

Hope in Uncertain Times by Nigel Coles Part 5: You Are The Hope Of The World

Matthew 5

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. ¹⁵ Neither 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. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Antonio is a Christian in Syria. Along with most of his friends, colleagues and family he was looking to find a way of escape his country being ravaged by war a few years ago. Then he encountered Jesus. He was introduced to him by someone he just met, amidst the rubble and shells. Soon after, he made the decision to stay. He said: 'My people need Jesus, so I must stay and tell them'.

Syria's healthcare system, among other infrastructure, has been ravaged by nine years of war. Now Covid-19 has hit and the first recorded diagnosis is in a refugee camp, where social distancing is impossible. Tsunami after Tsunami.

I don't know Antonio personally; a mutual friend shared his story with me. Nor do I know whether Antonio knew Jesus' words:

You are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world.

But that's what he is and if you are a follower of Jesus Christ, you are too:

You are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world.

I think that also makes you the hope of the world.

I do know his name is not Antonio – I've chosen this for him, partly because it's a reminder to me it's dangerous to be publicly known to be a Christian in too many places around the world, partly because it's a popular name in Syria, but mainly because it means 'invaluable'.

The fact my friends know I'm a Christian here in the UK provokes various responses, but none of them are dangerous. In our present situation, responding to the coronavirus pandemic, we are practicing social distancing as an expression of love for others, of not simply saying, but practising we want the best for our neighbour, by halting the spread of Covid-19.

Jesus tells us we are salt and light. Fact. What I need to work out is 'how'?

Salt needs to be in close proximity to have affect, so how do I do that, whilst maintaining social distancing?

Light can illuminate only when there's no barrier in-between, preventing the source from shedding light.

I've re-discovered my 'mobile' still actually works as a mobile *phone*. I've probably had more one-to-one conversations in the last three weeks than ... well probably before I had a mobile phone. I find it interesting how something originally designed for one purpose – enabling us to speak to one another from situations previously impossible has become a barrier to people connecting with one another on a deeper than superficial level.

Does that make it useless?

Jesus says no one has any use for impure salt from which the sodium chloride has leached out: *"It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot"*.

Neither would we buy a new lamp and keep it in the box. Again, Jesus says: *"Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house"*.

Now, in English, we refer to someone as 'the Salt of the earth' as a designation for people we regard as especially good. That's not how Jesus is talking about salt. Someone suggests we'd catch the force of it better by substituting another seasoning: 'You are red hot pepper for the whole earth!' The point is the statement is not about status (we are not the world's elite), but function: 'You must add zest to the life of the world'. One of our churches has basically asked everyone to answer: what help do you need? & what help can you give? Do you know what, we can give to others in ways which add meaning and bring hope without getting closer than two metres away.

Jesus says: 'I am the light of the world'. I'm OK with that, but Jesus is looking you and I in the eyes when he says:

Without light I'm in darkness, I can't see where I'm going, I can't find what I need, I need the light of Christ, but Jesus says: 'You are the light of the world'.

You are the hope of the world.

Jesus doesn't say you need to be up to a certain mark to qualify as salt and light. He didn't say you'd feel like salt, or light.

Jesus, as ever, says it how it is: 'You are'.

In these days of restricted movement and social distancing, Jesus still says you and I are salt and light.

Why don't you pray daily: 'Lord show me how I can be all you call me to be today'. In my experience he does.

When that person comes into your mind, pick up the phone, use their name. They may be engaged and be inundated with calls, but you may be the only person to call them and say their name that day.

To watch the video, go to: <https://www.thefuelcast.com/>

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