

## The Boy Scout Law and the Law of Christ

A sermon preached by Ted Atkinson, Minister, Oxford Presbyterian Church, Oxford, PA on February 7, 1999. Scripture Lessons: Matthew 5:13-20.

**IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER AND OF THE SON AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.**

Look at the Communion Table! Four containers of salt and several varieties of lights rest on the Table. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." He said that to his disciples nearly two thousand years ago. The Risen Christ says the same thing to us this morning. "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." You and you and you.

In the ancient world salt had two uses. **First, salt preserved meat.** Think of life without freezers or refrigeration. Meat rots. Meat begins to decay unless eaten. But long ago people discovered that salt rubbed on meat preserved it. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth." Jesus wants you to help keep society from rotting. **Second, salt enhances flavor.** Salt makes food taste better. I love salt. We have all kinds of salt in our kitchen. Regular salt. Lite salt. Garlic salt which I love on spaghetti. And spice supreme seasoned salt which I put on salads. Salt enhances flavor. We are the salt of the earth. Jesus wants us to add zest to life.

I also have lights on the Table. A lantern. A little light shaped like a heart used for a key chain. Light stands for revelation, the saving knowledge of God. Christians come in all shapes and sizes. Some Christians are brighter than others. But Jesus wants all of us to shine for him. *This little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine.* God wants us to shine. He wants us to shine like the Christmas star. The Christmas star led the wise men to Jesus. God wants our lives to shine with good works which will lead unchurched friends and neighbors to find Jesus.

**God put Christians on earth for three main purposes.** **One,** he wants us to preserve what's good in society. **Second,** he wants us to make life better for everybody. **Third,** he wants our lives to shine for Jesus so that unchurched people will see the risen Christ living in us and glorify God. **Salt stands for Christian activism in society.** Light stands for Christian evangelism. **We need both. Christian activists and evangelists.**

Today is Boy Scout Sunday. A lot of young people in our church are involved in scouting. A lot of us old people have been. This morning I want to hold up several famous boy scouts who illustrate how Christians are salt and light in society.

**First, former Senator Bill Bradley.** Bradley was a Boy Scout. He was an Eagle Scout. He attended Princeton University and graduated in '65. I got to Princeton Seminary in '66 where I heard all kinds of good stories about Bill Bradley. He was a fantastic basketball player and scholar. After Princeton he accepted a Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford University in England. In 1967 he began his professional basketball career. In 1978 he became a U.S. senator. He was influential in a bipartisan tax reform legislation. Bradley may run for president someday. But did you know that Bill Bradley is a Christian. He's a Presbyterian. When he was in college he attended the First Presbyterian Church in Princeton (where I was ordained). He taught Sunday School. I heard he took a few classes at the seminary. Bradley has lived an exemplary life, free of scandal to my knowledge. Bill Bradley is a famous example of what Jesus wants his disciples to be. Salt and Light. Salt - to preserve society through political involvement and add zest to life through basketball skills. Light - good works that lead people to glorify God.

**Second, former astronaut and senator John Glenn was an Eagle Scout.** Glenn was the first American astronaut to orbit the earth. He served in the United States senate for many years. But did you know that John Glenn has been a lifelong member of the Presbyterian Church? He's always been active in his church. He's an elder and openly spoke of his faith when he gave the key-note address at a national political convention years ago. John Glenn is another example of what Jesus wants all his disciples to be. His most recent adventure in orbit added zest to the lives of many older Americans. His service in the Senate helped to preserve our nation. His service to Christ through the church is a light that leads people to Christ.

**Think again of the great actor Jimmy Stewart.** Jimmy Stewart was an Eagle Scout. He was also a Presbyterian and an elder. He starred in many great American films: *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington*, *The Philadelphia Story*, *Harvey*, *Strategic Air Command*, *It's a Wonderful Life*. His acting ability added zest to the lives of millions of people. Living in a town known more for its scandals than, perhaps, any other town in America Jimmy Stewart had the reputation of being a moral, good man, with a marriage that must have come near setting a record for endurance in Hollywood. He's an illustration of what it means to be salt and light in society.

**Lots of ordinary men, once Boy Scouts, have been salt and light right here in Oxford.** *Camp Ware* is named after former state senator **John H. Ware III.** Mr. Ware was an active supporter of scouting in Oxford. He also exemplified what Jesus wants all his disciples to be, salt and light. Mr. Ware served as an elder in our church for many years and taught an adult Sunday School class when I first arrived in Oxford thirteen years ago. He was light pointing men and women to Jesus Christ through his Sunday School teaching. He was salt. Through his political involvement he tried to check cultural decay.

Many **other scout leaders** have been salt and light in our town and church. **Dr. Al Farrel, Joe Goss, Charles Sersun** just to name a few of many. And **Bob Hudler.** Bob is assisting in worship today. He's a Cubmaster. He is salt and light. He's an elder and has helped point young people to Jesus through helping his wife teach Sunday School. Through his involvement in scouting he's doing something to preserve our town and prevent it's decay.

**Jesus calls all of us to be salt and light. Salt, to add zest to life and do what we can to preserve society through our involvement in society. And light to point men and women and children to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.**

One way you can be salt and light is through participating in **a Lenten Bible study or support group.** Look at the resources on the table in the narthex. Resources that will help us to be salt and light. Salt to preserve our town and add zest to life. Light that will lead others to Jesus and glorify God. Find a few people to meet with once a week during lent, at least four times. You don't have to add another group to your heavy schedule. Think of groups you already participate in. Maybe you have coffee with four or five people everyday at *The Varsity Grill* or *Little Miss Oxford Diner* or *Post House* or *Octarara Hotel* - ask your group to think about participating in a Bible study on stress, or financial planning, or whatever. **Be what Jesus says you are - be salt and light.** Salt to add zest to life and help preserve Oxford. Let your light shine so that unchurched people will see your good works and glorify God.

Let us pray: Faithful God,  
you have appointed us your witnesses,  
to be light that shines in the world.  
Let us not hide the bright hope you have given us,  
but tell everyone your love,  
revealed in Jesus Christ the Lord,  
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, forever and ever. Amen.