

Sunday, February 5, 2017

Isaiah 58:1-9

I Corinthians 2: 1-12

Matthew 5:13-20

Prayer Time

There was a mother mouse who decided to teach her children about the world. So she gathered all of her little mice and set out for a walk. They walked down the hall and turned to the right. Then they went down the hall and took another right. And suddenly they found themselves in front of the family cat dozing in the sunlight. The mother mouse was scared. But she didn't want to give in to her fright. So she signaled to the children to be very quiet and to follow as she began to tip toe quietly and slowly past the sleeping cat. Just as she was about to get past the cat, the cat's eyes popped open and raised its paw.

The little mice were petrified. What would their mother do? Well, just as the cat's paw started to come down, that mother mouse looked the cat right in the eye and started barking like a dog. And do you know what? The cat was so startled and frightened that it jumped up and ran away! The mother mouse, wiped her brow, shook a little and then turned to her little mice and said, "Children, I hope you learned a valuable lesson. Sometimes it's good to know a second language!"

It's the same way with us. It's good to know a second language—the language of accepting and following Christ as His disciples and followers in the 21st century. We continue to focus on the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus had so many people following him that he went out to the side of a hill and the crowd sat down to listen to him. Jesus then spoke and taught about many different topics and the people were amazed because he taught as one who had authority and not as their teachers of the law.

Last week our focus was on blessings or the beatitudes and in today's passage Jesus calls those who are listening to him 'the salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world.'" He calls them this because they can relate to him as he uses everyday words for the world in which they live. Salt had two purposes in the first century- Middle East. There was no refrigeration and so salt was used as we use it too- to preserve food especially meat. In the heat of the desert meat would spoil so easily that salt became an important asset in the household. Jesus called those who were listening to him, the salt of the earth because they and we are the preservatives to the world. We are the ones who are preserving the world from inherent evil which seems to abound in the world then and now. With corruption, destruction death and random acts of violence we pray that those who follow you will let their salt preserve peace and love in your name.

A second purpose for salt and is to enhance the flavour of food. In the same way that salt enhances the flavour of the food it seasons, those who follow Jesus stand out as the ones who offer a life different from others. Christians living under the guidance of the Holy spirit and in obedience to Christ will inevitably influence the world for good as salt has a positive influence in moderation and balance to the food it seasons.

When we accept the call to follow Jesus we are the ones who are to be peacemakers where there is strife, where there is sorrow, we are to be the ministers of Christ, binding up wounds and where there is hatred we are to exemplify the love of God in Christ, returning good.

Jesus then says that you are the light of the world. In John's gospel Jesus calls himself the Light--*(big L) as the one from whom we receive all light and life and whose life we reflect every day in our words, actions and deeds. Jesus says, you are the light of the world and by this he means that we are to shine before others in such a way that people will see what we are doing not for our glory, but the glory of God. We are light and in the darkness of the season, do we still shine for Jesus that is are we sharing his message even though we may be over tired, wanting to sleep the winter evenings away in the warmth by relaxing and reading or watching tv, Are we still shining for Jesus?. In these few weeks we have experienced very little sun, the days have been fairly dark and when even for a few moments the sun was shining there is a different feeling of life around us. But when the clouds come again do we still shine for Jesus? Jesus calls those who follow him salt and light. And this is a tough job- for when we think about our world, with its growing dishonesty, corruption, immorality, violence, pornography, the diminishing respect for human life, and the escalation of greed and money and wanting more and more while many have nothing.—how might we as the salt and light of Christ do anything?

We must also remember that salt and light are the language of God—grace, hope and love. And this second language when spoken or put into action by Jesus' followers, there is change but we must bring about that change.

Just thing about this for a moment- if the house is dark at night, there is no sense in blaming the house. This is what happens when the sun goes down. Where is the light? If the meat goes bad, is there any sense in blaming the meat? This is what happens when bacteria is allow to breed unchecked. So where is the salt?

If society becomes corrupt like a dark night or stinking fish, there's no sense in blaming society. That's what happens when fallen humans are left to itself and human evil is unrestrained and unchecked. The question we must ask is where are those who are Christ's followers, Christians, or the gathering of Christians together—the church?

Where is the church? Praying to God. Not asking God to answer fill in the blank wish lists which we often think prayer lists are, but praying to God with deep faith and conviction so that lives will change because of His Spirit's presence.

Where is the church? Praying to God and telling others of the message of Jesus' death and resurrection and the light of hope which is experienced through him alone.

Where is the church? Praying to God that the Spirit might act in power and strength of God. The church is also where a message of God's wisdom will be revealed by His Spirit to those who believe and act and share. And where prayer is not just a list of orders to be filled by God, but an experience of faith between God and His people- individuals and churches as a whole.

Where is the church? Praying and calling upon God's Spirit to act, in faith and with hope so that those who are searching for God and finding their spark of commitment will do so as they tell Jesus' story from their perspective.

Where are God's people? Praying with expectant hope, and offering to God praise and thanksgiving.

Jesus calls us the salt of the earth as we are called to share his message of preservation and enhancing the world through hope and change, through opportunities and experiences. Jesus calls us share the light which reflects his life and to share the salt which brings life to light and challenges us to preserve it in the world through prayer like the salt salesman in this story..

A man walked into a little mom-and-pop grocery store and asked, 'Do you sell salt?' 'Ha!' said Pop the proprietor. 'Do we sell salt? Just look!' And Pop showed the customer one entire wall stocked with nothing but salt. Morton salt, iodized salt, kosher salt, sea salt, rock salt, garlic salt, seasoning salt, Epsom salts, every kind imaginable.

'Wow!' said the customer.

'You think that's something?' said Pop with a wave of his hand. 'That's nothing! Come look.' Pop led the customer to a back room filled with shelves and bins and cartons and barrels and boxes of salt. 'Do we sell salt?' he said.

'Unbelievable!' said the customer.

'You think that's something?' said Pop. 'Come! I'll show you salt!' Pop led the customer down some steps into a huge basement, five times as large as the previous room, filled floor to ceiling, with every imaginable form and size and shape of salt, even huge ten-pound salt licks for the cow pasture.

'Incredible!' said the customer. 'You really do sell salt!'

'No!' said Pop. 'That's just the problem! We never sell salt! But that salt salesman? Hoo-boy! Does he sell salt!'"

PRAYER:

God of love—help us to be salt and light in this world, our world, our community, our neighbourhoods-schools and workplaces. Enable us to preserve our faith yet reach out to tell others about Jesus; enable us to reflect the Light of the world Jesus and to know that as we hear of problems around the world, we will pray to you for strength and wisdom and how we might wonder and then act as your feet and hands. Hear us O God as we pray. AMEN>