

Pastor Jon's Sermon from Sunday, Feb 5, 2023

Text: Matthew 5:13-19

“You already are the salt of the earth and light of the world”

How are you doing? How is your saline level? Are you letting your little light shine before others? We hope so, right? But chances are you haven't thought consciously about your faith in these terms. Salt and light.

However, can you think of a time when someone saw something in you that you didn't see in yourself?

In Matthew 5, Jesus reminds me of a coach giving a pep talk before the big game. In this portion of the Sermon on the Mount, after Jesus redefines who is considered blessed in his kingdom, the poor in Spirit, those who mourn, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers, he is communicating that he believes in his team more than they might believe in themselves. He is reassuring them that they are extremely valuable and useful in bringing forth God's reign of justice and love to the world... as useful as salt and light in the first century.

For individuals, to be called salt and light is one of the highest of compliments a Christian can receive. You might hear at a funeral, they were the salt of the earth. In other words, they maximized their time and talent to bring out the best in those around them. However, in this text, Jesus is calling the whole community salt and light. You all are salt and light.

Salt. I remember in elementary school learning how important iodized salt is for our diet. Now, you can get a container of iodized salt at Aldi for .54 cents. Salt is a relatively cheap commodity, and something we don't think much about unless there is too little or too much on our food. In Jesus' time, salt was an extremely precious commodity. It was used for preserving food, stopping bleeding, cleaning wounds, stimulating thirst, and treating skin diseases. It was also believed to ward off evil spirits. Did you know that salt was also used as compensation for Roman soldiers called “salary”. You didn't want your commanding officer to say, “You are not worth your salt.”

In the culinary world, salt in just the right amount brings out the best flavors in everything... in chocolate chip cookies, in chicken noodle soup, or on your favorite steak on the grill. Too much salt, a regular occurrence in my grandma Ruth's gravy, can ruin the whole batch or give you high blood pressure. Regardless, we need salt to live. It is a necessity in our diet in the right amount for life.

By Jesus saying that his disciples already are salt, means, they already are precious and extremely useful for preserving, healing, and bringing out the best flavors of the kingdom of God. Notice, they won't one day become salt of the earth. They already are salt of the earth.

The pronoun "you" in this text is plural. It means "you all". Jesus is saying "you all are the salt of the earth." It is communal in nature. Working together in the church with our collective gifts is salt for the earth. We are called to bring out the best in each other and salt each other in the right amount through our words and actions wherever we are. You don't want to remove the cap off the salt shaker and pour it on thick. Salt is meant to be sparingly mixed with other ingredients to bring out the best.

But be careful, you don't want to lose your saltiness. Salt loses its effectiveness when it is watered down. This is a warning to any church that adapts itself so completely to the secular world that it waters down the Gospel. The Gospel of Jesus should afflict the comfortable and comfort the afflicted.

Next, Jesus calls his disciples the light of the world. Light helps seeing people see. Like a candle in a dark room or the lights of a city on a hill, light helps us navigate the darkness. It is meant to be shared so others can see too. Jesus doesn't want us to keep our light for ourselves, or hide it under a bushel basket. But to let our little lights shine so others can see God in you and through your good works and give glory to God.

What is Jesus getting at for us today by calling us salt and light. Jesus is reminding his disciples and us that we have already been put in a right relationship with God through Jesus work on the cross and in the resurrection. That you won't one day arrive and be acceptable to God

through what you have done. Or that God will love you more. Jesus already considers you salt and light.

Our little contribution when mixed with others can make our world better around us.