

Sermon preached at OCC, 8 February 2026

Gracious God, open our ears to hear your voice and our hearts to receive your truth. Remind us that we matter to you—not because of what we have done, but because you have called us your own. As we listen to your Word today, show us where you are already at work in our lives, and where you are inviting us to be salt and light in quiet, faithful ways. Amen.

Matthew 5:13-20

You Matter – salt and light

In the past, when we needed to be picked up from the airport, either a friend or a family member would come to pick us up. Now we use Uber. Families and friends are too busy. But it's not all. It has become the new normal to hire out childcare, care for our elderly parents, order in meals, and take Uber rides to the airport, to name a few. We may meet our needs, but it doesn't add anything to strengthen our human relationships; it's transactional, not transformational. We have our own reasons for this. We feel so overstretched that we can't possibly take on more responsibilities to help people. But is it really? The author of the book *Mattering*, Jennifer Breheny Wallace, says that human energy doesn't operate like a bank account. It can work more like a muscle. When we offer small acts of support in our home, neighbourhood work or wider community, it can actually boost our sense of purpose and agency. That's what gives us energy.¹

In today's reading about salt and light, Jesus says something that goes even deeper than that book. He does not simply tell us to try harder or to be kinder people. He gives us an identity. He says: *You are salt. You are light.* Jesus calls us salt and light because we matter to God—and because God chooses to change the world through ordinary people who dare to love.

Beatitude: Matthew 5:3 -11

Understanding the Beatitudes helps us hear Jesus' words about salt and light. They come at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. They describe what life looks like under God's reign—here and now, even while pointing us toward heaven.

¹ Jennifer Breheny Wallace, *Mattering*, quoted in *The Key to a Fulfilling life—Feeling like You Matters to Others* By Kara Alaimo in CNN Health, 30 January 2026

The Nine Beatitudes start with a phrase like “Blessed are those...” They are not abstract promises about the distant future. The contents of these blessings or happiness are also far from what we expected; for instance, ‘the poor in spirit,’ those who mourn, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness don’t seem to promise a comfortable, let alone a peaceful, life. Rather, all these conditions will make us unrestful, agitated and even painful because what makes us feel mournful, hungry and thirsty for righteousness. We are restless because we feel something is not right. It’s not for an instant reward either. Yet, when these things are dealt by us unfailingly, it will give us peace and new energy. In that light, Jesus then turns to the crowd and says: *You are salt and light*.

Salt and Light

When Jesus mentioned salt and light in his Sermon, people, mostly the crowd and Jesus’ disciples, may have wondered. Salt was a valuable commodity and was often used to exchange goods. Lighting materials, such as olive oil, were expensive in Jesus’ time. Jesus says that people, together with his disciples, *are salt and light*, while in the Beatitudes, people are described in general. From salt and light saying till the end of chapter 7, Jesus says what is involved in living the blessed lives described in the Beatitudes. As such, the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12) function like a vision statement: they describe the kind of people who belong to God’s reign and the values of the kingdom. What follows shows what that life looks like in practice.

Among the audience, there are also Jesus’ disciples. As time goes by, we learn what they are bit by bit. They are often seen far from being salt and light; we see how silly they are,² full of pride,³ or even greedy.⁴ What about us?

You Matter – Salt and Light

In our story time earlier, a king challenged his sons to fill a great room. One used stones, another feathers. The youngest waited until the last moment and then filled it with light from a single candle. The king chose him, seeing that true wisdom lies not in crowding life with things, but in filling it with what gives light. That story invites us to ask what fills our days—mere activity, or the light of God’s purpose and love. And here is the good news: Jesus does not wait for us to impress him the way the youngest son impressed the king. He does not say,

² Matthew 16:5-12

³ Matthew 18:4

⁴ Matthew 19:23-27

“Try to become light.” He says, “*You are the light of the world.*” Before we do anything, he tells us that we matter. To sum, first, we matter no matter how old, weak, poor, or slow we are! It is not us, but God, who will fulfil through our clumsy and feeble work. Second, our lives are already filled with energy and purpose as we matter wherever we go, through small and big jobs. Third, we are keeping Jesus’ new commandments and it’s a happy life too. If that is true, then the question is not whether God is at work among us, but where we can already see that work happening.

OCC has been doing a lot of outstanding work for the community so far—from the Homeless work to Eco Kids church, Repair Shop, Mainly Music, Thursday Group, and many more. These activities are run quietly but faithfully by many members. We recently formed *Onewa Youth* and began meeting every Tuesday from 5 pm to 7 pm. If you didn’t know about them, please drop in and say hello. In the past, we have relied on people’s contributions, and we will continue to do so, as we cannot rely on hired services to be the church for us. These ministries grow because ordinary people quietly show up, week after week. All these works are for our future; they are part of discipling onward.

Jesus does not say, “Become salt or light.” He says, “You are salt and light.” This is grace before responsibility. By God’s grace, we are salt and light and ready to be used where we are needed. Don’t know where to start? Come to the Day Away on 21 March to pray, listen, and talk together about where God may be leading us. Or support any of the ministries you’ve heard about today, where your heart is stirred.

This is what our Lord Jesus Christ promises: that we matter, and that he will use even our small lights for the sake of the world. May God give us eyes to see where we already matter—and courage to shine there. Amen.