

Sunday, July 23,2023 *“You are the Salt of the Earth”*

You are the salt of the earth. Flavour your life with joy.

Purify and cleanse the negative. Create a thirst for God.

Psalm 104 826 VU Ref 1 Matthew 5:13-16

It is great to be back with you after a couple of weeks away. To begin my 15th year as minister here at Glenwood is the summer series of “At Your Request”. We have been having this series for a few years where I ask for topics for this sermon series for the summer services when I am present. I was given this brief reading and asked “can you comment on it? Would you help us to understand it?”

In order to do this, I will look at each section and then hopefully bring it together! One must first realize that these words are not all from the Bible alone. But the first statement is as Jesus declares to the listeners who are also believers in His memorable Sermon on the Mount, that they are the "salt of the earth". This is from Matthew 5:13. Advising his listeners, Jesus states it was possible for them to lose their flavour as Jesus’ followers. If believers lost this "flavor," they would be of no benefit to others. They would then only be deserving of being "thrown out and trampled upon in the street."

But why did Jesus use salt in this statement? Salt was and is essential to life. The unusual thing about salt is that although it is vital to life and good health on planet earth, too much of it can be deadly. Blood, sweat, and tears have this mineral in them. The significance of this substance in civilization goes back many millennia where it was used as currency and those who had more salt also had more power. It was used to reduce the corruption of meat and other foods so that they could be eaten later on.

The headline reads: ***“A tentative agreement has been signed between Windsor Salt and the bargaining committee representing members of Unifor Local 1959 and 240. The union began legal strike action 154 days ago, on Feb. 17, 2023. Nearly 250 unionized workers were on strike at the mine.*”**

But why is this company so important for the people of Windsor- Essex and the province? Because Windsor Salt is Canada’s most trusted salt brand as they have been making quality

products since 1893. Their product line includes water softeners, pool salt, ice melt, and are key ingredients to food manufacturing and in the agricultural business of food preservatives.

Salt is key to life- in our bodies, on the street in winter and acts as a means of savory doctrine in our understanding of being disciples and apostles of Christ. When Jesus called these early followers 'the salt of the earth' because they were the ones who sought to live as pure a life as possible in order that they would be able to maximize their blessing our flavouring others with good things. The original goal is to share Christ's message of love, but if they lose themselves by mixing with those not following Jesus, they will be become worthless and hollow. This is noted in Mark 7 when Jesus states, " that whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile since it enters. It is what comes out of a person that defiles." Jesus is thus saying live a pure life- just as salt is found in the earth and used to sustain life.

Flavour your life with joy. Where do you find your joy? Not happiness, but real joy? If we are the salt of the earth we need to have joy help us to flavour the lives of others. To do this is to spread the joy of the Lord. As people we have the need to eat in common and just as there are many people from different cultures and customs, there are many flavours of the world which entice people to remember the special foods. Vanilla, chocolate and surprisingly the flavour of different kinds of meat cooked with species are the most sought after flavours which we enjoy. But how are we to flavour our lives? Joy is the feeling that is stronger than happiness and is long term in nature. We sing "Joy to the World" at Christmas when Jesus is born but for how long do we remember the joy of Jesus when we are struggling, hurting or searching for who we might be and become? Joy is one of the fruit of God's Spirit and it is not just available to us on the other side of difficulties. Joy is a gift of living and walking with Jesus: "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22F) but we must choose to be and become joy-filled. Joy is an inner contentedness despite our circumstances.

Purify and cleanse the negative. What are the negative things in your life right now? As the salt of the earth, Jesus calls us to share our beliefs and teachings with others. He calls us to look within ourselves and flavour others with good things including hope. But what does the

process of cleansing and purification mean? One of the simplest ways to understand the difference between cleansing and purification is by looking at the level of removal they perform. Cleansing is maintenance. It's akin to the everyday cleaning you do to keep your home from becoming a complete disaster. Purification, on the other hand, is the deep cleaning. The difference of sweeping your kitchen floor and removing the crumbs of the day to getting mop and bucket and cleaning the dirt off the floor. As we cleanse and purify the negative we remove what causes harm, hurts, and disillusionment with life. We know that there are people who use salt baths, smudging with herbs, meditation and prayer, as well as using essential oils with special aromas. All of these help us to alleviate the negative in our lives, but it is God's Spirit with which we connect that allows us to breathe anew.

Create a thirst for God. Have you ever been really thirsty? Maybe you have had a heavy workout in the blazing sun and humidity during these summer days. You stop for a moment and realize that you are thirsty. Your mouth is dry and there is just no saliva there at all. You feel hot and achy and you dream of just having a cold glass of water! This is the kind of yearning we as Christians should have for God.

The pandemic caused people to be isolated and alone; there was little community and the search for life's meaning was all over the map. People tried to escape from the boredom of being at home; many tried cooking for the first time in a while. The most popular recipe that was downloaded was for banana bread and sales of flour, sugar, and baking soda and powder grew. People were hungry for something different in their lives.

Since then, the world has opened up and instead of wondering about life, many people of all ages are seeking two things: community and meaning. They are searching for someone bigger than themselves and this is largely focused on the need to quench their thirst and be spiritually fed by God. As the salt of the earth, Jesus taught his followers to be ready to reach those who are in need. Because people who are thirsty and hungry for God also are longing to be connected. In Psalm 42, the psalmist compares his spiritual thirst to the physical thirst of the deer. One can visualize a deer searching in the bush for water. Yet often, people who seek God do not see themselves as thirsty or hungry spiritually, but merely just being.

These statements speak to those who believe in Jesus the teacher, healer, redeemer Saviour. Those whom Jesus called the salt of the earth, his committed followers in faith. As we reflect on these statements we must look to God's Spirit to lead us to do what is needed to live a full and abundant life. A life being lived according to Jesus' teachings of hope and peace. If we do this, we will have a life of joy, the negative will be taken away, and there will be a deeper yearning for God. The question to consider in all of this is whether you will choose to live the way of life that Jesus offers and whether you take on the role and the name as the salt of the earth. Maybe you are thirsting and hungry for some One bigger than yourself; someone who through the word that we call the Bible, teaches us how to live a wonderful and blessed life. A life that is filled with hope in times of despair, challenge and transition. A life of love with others who are in relationship with the Christ, and a life of peace. When we consider Jesus we must reflect upon his way of teaching—uproot us, but still ground us in faith; to challenge us yet at the same time affirm our understanding of being one with each other. This is the way of Christ. Let us remember this each time we add a little salt to whatever we are doing—whether preparing food or melting snow; whether we are cleansing our purifying our thoughts with a bath for renewal or searching and learning more about Jesus, the word made flesh. Our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

PRAYER

God of grace and hope we praise you and thank you that Jesus called and continues to call us the salt of the earth.

Help us to understand how we might live with joy. Enable us to purify and cleanse all that is negative in our hearts and to truly thirst for you.

Show us your way o God so that we may always follow it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.