

YOUR MISSION IN THE MARKETPLACE

By Henry Janse van Rensburg
Christian Centre Abbotsford

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Scripture reference: Matthew 5:13-16 NIV

Salt and Light

¹³*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.*

¹⁴*"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

Introduction

When Jesus entered our world, He didn't box himself inside the four walls of the synagogue. He walked into the lives of sinners. He touched the lepers. He associated with prostitutes. He dined with heathen. He scandalized the religious community by penetrating the world.

In order for Jesus to reach and rescue the world he had to penetrate it. Likewise, for us to impact and influence the world for Christ we must penetrate it.

Is this not the church's greatest failure? We have disengaged too much. We have become a withdrawn community. We have become aloof instead of alongside.

We became judgmental and self-appointed instead of loving and kind.

On Sunday the church gathers, but on Monday through Saturday the church scatters. Into the marketplace followers of Jesus Christ live as God's ambassadors. They are His representatives, His messengers. They are on mission.

R.C. Sproul described the mission to the marketplace.

"The cradle of the church was the marketplace. From the preaching and public ministry of Jesus to the daily acts of the Apostles, the central scene was the marketplace. Perhaps the greatest need for our day is the need to market Jesus Christ. The church must become expert in marketing: not in the slick, Madison Avenue style, but in an aggressive, yet dignified way. The marketplace is where we belong. It is where needy people are found. It is not enough for the church to hang a welcome sign on her door. We dare not wait for the world to come to us."

Jesus' strategy always involved believers going into the world, to penetrate the marketplace. Followers of Christ must recognize their ministry and mission of communicating God's love to people they come into contact with each day.

Introduction (Work and Worship) from 2023

The word used in the Bible for working in our calling is the same word used for worshipping the Lord. In fact, God put us on earth to worship-work. In fulfilling the First Commission (Genesis 1:26-28) – the Cultural Mandate, we work (Avodah) and at the same time we worship (Avodah) the living God.

For the Hebrew mind, there was no separation of labour from worship. Worship is not only for Sunday, but for Monday as well. Worship is not limited to a religious meeting in a building or for a public evangelistic effort. Worship is to take place in the midst of our everyday lives, in our homes, in the office, in the factory. The God of the Bible is not a part-time God. Our worship should not be thought of as part-time praise.

In some verses, avodah means work, as in to cultivate the field or do common labour:

- Genesis 2:5 – **“and there was no man to work (avodah) the ground.”**
- Genesis 2:15 – **“The LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work (avodah) it and keep it.”**

In other verses, avodah means worship, as in worshipping the Lord.

- Exodus 8:1 – **“This is what the LORD says: ‘Let my people go, so that they may worship (avodah) me.’”**
- Exodus 12:31 – **“Then he summoned Moses and Aaron by night and said, ‘Up, go out from among my people, both you and the people of Israel; and go, serve (avodah) the Lord ...’”**

I. The Biblical mandate

It was this intentional mission strategy that Jesus had in mind when he said, “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It’s no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by men. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven” (Matt. 5:13-16).

Imagine Jesus standing on a quiet hillside by the Sea of Galilee speaking quietly to a small band of earnest followers. Then picture, if you will, the marketplace today. Can you conceive of two more contrasting scenes? Yet even today, in the marketplace of a noisy and hectic world, these words find their mark. I am constantly amazed that words that gripped the hearts of first-century believers can still strike responsive chords in the hearts of men and women today. Let me highlight three ideas illustrated in Jesus’ imagery of light that have direct bearing on our experiences in the marketplace.

Light

1. Radiate Christ’s love

Jesus made it absolutely clear that he wants his followers to radiate his love to those around them. That’s why he talked about light. A tiny tungsten filament charged with electrical energy naturally radiates light and dispels darkness. It has no choice. We can’t turn a light

on and then tell it not to dispel darkness. The very nature of light is such that it must shatter the darkness around it. In the same way, true Christians should, by their very nature, radiate something of the work of God in their lives to the people around them. We are the light of the world; we must, therefore, radiate that light and dispel darkness.

2. Don't refuse to shine

Jesus anticipated that some believers might choose to limit their candlepower, to refuse to shine their lights. He knew that they would feel safer securely hidden "under a bowl" (or in a stained glass sanctuary), where they could bask in their anonymity and escape the accountability associated with "going public" with their faith. He anticipated this and forbade it. "Let your light shine!" he commanded. He did not, and he does not now leave believers the option of letting their worlds remain in undisturbed blackness.

3. Spread Christ's influence

Jesus made it obvious that he wants us to spread his influence to every corner of this dark, fallen world. It's not enough that we simply take our lights out of hiding. He wants us to put them on a lamp stand where everyone can see them! God wants the light of his love to be held high so it can permeate every bit of darkness.

How long will it take for us to realize that we are his agents of light? It is through the channels of our daily lives that God shines the light of his message of love.

How do we become agents of light? How do we penetrate the marketplace? How can we bring glory to God and touch the lives of the people we meet in a positive life-changing way?

4. Point the direction

When you shine a light you can see where you are going. It points you in the right direction.

Do not be oblivious to all the questions, opinions, uncertainty, "darkness" around us in the workplace. Take the opportunity to speak light, demonstrate a sure stride and operate with confidence. Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world.

Salt

1. Add flavour to each conversation.
 - a. **Colossians 4:6, ESV** Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.
2. Make people thirsty.
 - a. Proverbs 10:20-21
The tongue of the righteous is as choice silver, The heart of the wicked is worth little. The lips of the righteous feed many, But fools die for lack of understanding.
3. **Preserve...** When you speak, be careful what you say and rather be kind –
 - a. **Ephesians 4:29, NIV** Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

II. The practical steps

The following practical steps can be implemented to communicate and model the love of Christ when you step outside the walls of the sanctuary and into your workplace.

1. Take on the 'unseen' Partner

Live as the psalmist who wrote, "I keep the LORD in mind always. Because He is at my right hand, I will not be shaken" (Psa. 16:8). Before you go to work, take time to pray about your job. Pray for the people you'll be working with and those who you'll be serving. Remember, God is the "unseen Partner" in all of life. He is with us wherever we are. And we need his presence, especially in the marketplace.

Think about the meaning of these words from the 13th-century writer Meister Eckhart: "The kind of work we do does not make us holy, but we make it holy. . . . As we have the divine being within, we bless each task we do, be it eating or sleeping or watching, or any other [task]."

Keith Miller, a businessman and author, decided to take the "unseen Partner" with him to work. Consciously he decided he would take Christ's presence with him throughout the day at the office. To remind himself of the divine being within, he prayed every time he walked to and from the drinking fountain. As he walked through the offices and spoke to people, he prayed for them. As a piece of paper came across his desk, he committed it to God. He said he noticed no outward change in his attitude, but some of the love and concern he had for these people must have communicated itself to them. People began to come to him to talk about their inner lives.

Being conscious of God's presence can have a profound impact on your job, and the people around you.

2. Transform your attitude

Work like the apostle Paul who wrote, "And whatever you do, in word or in deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him" (Col. 3:17). At your work, whatever it may be, have an attitude that reflects the positive nature of God's grace on your life.

Many jobs are boring. The marketplace is often a maze of nameless people. Sometimes good employees don't get recognized and promoted. The woes of layoffs and the threats of mergers and downsizing can be discouraging. But in the midst of less desirable circumstances attitude can transform a boring, thankless job into a Christian ministry.

When Gordon MacDonald pastored Trinity Baptist Church in New York City, he would ride the same bus daily from his home to the church. One day the bus driver complained to MacDonald: "You've got it a lot better than me. You have an interesting job and travel different places. I just drive this bus up and down the same streets everyday."

MacDonald told the bus driver his job could be a Christian ministry too. "Everyday, when you first get on this bus, before anyone else gets on, dedicate that bus to God for that day. Declare it to be a sanctuary for God for that day. Consecrate it to God's glory, and then act like it is a place where God dwells."

Several weeks later MacDonald returned from a trip and saw the bus driver. "You've transformed my life," the man exclaimed. "I've been doing what you said every day, and it has made me see my job in an entirely new perspective."

The same transformation could happen to you in your work if you would take the time to adjust your attitude each day.

3. Realise your job is your mission field

The apostle Paul reminds us, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power for salvation to everyone who believes, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). "Why should I be ashamed of the gospel?" asks Paul. "It is the message of salvation, of life! It's powerful! It's the answer to man's greatest need!" And guess what? People in the marketplace are in the largest mission field in the world. You rub shoulders everyday with people who need the power and grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Tony Ponceti is the owner of a very successful printing business in Miami. His attitude is that God gives him daily orders and he simply follows them. He believes in the "theology of interruption." If he senses the Spirit leading him to minister in a certain way, he will adjust his business agenda to get in on God's agenda. When Hurricane Andrew devastated Miami, Tony became absorbed in the needs of thousand of hurricane victims. He shared food with the hungry, found shelter for the homeless, and medical aid for those suffering everything from minor to major illnesses. As he administered humanitarian aid, he would pray for the hurting and share Christ with them. When Andrew struck Miami, God interrupted Tony's printing business agenda and gave him a ministry agenda of helping storm victims find relief and then to find Christ.

Conclusion

What can you do in your work setting to minister and witness to those around you? Let me encourage you to make an impact list. List the people with whom you work that you will pray for. And begin praying for them each day. Begin each day by consecrating your work place. Dedicate it as a sanctuary to God. Make it a holy place where God is present and God can work. And, then, each day look for opportunities to minister, to serve, to help, to offer assistance. We may not be able to do everything, but we can do something.