

The Power

Wayne Waibel – 02/08/2026

I know it's hard to wrap our heads around the relevance of an ancient set of rules. How can those guidelines possibly apply to our world in this time? It may help if you try to gauge your perspective based on the life of Christ as opposed to ancient texts. The distinct advantage we have over our predecessors is while they awaited the coming of the Messiah, we live in a world where the Messiah walks among us. The reign of God has begun.

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As Jesus addresses the throng, He is speaking in a gentle tone. He is not admonishing – He is blessing and commissioning. You – yes **you** – are the salt of the earth. **You** are the light of the world. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven." That's a fairly profound challenge, further, we are held to a higher calling than the scribes and Pharisees.

I know that they do not enjoy a particularly sterling reputation with us today, so you might think that Christ was setting the bar a little low. But in the first century – the scribes and Pharisees were held in high esteem. They cultivated harmonious relations with the community and led relatively virtuous lives.

They shared a lot of the same beliefs as Jesus. When He says that we will not enter the kingdom of heaven unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees – he’s asking a lot of us. But he’s not asking the impossible.

The Jewish elite in first century Palestine were made up of two factions. The Sadducees were the folks complicit with imperial Rome, and the Pharisees were driven by the letter of the law. The component both groups lacked was the courage that Jesus continually displayed and expected from his followers.

Christ expects us to hold that light up for everyone to see. The law was intended to be the guiding force in our lives. If we emulate the world’s understanding of power, we cease to be the church. How we move and dwell with others makes all the difference in the world.

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Jesus was put on this earth to make a difference. He came into the world at a time of great suffering for the people of Israel. They expected a warrior king to avenge and liberate them, and they got the Master of grace and peace.

I'm sure they felt a little disappointed at the time, but His way was rich in Spirit – void of self – devout and righteous. Works do not earn a place in the realm of God but are responses to the gift of the realm.

Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. All of it. And this man looked at these people and proclaimed that *they* were the salt of the earth and the light of the world. These poor, broken, oppressed and marginalized followers were who He was looking at.

That's who **we** are. This life of faith frees us from a life of fear, and that is precisely why there are lasting joys to be found in a life of faith.

Worship is the place that informs us into the people of God.
The law is what propels us into the service of the weak,
and the Spirit is what sustains us as we live and move and have our being.

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I think each of us has benefited from the kindness of strangers and friends alike. I believe each of us has in some way at some point touched the life of another as well. Not a day goes by that I don't witness some act of redemption being performed. It is what happens when you are a participant in the world – not a spectator. We as Christians are charged to engage in life, not watch it pass us by.

It is ultimately a work of the Holy Spirit to write God's truth on people's hearts. In a very real sense, the law is not something we have to study and protect like the Pharisees.

We draw our sensibilities from the still small voice. Divine love demands justice, righteousness, and compassion. Our challenge leads to change that leads to perseverance. And that perseverance eliminates fear. Without the weapon of fear, the desire of the wicked truly comes to nothing. Wickedness, more than just a rebellion against God, is an embrace of nothingness.

This community of faith embodies the very essence of what Christ meant by the salt of the earth and the light of the world. You engage life. You extend courtesies. You provide guidance and warmth.

You allow the Spirit of the living God to rest upon your heart, and generate that peace outward. You understand the power of a right relationship with God, and I could not count myself more blessed than to be in your midst. So, thank you. Amen.