

You are the Salt of the earth.....

I laughed to myself when I saw the Gospel passage for today as salt is not something I use very often...I don't usually cook with salt, very rarely put it on my food, and sometimes stare in amazement at how much salt some people put on their food and sometimes without even tasting it first!

But what does salt do?

Salt **preserves** wholesomeness and **prevents** decay. If you get salt into a wound, it hurts but it does stop the wound becoming infected. It is also something that cleans and disinfects...

Salt creates thirst, Salt acts secretly. We know that it combats decay, though we cannot see it perform its task and so the impact of salt is very real.

And Salt has many more uses, but we would be here all day if I outlined them!

In Biblical times, salt was very important. People back then did not have fridges and so salt was very important to preserve food. They preserved vegetables. They would preserve fish for the winter; by salting it and drying it out.

In Biblical times, they said that a man's life was as valuable as a bag of salt. And when they offered their cereal offerings, the Jews always put salt on the cereal offering so the cereal would not mould or rot. When they had new babies, they would wash the new babies in salt water for medicinal purposes as they believed that salt water would help preserve the baby's life.

The Jews would make a covenant with each other by using salt. Instead of there being a written contract you would take some salt from your house; I would take some salt from my house; and we would throw salt across each other's shoulder. It was called the covenant of salt. Salt was symbolic of the preservation of a contract.

As people who follow Jesus Christ we are told that

'You are the salt of the earth...

not you can be, or you will be eventually or the church you go to is but YOU are the salt of the earth

But what does that mean for us? let me give you an example..

William Wilberforce was a man who knew how to be a salt of the earth person. He took up a career in politics eventually gaining election to the House of Commons. At the age of 25 he proved his saltiness by taking an active stand against the slave trade despite repeated defeats in parliament. William Wilberforce died on 29th July, 1833. One month later, Parliament passed the Slavery Abolition Act that gave all slaves in the British Empire their freedom. His presence was the salt that did that.

As followers of Christ we need to be thinking about how we can be salt in our context? Salt sitting in a salt shaker will never do anything until it is shaken, so the question is how do we become like salt that is shaken out rather than sitting in the salt pot? As writer A T Pierson said...

'We are not responsible for conversion, but we are responsible for contact. Jesus calls us to be people who are salt at every level of society. Be careful not to lose your saltiness.'

A writer and teacher Alan Redpath who I knew used to frequently challenge us all about how we were with friends and family who did not know Christ by saying If it is possible for your closest contacts to be neutral about Christ then there is something wrong with your Christianity. Not meaning we have to force it down their throats, but by living out the Gospel.

Jesus doesn't challenge us to become salt or light. He simply says that we are – salt and light and we are either fulfilling or failing in that responsibility.

Do you have someone who wants the best for you and will tell you when you are messing up? Or do your friends go along with what you are doing because they don't want to upset you? If you have someone who is willing to rub salt into your wound and press for genuine change in your life, you are quite fortunate. A warning here though.... Too much can have a detrimental effect, so don't push too hard...

I once had the unfortunate task of having to clean a wound for my daughter for 6 very long weeks, due to the nurse being too rough... I still had to push but I knew how much my daughter could cope with. It hurt her everyday but she knew I had to do it to stop the wound closing up without healing properly. It hurt me too as being the one who was doing the hurting, but I also knew it was the right thing to do to stop her having the condition again. I have a spiritual director who does that sort of thing for me as well as having some very good friends!

Does being here and worshipping God have anything to do with how you are with people who do not know Christ? When people are in your presence do they thirst to know God more? Are you the sort of person whose salt is being shaken out of the shaker and entering the world wherever you go?

You are the salt of the earth."
You are the Light of the World...

A few years ago I was travelling up from London with a friend it was very late and dark and we had been driving for quite a while when over to the right of us there was a town situated on a hill (and don't ask me where it was) and we both immediately remembered this passage 'You are the Light of the world, a city built on a hill cannot be hidden.... And we started to have a conversation about what being a light in the world meant for each of us...

What does light do? It dispels darkness – .

Lighthouses guide ships away from the rocky places, so that accidents don't happen.

It gives hope, it causes plants to grow...

You are the Light of the World....

What do people who don't follow Christ see when they are in your company, someone who can help them see the way to go, someone who can stop them going to wrong places and doing things that are harmful to you and others? Or is your light barely flickering? Or hidden? What is the use of that?

You are the Light of the World

So let your light shine for others to see, don't hide your faith from others, don't be ashamed of following Christ.

People know I am something to do with the church and God when I wear my collar or my cathedral hoodie, but what about when I take the collar off? Are they still able to tell that I am a follower of the most amazing person ever to live? Do they know that without God I am nothing? That they are nothing?

You are the Light of the World...

In the reading from 1 Corinthians we are pointed to the God who brings new life by means of the Crucified AND Risen Messiah. This is the amazing message of the gospel: it is about God's power being shown in our weakness. If we are Salt and Light (and we are when we follow Christ), however weak we feel, God will and does work through us. It goes against everything that society teaches us though, for most in our culture today it is the brightest, the most able, the most gifted that supposedly get to the top, but God says you are nothing without me.

Throughout 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 Paul places God's wisdom and the world's wisdom in exact opposite corners. Following a crucified and Risen Messiah makes no sense in the eyes of those who don't follow Christ. Are we Salt and Light to those around us? do we show Christ to them or keep our faith hidden for ourselves?

Jesus was talking to his disciples in the Gospel reading... we also are his disciples Who are 'salt' of the earth? They are the humble, the ones who mourn, the meek, and those who thirst after doing what is right in the world. Who are 'light'? They are the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who receive abuse for standing up for what is right.

Go and be the salt AND light of the world...