

Matthew 5:13-20

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.

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

ONE OF THE “PEANUTS” CARTOONS SHOWS PEPPERMINT PATTY TALKING TO CHARLIE BROWN ABOUT THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL.

SHE SAYS- “GUESS WHAT CHUCK, THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL AND I GOT SENT TO THE PRINCIPAL’S OFFICE. IT WAS YOUR FAULT CHUCK.”

NATURALLY, CHARLIE BROWN IS SURPRISED BY HER COMMENT AND PROTESTS- “MY FAULT? HOW COULD IT BE MY FAULT?”

SHE RESPONDS- “YOU’RE MY FRIEND, AREN’T YOU CHUCK? YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN A BETTER INFLUENCE ON ME.”

WHAT PEPPERMINT PATTY FORGOT IS THAT THE GREATEST ROLE MODEL IN THE WORLD IS ONLY AS INFLUENTIAL AS HE OR SHE IS ALLOWED TO BE.

INDEED, EVEN JESUS’ INFLUENCE IS SUBJECT TO THE FREE WILL OF THOSE WHO CHOOSE TO FOLLOW HIM OR NOT.

THE FACT THAT MANY WILL IGNORE OR REJECT CHRIST’S INFLUENCE, DOES NOT HINDER HIM FROM BEING THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD-AND OUR GREATEST ROLE MODEL.

BUT THE FACT PEOPLE WILL NOT ALWAYS FOLLOW A GOOD ROLE MODEL IS NO EXCUSE FOR NOT BEING ONE.

TODAY’S GOSPEL READING TOUCHES ON THIS VERY THING, IT TEACHES US THAT CHRIST’S CHURCH AND HER MEMBERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE A GODLY INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD.

JESUS DRAWS FROM THE PROPHET ISAIAH TO DESCRIBE HIS VISION AND INTENTION FOR HIS CHURCH.

ISAIAH 58 DESCRIBES GOD’S DESIRE FOR ISRAEL, WHICH WAS FOR THEM TO RESIST THE DECAY OF SIN, BY OBEYING THE LORD, AND THUS BE LIKE SALT.

GOD’S PEOPLE ARE ALSO TO BE THE LIGHT THAT ATTRACTS OTHERS TO THE LORD GOD. THE SAME IS TRUE FOR CHRISTIANS.

NATURALLY, IN ORDER TO BE THE SALT AND LIGHT WE ARE EMPOWERED TO BE, WE FIRST NEED TO BE INFLUENCED BY CHRIST AND HIS GOSPEL IN SUCH A WAY THAT OUR LIVES ARE FLAVORED BY AND REFLECT HIS VALUES AND LOVE.

THEREFORE, JESUS BEGAN HIS SERMON WITH THE BEATITUDES TO TEACH HIS FOLLOWERS HOW TO LIVE AS PEOPLE OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

THEN HE SPELLS OUT WHAT THIS WILL LOOK LIKE. JESUS DESCRIBES US AS EXHIBITING THE TRAITS OF SALT, LIGHT, AND A CITY ON A HILL.

THOSE TRAITS, LIKE THE BEATITUDES, ARE PART OF THE BLESSINGS, AND THUS THE RESPONSIBILITIES, THE HOLY SPIRIT BESTOWS UPON ALL OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

THIS MEANS WE MUST WORK WITH GOD'S SPIRIT TO BRING OUT THESE CHARACTERISTICS, BOTH AS INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLES AND AS CHURCHES.

WE ALSO SHOULD REMEMBER, THE BIBLE RECORDS JESUS SAYING "YOU" AT THE END OF THE BEATITUDES, IN THE PLURAL FORM.

THE SAME IS TRUE IN TODAY'S READING- IT IS NOT "YOU" INDIVIDUALLY- BUT RATHER "ALL OF YOU" ARE SALT, LIGHT, AND A CITY.

HERE JESUS EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUALS IN COMMUNITY WITH ONE ANOTHER.

THINK OF IT THIS WAY: A SINGLE GRAIN OF SALT OR BEAM OF LIGHT CAN DO SOME GOOD, BUT MANY JOINED TOGETHER ARE MORE AFFECTIVE.

SIMILARLY, CHRISTIANS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE ISOLATED BUILDINGS, BUT MANY STRUCTURES THAT MAKE UP A CITY ON A HILL.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE, WHICH IS THE SAVIOR'S EMPHASIS ON SALT AND LIGHT.

THE INFLUENCE OF SALT, FOR THE MOST PART, IS MEANT TO BE SUBTLE, AND OFTEN HIDDEN.

LIGHT, ON THE OTHER HAND IS MEANT TO BE VISIBLE TO -BOTH BE SEEN AND ALSO TO ALLOW OTHER THINGS TO BE SEEN.

LET US TURN NOW TO LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT SALT AND ITS MANY USES.

FIRST, OUR BODIES NEED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SALT TO SUSTAIN LIFE.

SALT ALSO -PROVIDES FLAVOR, IT IS A PRESERVATIVE, AN ANTISEPTIC, AND IT EVEN MELTS ICE.

THE SALT JESUS REFERRED TO CAME PRIMARILY FROM THE DEAD SEA, AND THEREFORE IT WAS NOT IN A PURE FORM.

SOMETIMES THE SALT HAD SO MANY OTHER MINERALS MIXED IN WITH IT THAT THE FLAVOR WAS IMPAIRED, AND SO IT HAD TO BE DISCARDED.

THUS, JESUS WARNED HIS FOLLOWERS TO NOT ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GIFT OF SALTINESS TO BE SMOTHERED SO THAT THEY WOULD LOSE THEIR CHRIST-LIKE FLAVOR.

IT IS THE FLAVOR OF SALT, THAT IS- THE ABILITY OF SALT TO FLAVOR FOOD IN A POSITIVE WAY, JESUS PRIMARILY FOCUSES ON IN HIS SERMON.

HE WANTS HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS CHURCH TO ADD GOOD FLAVOR TO LIFE, SO THAT OTHERS WILL BE DRAWN TO HIM.

BUT ANOTHER FACT ABOUT SALT THAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT LEFT IN A CONTAINER IT DOES NO GOOD.

SALT NEEDS TO BE IN CONTACT WITH SOMETHING TO BE EFFECTIVE.

THEREFORE, THE CHURCH AND THOSE WHO ARE A PART OF THE CHURCH, ARE CALLED BY OUR SAVIOR TO SHARE IN THE EXPERIENCES OF THE WORLD, AND ARE TO YET BE DISTINCTIVE FROM THE WORLD.

THIS IS WHY WE ARE GIVEN THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS, POWER, AND GUIDANCE TO FLAVOR THE WORLD WITH THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

THIS OFTEN HAPPENS IN SMALL YET SIGNIFICANT DEEDS OF KINDNESS OR CHARITY.

A PERSON OR A CHURCH DOES NOT HAVE TO HEAVE GREAT RESOURCES TO DO MUCH GOOD-GOD ASKS ONLY WE USE WHAT WE HAVE TO INFLUENCE THE WORLD FOR CHRIST.

THIS BRINGS US TO LOOK AT LIGHT. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT FOR US TO EXHIBIT, BUT IT WORKS DIFFERENTLY THAN SALT.

THE MAIN PURPOSE OF LIGHT IS TO SHINE, BUT IT SHINES NOT JUST TO BE SEEN, BUT IN ORDER TO ALLOW WHAT IS AROUND IT TO BE SEEN AS WELL.

THEREFORE, INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES, AS LIGHT, ARE TO EXPOSE OTHERS TO JESUS CHRIST; AND TO GIVE GOD HONOR AND GLORY, NOT THEMSELVES.

THINK OF THE WORD "SHINE"- IT CAN BE AN ACRONYM FOR CHRISTIANS.

S IS FOR SHARING THE GOSPEL, H- IS HELPING OTHERS, I IS ABOUT BEING AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

N- STANDS FOR NURTURING ONE ANOTHER IN THE FAITH, AND E- POINTS TO EXALTING GOD IN WORD AND DEED.

HOWEVER, WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE CHURCH AND INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS DO NOT PRODUCE THE LIGHT.

INSTEAD, LIKE THE MOON REFLECTS THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, CHRISTIANS REFLECT JESUS, WHO IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

A CHRISTIAN NAMED ROBLE NEBRES, WROTE AN ARTICLE ENTITLED "REFLECT THE LIGHT."

IN IT, HE SHARES A TIME WHEN, AFTER WATCHING THE SUNSET ON TOP OF A MOUNTAIN, HE THEN DROVE DOWN THE STEEP AND WINDING ROAD.

WHEN HE LEFT THE PARKING LOT THE MEDIAN STRIPS ON THE ROAD SUDDENLY CAME ALIVE WITH REFLECTORIZED LIGHTS.

THEY PROVIDED A MUCH-NEEDED DIRECTIONAL GUIDE ON THE MOUNTAIN ROAD, ILLUMINATING THE WAY FOR HIM.

NEBRES POINTED OUT THAT THOSE REFLECTORS, WERE USELESS WITHOUT HIS HEADLIGHTS SHINING ON THEM.

THE LIGHT THEY GAVE DEPENDED ON THE LIGHT FROM ANOTHER SOURCE. OTHERWISE, THEY COULD NOT HAVE HELPED HIM SEE.

HE WROTE: "WHEN JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES THEY WERE THE 'LIGHT OF THE WORLD' I BELIEVE HE MEANT THEY WERE TO BE REFLECTORS OF THE LIGHT OF GOD."

TRULY, CHRISTIANS ARE LIKE REFLECTORS, GOD SHINES THE LIGHT OF HIS SON ON US FOR OTHERS TO SEE AND BE GUIDED BY.

OUR TASK, HOWEVER, IS NOT AN EASY ONE, SINCE THE WORLD PREFERS DARKNESS, WHICH MEANS, THE WORLD WILL NOT ALWAYS WELCOME US AS REFLECTS OF GOD'S LIGHT.

INDEED, EXPOSING THE DARKNESS OF SIN, AND SEEKING TO REVEAL THE TRUTH OF CHRIST TO THE WORLD CAN LEAD TO PERSECUTION, JUST LIKE JESUS WARNED BY THE LAST BEATITUDE.

AND YET THE MOON CANNOT HELP BUT TO REFLECT THE LIGHT OF THE SUN.

AND THE REFLECTORS ON THE ROAD ARE MEANT TO CAPTURE AND SEND FORTH HEADLIGHTS, SO ALSO CHURCHES AND INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS MUST REFLECT CHRIST.

TO HIDE OUR LIGHT IS LIKE BUILDING A HIGH WALL AROUND A CITY ON A HILL-PREVENTING OTHERS FROM SEEING IT.

JESUS CALLS US TO THE HIGHER STANDARD OF THE LIFE GOD HAS ALREADY PLACED WITHIN US THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT AFTER WE ARE SAVED.

THIS LEADS US INTO THE FINAL VERSES OF THE GOSPEL READING WHERE JESUS SPEAKS ABOUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS, HE EXPECTS HIS DISCIPLES TO EMBODY.

LET'S LISTEN AGAIN TO A ONE OF THOSE VERSES: "DO NOT THINK I HAVE COME TO ABOLISH THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS, I HAVE NOT COME TO ABOLISH THEM BUT TO FULFILL THEM."

THE PHRASE "LAW AND PROPHETS" IS SHORT FOR ALL OF OLD TESTAMENT SCRIPTURE.

HERE JESUS IS EXPLAINING FOR THOSE WHO ACCUSE HIM OF BEING A LAW BREAKER, THAT HE IS NOT IGNORING OR DISTAINING BIBLICAL LAW.

BUT HIS WORDS ALSO GIVE A SUBTLE HINT THAT HE ALSO HAD NOT COME TO MAINTAIN THE STATUS QUO OF JEWISH RELIGIOUS RITUALS AND PRACTICE.

REMEMBER, THE PHARISEES AND SCRIBES SO ENGULFED THEMSELVES IN FOLLOWING RULES THEY LOST SIGHT OF GOD, WHOSE LAWS, THEY PRIDED THEMSELVES IN OBEYING.

THE PROBLEM WAS THEIR PRIDE BLINDED THEM TO GOD'S LOVE, AND HIS CALL FOR THEM TO LOVE GOD AND OTHERS.

JESUS CAME TO DRAW GOD'S PEOPLE AND ALL PEOPLE, CLOSER TO HIS AND THEIR HEAVENLY FATHER, BY INNER TRANSFORMATION.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT JESUS TOOK OUR PLACE ON THE CROSS AND SO JUSTIFIES US BEFORE GOD, EVEN THOUGH WE FAIL TO PERFECTLY OBEY SCRIPTURE.

IT IS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS IMPLANTED WITHIN US THROUGH CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION, AND OUR FAITH THAT OPENS THE WAY FOR US.

THIS DOORWAY TO HEAVEN IS NOT PASSED THROUGH BY OUR OWN EFFORTS AND ACHIEVEMENTS, BUT BECAUSE JESUS CLOTHES THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN AND FOLLOW HIM, WITH HIS OWN RIGHTEOUSNESS

FURTHERMORE, THE HOLY SPIRIT LEADS US TO REPENT AND SEEK THE FORGIVENESS THROUGH CHRIST WE NEED.

THEREFORE, THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT SURPASSES THE PHARISEES IS THE SALT AND LIGHT OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF JESUS CHRIST-THAT FULFILLS THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS.

THIS RIGHTEOUSNESS CAN BE RENEWED WITHIN CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS, AND THE WHOLE CHURCH IN MANY WAYS.

THOSE WAYS INCLUDE: PRAYER, THE STUDY OF SCRIPTURE, WORSHIP, CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP, AND THE SACRAMENTS BAPTISM AND HOLY COMMUNION.

JUST AS IMPORTANTLY, CHRIST'S RIGHTEOUSNESS IS NURTURED BY OUR EVERYDAY WORDS AND ACTIONS THAT ARE INSPIRED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT.

THE MORE WE ALLOW THE SPIRIT TO FLAVOR OUR LIVES, SO WE MAY BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS, THE GREATER A BLESSING WE WILL BECOME.

AND THE MORE WE ABSORB CHRIST'S LIGHT AND THEN REFLECT IT TO OTHERS-THE BETTER REFLECTORS OF HIS LIGHT WE WILL BE.

LET US PRAY:

LORD JESUS, WE GIVE YOU THANKS FOR YOUR LOVE FOR US AND THE PROMISE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS YOU OFFER TO US.

SEND YOUR SPIRIT TO RECREATE US IN YOUR IMAGE SO WE MAY GLORIFY GOD.

MAY OUR LIVES INDIVIDUAL AND IN COMMUNITY FLAVOR THE EARTH WITH THE SALT OF THE GOSPEL, AND SHINE THE LIGHT OF YOUR LOVE IN THE WORLD.

BLESS US, WE PRAY, SO WE MAY BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS IN YOUR NAME, AND THUS FULFILL OUR PURPOSE IN THE WORLD. IN YOUR PRECIOUS NAME WE PRAY, AMEN.

SERMON SUMMARY: MATTHEW 5:13-20

TODAY'S GOSPEL READING TEACHES US THAT CHRIST'S CHURCH AND HER MEMBERS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE A GODLY INFLUENCE IN THE WORLD. \

JESUS BEGAN HIS SERMON WITH THE BEATITUDES TO TEACH HIS FOLLOWERS HOW TO LIVE AS PEOPLE OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

THEN HE SPELLS OUT WHAT THIS WILL LOOK LIKE. JESUS DESCRIBES US AS EXHIBITING THE TRAITS OF SALT, LIGHT, AND A CITY ON A HILL.

THOSE TRAITS, LIKE THE BEATITUDES, ARE PART OF THE BLESSINGS, AND THUS THE RESPONSIBILITIES, THE HOLY SPIRIT BESTOWS UPON ALL OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS.

THIS MEANS WE MUST WORK WITH GOD'S SPIRIT TO BRING OUT THESE CHARACTERISTICS, BOTH AS INDIVIDUAL DISCIPLES AND AS CHURCHES.

JESUS EMPHASIZES THE IMPORTANCE OF INDIVIDUALS IN COMMUNITY WITH ONE ANOTHER. THINK OF IT THIS WAY: A SINGLE GRAIN OF SALT OR BEAM OF LIGHT CAN DO SOME GOOD, BUT MANY JOINED TOGETHER ARE MORE AFFECTIVE.

SIMILARLY, CHRISTIANS ARE NOT MEANT TO BE ISOLATED BUILDINGS, BUT MANY STRUCTURES THAT MAKE UP A CITY ON A HILL.

THIS BRINGS US TO THE MEAT OF THE PASSAGE, WHICH IS THE SAVIOR'S EMPHASIS ON SALT AND LIGHT. LET US TURN NOW TO LOOK MORE CLOSELY AT SALT AND ITS MANY USES.

FIRST, OUR BODIES NEED A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SALT TO SUSTAIN LIFE. SALT ALSO -PROVIDES FLAVOR, IT IS A PRESERVATIVE, AN ANTISEPTIC, AND IT EVEN MELTS ICE.

THE SALT JESUS REFERRED TO CAME PRIMARILY FROM THE DEAD SEA, AND THEREFORE IT WAS NOT IN A PURE FORM. SOMETIMES THE SALT HAD SO MANY OTHER MINERALS MIXED IN WITH IT THAT THE FLAVOR WAS IMPAIRED, AND SO IT HAD TO BE DISCARDED.

THUS, JESUS WARNED HIS FOLLOWERS TO NOT ALLOW THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GIFT OF SALTINESS TO BE SMOTHERED SO THAT THEY WOULD LOSE THEIR CHRIST-LIKE FLAVOR.

IT IS THE FLAVOR OF SALT, THAT IS- THE ABILITY OF SALT TO FLAVOR FOOD IN A POSITIVE WAY, JESUS PRIMARILY FOCUSES ON IN HIS SERMON. HE WANTS HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS CHURCH TO ADD GOOD FLAVOR TO LIFE, SO THAT OTHERS WILL BE DRAWN TO HIM.

BUT ANOTHER FACT ABOUT SALT THAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT LEFT IN A CONTAINER IT DOES NO GOOD. SALT NEEDS TO BE IN CONTACT WITH SOMETHING TO BE EFFECTIVE. THIS IS WHY WE ARE GIVEN THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS, POWER, AND GUIDANCE TO FLAVOR THE WORLD WITH THE LOVE OF CHRIST.

THIS OFTEN HAPPENS IN SMALL YET SIGNIFICANT DEEDS OF KINDNESS OR CHARITY. A PERSON OR A CHURCH DOES NOT HAVE TO HEAVE GREAT RESOURCES TO DO MUCH GOOD-GOD ASKS ONLY WE USE WHAT WE HAVE TO INFLUENCE THE WORLD FOR CHRIST.

THIS BRINGS US TO LOOK AT LIGHT. IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT FOR US TO EXHIBIT, BUT IT WORKS DIFFERENTLY THAN SALT. THE MAIN PURPOSE OF LIGHT IS TO SHINE, BUT IT SHINES NOT JUST TO BE SEEN, BUT IN ORDER TO ALLOW WHAT IS AROUND IT TO BE SEEN AS WELL.

THEREFORE, INDIVIDUALS AND CHURCHES, AS LIGHT, ARE TO EXPOSE OTHERS TO JESUS CHRIST; AND TO GIVE GOD HONOR AND GLORY, NOT THEMSELVES. HOWEVER, WE NEED TO RECOGNIZE THAT THE CHURCH.

INSTEAD, LIKE THE MOON REFLECTS THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, CHRISTIANS REFLECT JESUS, WHO IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

OUR TASK, HOWEVER, IS NOT AN EASY ONE, SINCE THE WORLD PREFERS DARKNESS, WHICH MEANS, THE WORLD WILL NOT ALWAYS WELCOME US AS REFLECTS OF GOD'S LIGHT.

AND YET THE MOON CANNOT HELP BUT TO REFLECT THE LIGHT OF THE SUN, SO ALSO CHURCHES AND INDIVIDUAL BELIEVERS MUST REFLECT CHRIST. AMEN