, I was surprised to read that, in his lifetime, Vincent Van Gogh only sold one painting. (And it wasn’t this painting by the way.) One painting. He sold it to a fellow painter that appears to have taken pity on Vincent.^{xi} That should tell you something about the opinion of the crowd.

Van Gogh lived what many would call a very tragic life. This week I did some research and discovered that he was the son and grandson of Dutch Reformed pastors, who wanted to be a pastor himself but flunked the seminary entrance exam. But he still served a parish as a missionary—a missionary who loved his Lord and his people deeply, poor coal miners in a working district in Belgium. He gave away most everything he owned, most of his clothes, and even slept on straw in a hut so that a homeless man could use his own lodging. When church authorities discovered this, they dismissed Vincent for “undermining the dignity of the priesthood.”^{xii} He appears to have suffered a nervous breakdown at this point in his life...

It was his brother, Theo, (a name which means “God,” by the way)—It was Theo that persuaded Vincent to pursue his artwork. And it was Vincent who hoped that in doing so, he could see God. “... to understand the real significance of what the great artists... tell us in their masterpieces,” said Vincent, “that leads to God. One man wrote or told it in a book, another in a picture.”^{xiii}

So, Vincent painted pictures, many of them with biblical themes. And according to William Havlicek, (one of Vincent’s biographers^{xiv}), this particular painting—the *Starry Night*, painted in 1889 in the asylum in Saint-Remy France—this particular painting is Vincent’s interpretation of a scene in Victor Hugo’s *Les Miserables*. A scene in which a saintly bishop reflects on the Kingdom of God, at hand, in the night sky, as Victor Hugo narrates, writing: “[He offered] up his heart... lighted like a lamp in the center of the *Starry Night*...”^{xv}

Well, as I mentioned, Van Gogh encountered great tragedy. He was spurned by a woman he deeply loved. He took pity on a poor prostitute and her children, although his motives and their living arrangement was and is questioned to this day. He struggled with substance abuse, mental illness and just like you, sin. In the end, he took his own life by planting a bullet in his chest.

However, some argue that he didn't *take* his own life but *gave* his own life; for evidence indicates that he didn't actually fire the gun, but took the blame for firing the gun just before he died, in order to protect two boys that had been shooting nearby and harassing Vincent for sport.^{xvi} ...I don't know.

Whatever the case, Vincent saw Beauty, and God is Beauty. Vincent saw Beauty, and regardless of the opinion of the crowd, Vincent reflected that Beauty through the shattered pieces of his broken vessel.

He painted and painted, and kept on painting, even though he sold only one painting his entire life. It wasn't *marketing, management* or *manipulation*... it was worship. And "*of such*" consists, and is constructed, the Kingdom of God.

Recently Angie Dancer showed me this old video from the British TV series, "Dr. Who". They travel back in time, pick up Vincent Van Gogh just a few weeks before his tragic death, and take him to the Museum De Orsay in Paris in 2010.

[Van Gogh and Dr. Who]

Video clip: *Dr. Who, Season 5 Episode 10: "Vincent and the Doctor"*
British Broadcasting Corporation (2010)

Dr. Who and Vincent Van Gogh step outside the flaming phonebooth.

Vincent Van Gogh Where are we?

Dr. Who Paris—2010 AD. And this is the Mighty Musee d'Orsay! Home to many of the greatest paintings in history.

Van Gogh Oh, that's wonderful.

Two people walk by and Van Gogh looks over at them.

Dr. Who Oh, ignore that, I've got something more important to show you.

The group enters the museum. Van Gogh looks around in wonder, pausing to look at famous paintings such as Monet, but getting pulled along to then enter the "Van Gogh" exhibit. Van Gogh looks around the room to see his artwork, in awe of the people taking in and photographing his artwork.

Dr. Who (pulling art historian aside over to where they are standing so Van Gogh can hear)
I just wondered, between you and me, where do you think Van Gogh rates in the history of art?

Art Historian Well, big question. But to me, Van Gogh is the finest painter of them all. Certainly the most popular great painter of all time. The most beloved. His command of color is magnificent. He transformed the pain of his tormented life into ecstatic beauty. Pain is easy to portray, but to use your passion and pain to portray the ecstasy and joy and magnificence of our world—no one had ever done it before. Perhaps no one ever will again. To my mind, that strange, wild man who roamed the fields of Provence, was not only the world's greatest artist, but also one of the greatest men who ever lived.

Van Gogh looks around as historian talks, tears filling his eyes.

Dr Who wraps arm around Vincent who is sobbing quietly.

Dr. Who Vincent, I'm sorry...Is it too much?

Van Gogh No. They are tears of joy. (*Rushes over to historian and kisses him on both cheeks*) Thank you, sir!

Historian (*confused*) You're welcome...

Van Gogh Sorry about the beard.

Scene ends with historian standing perplexed as all walk away.

You will have a day like that, or an eternity like that. You, and only you, are the absolute best at being you. You are the greatest. Because of who our Father is, I can say this with confidence.

You will have a day like that, an eternity like that. You'll look around and say,
*"I don't even remember giving that cup of water to that child in your name...
 I don't remember bumping into my son in the dark at 3 in the morning...
 I don't even remember straightening that nail..."*

I don't know if Vincent Van Gogh took his own life with a bullet to his chest. But I do know that my friend, Billy Baldrige, took his own life with a bullet to his chest. It was perhaps the hardest news I've ever received.

Billy struggled with some mental illness and lies that lingered from his childhood. And one day, in a garden at UCLA, he took a gun out of a bag, pointed it at his heart, and pulled the trigger.

Suicide will not get you into heaven, because it's not surrendering control but seizing control.

Suicide will not get you into heaven; but Jesus will.

I don't know how long it may take and how painful the process may be for those that take their own life... But I'm sure that Jesus followed Billy; and I trust that when Billy sees Jesus, Billy will recognize Jesus. He was the light in my father's eyes, and if there was light in my eyes, it was Jesus.

The Gospel of John makes it clear: The Judgment is the Light, the Light that has come into this world. Jesus is that Light. And to love him and go to him is salvation.^{xvii} He shines in your eyes, he speaks through your mouth, he touches the lost with your fingers—you are his body, his witnesses. He lives your life as you surrender your ego and let him shine.

In heaven, you are surrounded by masterpieces created through you. And the greatest masterpiece is you.

"We are his masterpiece created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we would walk in them." Eph. 2:10

You make great art, and you are revealed as great art when you lose your ego and find yourself worshiping the Lord; Your eyes reflect the Light. Beautiful deeds are the fruit of living a *vulnerable, authentic, and surrendered* life in the brilliant gaze of the one who loves you; your eyes reflect the Light.

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."^{xviii}

What good works was Jesus talking about? Matthew only uses this term, “*kalos ergon*,” (beautiful deed), in one other place in his gospel. It’s just before Judas betrays Jesus at a banquet in the house of Simon the leper. A woman, likely a prostitute, loses all sense of propriety and breaks a flask of expensive ointment, pouring it on Jesus’ head as he reclines at supper. Judas and the disciples become indignant, asking, “Why the waste? This could’ve gone to the deacon fund.”

But Jesus says, “She has done a *kalos ergon*, the beautiful deed. She has prepared me for my burial, and wherever this Gospel is preached, what she has done will be told in memory of her.”^{xix}

She didn’t *market* herself, *manage* her world or *manipulate* the people around her. She simply ignored the crowd, and surrendered to the light of Love shining in the eyes of Jesus. She is the light of the world, and the salt of this earth.

All the offerings presented in the temple were to be seasoned with salt.^{xx} And in the end, this entire earth will be an offering, consumed by fire, purified with fire, and filled with the fire that is our God who is Love.^{xxi} The Faith, Hope, and Love, that shine through the cracks of your shattered ego are the Life of God, Light of this world, and Salt of the earth.

In Matthew 26:12, the harlot bride of the *eschatos* Adam does the *kalos ergon* as she anoints him—our Lord, Jesus—with perfumed oil. In 14 more verses as he sits at table with his twelve disciples...

Communion

...He takes bread and breaks it saying, “*Take, eat; this is my body.*”

And he takes the cup saying, “Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”

In the morning, we nailed him to the tree. [Peter pats the cross behind the table.]

How’s this for poverty of spirit? “*Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.*”

How’s this for mourning? “*My God, why have you forsaken me*”

How’s this for meek? “*Father, forgive them. They know not what they do.*”

How’s this for thirsty? “*I thirst... for your righteousness.*”

How’s this for Mercy?

How’s this for Pure in heart? “*...not my will, but thy will, be done.*”

How’s this for Peacemaker? *...the one we call “the Son of God.”*

How’s this for Persecuted, by the crowd, for righteousness’ sake?

How’s this for Salt of the earth and Light of the world?

[Peter taps the cross again] This is Maximum Potency. This is the “Faithful Witness.”^{xxii} This is Love.

Come to the table and ingest some salt and light. Then stop worrying about yourself and let Him shine. Amen.

Benediction

So, This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine—let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine. Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine. Everywhere I go, I'm gonna let it shine—let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

--How ya gonna do that? You're gonna have to forget yourself. And how can you forget yourself with this crowd of people all around you, giving you their opinion all the time? How are you going to forget yourself?

Well, I think what Jesus is saying, 'cause he uses this word for the first time—he says to this group of people just sitting on the hillside, “Your Father—“ He calls God “their Father” their individual Father. I think we forget ourselves by looking at the face of our Father. And who is the face of our Father? [points up] He's the Light. That's the face of Jesus. How do we forget ourselves? We look at the light shining in the face of Jesus. We listen to the Word spoken from the Father to us. We listen to the Word of Love, the Word of grace upon our lives, and then we forget ourselves and we just start drawing pictures.

In my office, I have a bunch of pictures on the wall. Most of them are by my kids, including ones that are simply scribbles. I keep it in my drawer, because you see that art gallery is not just wishful thinking. Your Father has an art gallery, and it's called “Reality.” *This* isn't reality. Reality is at hand. And you taste reality when you stare in your Father's face and you draw him a picture, you sing a song, or you do your job, or you smile at someone at the grocery store. “Of such” consists the Kingdom of God.

And soon you will see it. You will see it with new eyes. But you can see it with the eyes of faith. In other words, by way of benediction, I'm saying, “Believe the Gospel. That's Good News.”

Endnotes

¹ Starry, starry night
 Paint your palette blue and grey
 Look out on a summer's day
 With eyes that know the darkness in my soul
 Shadows on the hills
 Sketch the trees and the daffodils
 Catch the breeze and the winter chills
 In colors on the snowy linen land
 Now I understand
 What you tried to say to me
 And how you suffered for your sanity
 And how you tried to set them free
 They would not listen, they did not know how
 Perhaps they'll listen now
 Starry, starry night
 Flaming flowers that brightly blaze
 Swirling clouds in violet haze
 Reflect in Vincent's eyes of china blue
 Colors changing hue
 Morning fields of amber grain

Weathered faces lined in pain
 Are soothed beneath the artist's loving hand
 Now I understand
 What you tried to say to me
 And how you suffered for your sanity
 And how you tried to set them free
 They would not listen, they did not know how
 Perhaps they'll listen now
 For they could not love you
 But still your love was true
 And when no hope was left in sight
 On that starry, starry night
 You [gave] your life, as lovers often do
 But I [would] have told you, [my friend,]
 This world was never meant for one
 As beautiful as you
 Starry, starry night
 Portraits hung in empty halls
 Frameless heads on nameless walls
 With eyes that watch the world and can't forget
 Like the strangers that you've met
 The ragged men in the ragged clothes
 The silver thorn, a bloody rose
 Lie crushed and broken on the virgin snow
 Now I think I know
 What you tried to say to me
 And how you suffered for your sanity
 And how you tried to set them free
 They would not listen, they're not listening still
 [I hope one day they will]
 --"Vincent" by Don Mclean (portion in brackets by Peter Hiett)

ii In Genesis 2 Adam is made when God breathes his Spirit into *Adamah* (Hebrew for dust, clay, earth or dirt).

iii¹ "Then said Jesus to the crowds and to his disciples, ² "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; ³ so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do; for they preach, but do not practice. ⁴ They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. ⁵ They do all their deeds to be seen by men (*anthropois*); for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long, ⁶ and they love the place of honor at feasts and the best seats in the synagogues, ⁷ and salutations in the market places, and being called rabbi by men (*anthropon*). --Matthew 23:1-7 RSV

iv https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/e/ea/Van_Gogh_-_Starry_Night_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg/1280px-Van_Gogh_-_Starry_Night_-_Google_Art_Project.jpg

v Donald Miller, *Blue Like Jazz* (Nashville: Nelson, 2003) pp.117-127

vi While teaching at the University of Pennsylvania, I became good friends with a young Jewish student . . . I advised him to go to a particular church that was well known for its biblically based preaching, to help him get a better handle on what the Bible is all about. When I met my friend several weeks later, he said to me, "You know, if you put together a committee and asked them to take the Beatitudes and create a religion that contradicted every one of them, you would come pretty close to what I'm hearing down there at that church. Whereas Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor,' down there they make it clear that it is the rich who are blessed. . . ."

- Tony Campolo, *Let Me Tell You a Story*, (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 2000), p. 101

Christians have fallen into the habit of accepting the noisiest and most notorious among them as the best and the greatest. They too have learned to equate popularity with excellence, and in open defiance of the Sermon on the Mount they have given their approval, not to the meek, but to the self-assertive; not to the mourner, but to the self-assured; not to the pure in heart who see God, but to the publicity hunter who seeks headlines. --A. W. Tozer

vii John 12:32

viii John 1:1-9, 8:12, 9:5, 1 John 1:5

ix 2nd Corinthians 4:7 RSV

x As I said last time, to understand the power of the crowd, just watch our democrat and republican senators vote along party lines...

But when someone breaks rank, there's a light that seems to shine—it's not republican or democrat; and it's not objective, but subjective.

People on both sides will try to explain it away as partisan, and maybe it is... but it may also testify to a king, greater than any crowd, sitting on a throne in that person's heart.

Pay attention, I'm not saying the Republicans are right, or the Democrats are right, or even that a particular person is right; I'm saying that someone who is willing to suffer for what they think is true, testifies that there is such a thing as Truth, and that He is worth more than the opinion of any crowd.

I don't agree with Mitt Romney on a lot of things, but this week he testified to our King, at the expense of ridicule from his crowd... and for that I'm deeply grateful.

xi Ed. Ingo Walther Impressionist Art 1860-1920 (Taschen, 2016) p.715

xii "Vincent Van Gogh" Wikipedia, 2-7-20 [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vincent_van_Gogh]

xiii - Mark Ellis, Vincent Van Gogh's unappreciated journey with Christ, in "God Reports," Nov. 9, 2012

[<http://godreports.com/2012/11/vincent-van-goghs-unappreciated-journey-with-christ/>]

xiv William J. Havlicek Ph.D., Van Gogh's Untold Journey: Revelations of faith, family, & Artistic Inspiration (Creative Storytellers, 2010)

xv Havlicek made the significant discovery that a saintly bishop's ruminations on the cosmos in Victor Hugo's *Les Miserables* inspired one of Vincent's most famous works, *The Starry Night*:

Victor Hugo wrote, "He was there alone with himself, collected, tranquil, adoring, comparing the serenity of his own heart with the serenity of the skies, moved in the darkness by the visible splendours of the constellations, and the invisible splendour of God, opening his soul to the thoughts that fall from the Unknown. In such moments offering up his heart at the hour when the flowers of night inhale their perfume, lighted like a lamp in the centre of The Starry Night..." –Mark Ellis

xvi Van Gogh died under unusual circumstances in what most label a suicide, but Havlicek has some doubts. "No gun was ever found," he says, and there were no powder burns near the fatal wound to his abdomen.

Two boys admitted they were target shooting near van Gogh and had an encounter with him that appears suspicious.

"One wrote a confessional letter years later saying they were harassing van Gogh. He didn't admit he shot him, but he said there were things he did to him he wish he'd never done."

Vincent lingered for two days after the fatal shot. When he was interviewed by police, Vincent said, "I'm hurt but don't blame anybody else."

Havlicek believes that if he was shot accidentally by the boys, it was consistent with Vincent's character to withhold that information. "He had a very sacrificial aspect to his personality. There were several times in his life when he took the blame for someone else," he says.

"He loved Christ enormously at the end of his life," Havlicek maintains. "He said Christ alone among all the magi and wise men offered men eternal life. In spite of a broken life, something glorious emerged." – Mark Ellis

xvii "And this is the judgment, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil." - John 3:19

xviii We didn't have time to mention this, but it is absolutely HUGE! Jesus refers to God as their "Father." The crowd around Jesus includes Jews and gentiles and not one person that even knows what a "Christian" is. My favorite art—the greatest masterpieces in my world—are drawings made for me by my children. Your Father in heaven has an art gallery in his heart. It's called reality... and each of His Children is his favorite artist—greatest in the whole world.

xix See Matthew 26:6-13

xx Leviticus 2:13

xxi Zephaniah 3:8-10, 2 Peter 3:7-13

xxii Revelation 1:5