

We are Salt and Light of the Earth

Texts: Isaiah 58:1-9a

1 Corinthians 2:1-12, 13-16 (Series A, 5th Sunday after Epiphany (Ps. 112:1-9, 10)

Matthew 5:13-20

Let us pray:

A United Church minister who has a flair for posting amusing slogan on his Church bulleting board:

- ‘You are not too bad to come in, you are not too good to stay out’
- Did you know that God’s last name is not dammit? Find out more about this God.”
- “Did you know.. that Grace is not 5’2” blond? Come and find out more about grace”

This week we pick up on the second installment of *The Sermon on the Mount*. Last week, the first part of the *Sermon*, in Matthew 5:1-12, was a presentation of the Beatitudes. It is always worth re-reading and re-examining what they mean to us individually.

One way to approach them is as “Be Attitudes” as there are blessings for each stage along our faith journey. With an *attitude of being* Christ’s disciples, we aren’t seeking success by some earthly measure, but rather we change our thinking, adjust our expectations of “life” for our brief stay on this earthly plain.

The readings appointed for this Sunday are a good introduction on ways we should live as Jesus wants. In the second portion of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, Jesus offers the Church an insight to our call as a Church, who we are, and what our purpose as Christians should be.

In Matthew 5:13-20 ... There are five important teaching or sermons points, but due to time, I will share with you only one point namely “You are the Salt of the Earth” the Christian has this quality. “You are the *salt of earth*; but is salt loses its taste, how can its saltiness be restored. It is no longer good for anything.”

Jesus takes us further by giving us a few particulars on the *responsibilities* of discipleship. He starts by telling us we are the “salt of the earth.” Salt in his time was a product of great importance far beyond seasoning, it was currency. Soldiers were paid in salt ~ *salarium* in Latin, from where we get the word *salary*.

Everyone used salt as we use money in our own time. If salt loses its taste, its value as currency drops; it becomes worthless, good only to throw on the street. A serious financial problem arises with tasteless salt ~ imagine your paycheck bouncing.

Salt and its significance, is this point of this meditation this morning:

- *Salt heals,*
- *Salt creates thirst.*
- *Salt influence whatever it touches.*
- *Salt brings out the best flavour or taste in food.*

Salt Heals #1:

Our world today is experiencing lots of pain and grief, people are hurting badly, lonely and desperately needing some one to listen to their cry. Just look at all shootings that is going on in our communities in the US and Canada, it is not even safe to go to a house of worship for fear being killed.

As broken humanity in spirit, in mind, and body we all are in need of love, forgiveness and acceptance. Thus, we are called to be healers in our world. Christians according to Jesus’ teachings, we are salt that brings healing these broken lives.

Salt Creates thirst #2:

In the desert of Kalahari in Central Africa, where water is in short supply; to find water the Pigmy hunters will trick monkeys by giving them salty peanuts, then hide in the bush and watch them run to their secret water holes.

Monkeys are selfish little creatures that only share with their clan. Monkeys are clever, observant, and secretive. But Pigmy hunters always have ways to get them to show their secrets. Salt creates thirst, keep that thought in mind for our next story.



A terrible incident occurred in the life of Mahatma Gandhi. He said in his memoirs that during his student days in England, he was interested in the Bible. Deeply touched by the Gospels, he seriously considered becoming a Christian, he thought Christianity seemed to offer the real solution to the caste system that was dividing the people of India.

One Sunday he went to Church to see the minister and ask for instruction on how to become a Christian. But when he entered the Sanctuary, the ushers refused him a seat and suggested that he go worship with his own people. He left the church and never went back: he concluded that *“If Christians have caste difference also, I might as well remain a Hindu.”*

Former Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa, He shared a story that has stayed with me all these years. The story was about young boy Nathan whose parents died and was raised by his grand mother, a devout Christian woman, she taught him all about the Christian faith and love for God.

Due to work he relocated to another town unfortunately where there were no black churches, his first Sunday he showed up in all white congregation and he was refused entry. Through unknow circumstances later Nathan died and went to heaven, in heaven he asked Jesus why he wasn't allowed to worship in that all white congregation? Jesus calmly said to Nathan...my son I have been trying to get into that Congregation but they would not let me.

How do we act toward those who are different? How do we create this thirst in others that I am talking about? It will depend on the way we treat one another, the way we care for one another.

Jesus says: *“By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you have love for one another”* We are called to be different, our faith and life alone is good enough to create that thirst.

In a metaphoric sense Christians are peanuts that people *taste, sample, and nibble* and then become thirsty. When they want water Christians are then in good position to offer them the *‘Living Water.’*



That is the way Jesus would want us to be, we are the Salt of the earth. Not too salty to turn people off, but salty enough to create thirst.

Salt brings out the Best Flavour or Taste in food #3:

Today good salt enhances the flavors of our food, and the yeast in bread will not rise without it. An appropriate amount of salt is vital to our physical health in digestive and other body processes.

Reformer Martin Luther said in one of his sermons in 1532, *“Salt is to bring seasoning to life”* one of our roles in this life is to bring flavour to people’s life. If you are a person who loves God, who walks with Jesus. Then our job is to bring flavour of the gospel to people around us. God really asks very little of us.

All God wants from us is to be what God made us to be Salt. I met *Paul Kupski* in a little hamlet call Borgholz-Hausen, Germany in 1994. This man lost very thing, I mean very thing including his spirit, his soul, with one exception, the shirt on his back.

He and family and many other Germans were chased out of Poland during the Second world war. Paul was one big angry, bitter man, disillusioned with life, with people and the world. He saw no hope in humanity, himself and the world. As our conversation went on some how we touched on religion, I seized the opportunity to share the hope we have in Christ Jesus.

I said some thing along this line: Hope is the very essence of our very being, for without Hope what else is there to live for *when the world says Give up... Hope whispers to our ears, try it one more time.*

There was silent for a moment, he broke the silence with almost tears in his eyes and said Sammy ‘*du hast mir wieder hoffnug gebrack.*’ The truth for the matter is that, my friends God made us the salt of the earth. Salt, however does not exist for its own. No one sits down to eat salt alone.

Salt is a seasoning meant to be applied to something, it is meant to bring out flavour in food. In being so identified as *the salt of the earth*, we are called to realize our own worth and potential in God's sight and to let our good works reflect the Glory of God as a pathway to eternal life.



Salt Influences what ever it Touches #4:

Dr. Reginald Bibby, a Canadian and well known sociologist wrote a book called ‘Fragmented God’ In his book he examined the various churches in Canada, he polled their members and he polled a large number of non-Christians and discovered an amazing fact ... *a disturbing fact.*

He discovered that on almost all major *social* and *political* issues Christians *did not differ* in their opinions from non-Christians. Dr. Bibby concludes his book by saying that the reason that the Christian Church is dying in North America is because it does not offer ***anything that anyone else does not offer.***

Dr. Bibby finding echoes the statement of the 19th century philosopher and skeptic Frederick Nietzsche. Nietzsche said this about the churches of his day:

“They must sing better songs, ere I learn belief in their Saviour. They must act like they are redeemed before I will believe in their redeemer.”

- We are the salt of the earth.
- We are the light of the world.
- We are the singers of the Lord’s song.

God asks very little of us. All God asks is that we follow him and be *salt as faithfully* as we can. In being so identified as *the salt of the earth*, these rich images, along with the blessings from the Beatitudes, are a guide for how we choose to live in discipleship. We are to be the light on the lampstand of life, shedding spirit-filled light to everyone in God's House.

Let us season God's Earth with faith as disciples of Christ and shine with the radiance of the Holy Light within us. When we do so, then we will be full of light, and of power be beacon in a dark place, praise and glory unto God will be the result we have God's word on it.

Salt and Light you know them, be like them. Amen.

February 5, 2023