**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 1-16-2022 --- Salt & Light**

Well friends, I am not ashamed to admit it, but I am not the chief chef of the family. Perhaps I am not a chef at all, although that is debatable. But hands down, Kara holds that role for our family. She is definitely very intentional in planning out healthy meals for the family, even though sometimes we have to eat on the road.

But while I’m not the chief chef of the household, I am able to help out in this department. At least I try. And although this usually ends well, I remember on at least one occasion, one thing that I forgot to do is to put on the salt. It was usually the corn or the squash that was neglected.

Kara would be out teaching violin or taking one of our girls to dance or gymnastics and our poor girls were battling through their rather bland dinner, thanks to Dad.

Truly, when it comes to food, salt and other small ingredients can make a very big difference. But as important as salt is today, at the time of Jesus salt was actually even more important than it is today. Salt not only enhanced flavor, but more importantly, it preserved food from corruption and decay. Salt was a preservative. Today, with refrigerators and freezers, salt is not needed so much as a preservative.

In His amazing sermon found in these three chapters in Matthew’s Gospel, he chooses to turn His attention to salt after sharing several statements about what a truly blessed life looks like from God’s perspective.

You see, Jesus excelled at communication and He would often use familiar things in the natural, like salt, to speak of spiritual matters to His hearers.

So let us now turn to God’s Word from Matthew 5:13-16.

In verse 13, Jesus tells this crowd of followers these words:

**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.**

Picture yourself among the large crowd of followers of Jesus that day of this Sermon by our Lord. Jesus says to them these words about salt. Jesus was informing them that if they continue as His followers, they have a big responsibility. They would be the salt of the world.

**First, what does this tell us about the world?** According to Jesus, it is a place that needs salt. The majority of the people in this world are in a bad place spiritually. Following Jesus is the narrow way that leads to life. There is a broad way that leads to destruction.

And Jesus tells this band of followers that they are the salt of the earth. This group that would seek to understand and to put into practice the words of Christ, this group would be the group that preserves the world from corruption. What a calling!

Again, even though I’m a novice when it comes to cooking, one thing that I do know is a little salt can go a long way. Friends, Jesus was telling this crowd of followers that they needed to be active and intentional in being salt in a world that is quickly decaying. They couldn’t be salt everywhere, but they could be salt where they were.

As followers of Jesus, they were to allow their faith in Jesus as the Messiah to impact their relationships with others who may not know Jesus. Jesus’ hearers would be carrying the best news ever and the answer to so many questions and problems --- His Name is Jesus Christ. Jesus would make them salt for the world.

But if the salt loses its saltiness or its zeal to share Jesus with others, it is not valuable as salt any longer. There is a book writing by a Christian leader named Rebecca Manley Pippert called ***Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World***. I think that the title says it all. As much as Christians are called to gather often together as God’s people, they are also called to take Christ with them into the world.

But Jesus doesn’t stop with one analogy, He offers the crowd a second. He continues by saying:

**14“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15Neither 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. 16In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.**

In the natural, light is essential to help people to see. Many people do not like driving in the dark, because there is much less light than in the daytime, especially if there are few street lights.

Jesus tells His followers “**You are the light of the** **world**.”

Just as His followers are not literal salt, Christians are obviously not physical light, but rather, believers in Jesus are called to embody qualities that make salt and light important. Salt preserves and flavors. Light symbolizes truth over error, purity instead of filth, and God’s presence rather than separation from God.

In another place in the gospels, Jesus refers to Himself as “**the light of the world**,” but here, in this greatest of all sermons, Jesus’ is connecting all of His true followers as carriers of His light.

Jesus says “**a town built on a hill cannot be hidden**.” These words would be obvious to Jesus. You can see a town of high elevation from very far away.

Jesus goes on to teach that neither can people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. That just wouldn’t make sense, right? Lamps are designed to carry light. Lighting a lamp and putting it under a bowl would be as foolish as trying to hide a city on a hill.

Instead, Jesus tells His followers that they are to let their light shine before others that they may see their good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Jesus’ words are so profound here. He is telling them that those who would be responding to Jesus’ teachings and seeking to live for Him are the sole light of the world.

Israel’s calling was to be a light to the nations. Israel was called to point people to the LORD. That was their calling as a nation.

Sometimes they succeeded, but many times they failed.

**But Jesus is now saying that it is not ethnic Israel that is the light to the nations, but His followers.** And His followers would be made up not only of Jews, but also people from all the nations.

So how was this band of followers to be salt and light? It would be not only through their words, but also by their deeds.

Jesus even says “**let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

So friends, what are we to make of Jesus’ words for our lives today?

***His words remind us that the Lord hasn’t changed His mind about the high calling for Christians. Today, we are still called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.***

We are still called to not lose our saltiness and still called to point people to Jesus through our words and our deeds.

Sisters and Brothers, I know that it may be hard to believe at times, but the church of God is advancing. Can we have an amen to that? Amen.

Jesus has been building His church for nearly 2,000 years and He tells us that the gates of hell will not stand against it.

The church has come a long way. The Book of Acts states that after Jesus’ resurrection, there were about 120 believers that were gathering in Jerusalem that were gathering in prayer in Jerusalem awaiting Jesus to pour out the Holy Spirit upon them.

Today, there is an estimated 2.3 billion Christians in the world. Followers of Jesus are being salt in a world that is decaying. Christians are shining brightly through their words and their deeds.

**That being said, the majority of the world is still walking in spiritual darkness**. Traditional Christian faith is coming under increasing attack in many places, including America. Teaching the truth of God’s Word is now even considered not only unloving, but even hate speech. Nothing can be further from the truth.

So what do we do? We simply choose to be intentional in being salt and light.

As helpful as salt shakers are, salt must come out of the shaker for it to make a difference.

As Christians, we are called to be intentional in sharing Jesus with those that may not know Christ. Again, we do this both through our words, but also by our actions.

**I know that it is not politically correct to talk about politics and religion, but Christ does not call us to be politically correct, He calls us to be salt and light.**

Although it may not always be perceived in this way, we as followers of Jesus have the best news ever and the answer to the problems of our world is Jesus Christ. Our God has come to rescue all people from their sins and to restore us to Himself. That is very good news indeed!

Truly, one of the biggest reasons that Jesus didn’t take us straight to heaven the moment we believe in Him is that He wants us to live on this earth as salt and light. Heaven doesn’t need more salt and light. But the earth definitely does.

**Our new vision statement as a church is to be a light on a hill, sharing the love of Jesus Christ.**

**Friends, learning to be salt and light goes hand and hand with following our vision.**

Our outreach team is meeting soon to discern possible outreach ideas that we may do as a church in the coming year. There will be several opportunities for you to participate in one or more of these outreaches. In each one of these outreaches, we will simply be seeking to be salt and light, sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

*But besides these church outreaches, I encourage you to ask the Lord to help you be salt and light as you go*. Everywhere we go and in everything that we do, we are called to represent Jesus and to point people towards Jesus.

**Colossians 4:6 states “Your speech must always be with grace, as though *seasoned with salt*, so that you will know how you should respond to each person.”**

**I just want to share 2 quick stories about practical ways that we can be salt and light.**

The other day I was visiting someone at a hospital. On my way out of the hospital, I was sharing an elevator with one of the workers at the hospital. After greeting him in the elevator, I just decided to tell him “have a blessed day” as I was getting off the elevator. He told me “please do not stop saying that.” He said that “I just say that at my church and at my home.”

And then this led to us speaking for a moment together about our churches.

The medical worker could just as easily said “**please don’t stop being salt and light” as “please don’t stop saying have a blessed day**.”

Friends, again, although Christianity continues to spread more and more throughout the world, our culture is becoming less and less biblically literate.

**Remember this, you may be the only Bible that someone ever reads.** Our words and our actions impact others all around us, whether we are realizing it or not.

The other day my daughter Kayla cut out a square piece of paper that said “Jesus Loves You” on it. She gave it to me and told me to give it to someone else and tell them to pass it on to someone else and to tell them to do the same. That way, she said, this will go all the way around the world.

*We cannot reach everyone ourselves, but we can be salt and light*. Let us stay close to Christ and He will help us to thrive in these ways by His grace.

Please pray with me*. “Heavenly Father, fill us with Your love. Help us to see each person that we meet through Your eyes of love, as You see them. Lord, we desire to be salt and light in this world for you. And it is not to make a name for ourselves, but that others would come to know You and bring glory to Your Name. We pray this in the precious Name of Jesus Your Son and our Savior, Amen.”*

Sources:

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