

Sermon – February 9, 2020

“Ministers of Light”

Crown of Life Lutheran Church, Rigby, ID

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Grace, mercy and peace be to each of you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Welcome again all of you “ministers of light”.

Some years ago, at the conclusion of a lecture by Greek Professor, Doctor Alexander Papaderos, he was asked...

"What is the meaning of life?"

The usual laughter followed, but then Papaderos held up his hand and stilled the room, and said “I will answer the question.”

Then, he brought out of his pocket a very small round mirror, about the size of a quarter, saying ...

"When I was a small child, during World War II, I found several broken pieces of a mirror on the road where a soldier's motorcycle had been wrecked.

I tried to find all the pieces and put them together, but it was not possible, so I kept only the largest piece. This one.

And by scratching it on a stone I made it round.

I began to play with it as a toy and became fascinated by the fact that I could reflect light into dark places where the sun would never shine - in deep holes and crevices and dark closets.

It became a game for me to get light into the most inaccessible places I could find. I kept the little mirror, and as I went about my growing up, I would take it out in idle moments, and continue the challenge of the game.

But, as I became a man, I grew to understand that this was not just a child's game, but a metaphor for what I might do with my life.

I came to understand that I am not THE light, or THE SOURCE of light.

But light, meaning truth, understanding, and knowledge, is there, and it will only shine in dark places ... if I reflect it.

What a great metaphor. We are like fragments of a mirror, who are able to reflect light into the black places in the hearts of men ... and possibly change some things in some people.

(let us pray)

"O Lord, speak in this place, in our minds, in our hearts, by the words of my mouth, and in

the thoughts we form. Speak, O Lord, we, your servants, are listening. Amen."

In our Gospel Lesson, Jesus called his followers then, as well as us today, to the highest standards of conduct.

And once again He uses a common element - in this case salt to teach us a major truth about life as a follower of His.

Have you ever thought about how really important salt is to us? We use 40 million tons each year in the US.

Homer once called it divine. Plato called it a "substance dear to the gods." Shakespeare mentioned salt 17 times in his plays.

When Leonard da Vinci painted "The last Supper, " he placed an overturned salt cellar conspicuously before Judas.

In ancient Greece, a far-flung trade involving the exchange of salt for slaves gave rise to the expression, "...not worth his salt."

Thousands of Napoleon's troops died during his retreat from Moscow because their wounds would not heal ... because their bodies lacked salt.

The human body contains about 4 ounces of salt. Without enough of it, muscles won't contract, blood won't circulate, food won't digest and the heart won't beat a beat. Without a doubt, salt is an essence of life.

Let's listen again to what Jesus says to us this morning about salt in our Gospel Lesson ...

"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." Matthew 5:13

Sodium Chloride, the table salt like the Morton's that you purchase at a store, is pure. But the Morton Salt Co. did not exist back in the first century. When they mined salt from a quarry, or from a pit, it was never completely pure.

Occasionally the salt they gathered was so impure, that it did not taste salty at all. When that happened, they would throw it out the door to harden the pathway that led to their home ... just as Jesus said, "It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."

If we, as followers of Christ, are going to impact the world, we have to be usable salt. We are all called to be uncompromised, pure, and authentic salt.

When Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth", He is not saying you SHOULD BE the salt of the earth, OR, you COULD BE the salt of the earth.

He is merely stating an irrefutable fact ... once you accept Jesus as your Lord and Savior ... once you accept the fact that Jesus sacrificed Himself on the cross as payment for your sins ... you became the salt of the earth ... you are now the salt of the earth.

The word “you” used here in the Greek is PLURAL, so in this context, you as believers are all salt. It is not an option. The only choice is what kind of salt will you be?

For example, salt can become useless. It is common in Syria and Palestine to see salt scattered in piles on the ground because it has lost its flavor.

As the salt of the earth, you and I are called to Be Authentic.

So, how authentic is your walk in this world as you live and serve in God’s Kingdom?

Our Lord states a fact, which I believe is perfectly clear. You, as believers, are THE salt of the earth. There is no other source of salt. Believers, like You and I, are it. There is no second line of defense.

Do the people that God places in your life recognize that there is a difference in the way you act and in the way you live? Don’t you think they should be able to see the difference?

You are the salt of the earth. It is a promise.

You are the light of the world. It is a promise.

Jesus says, “Do not hide your light under a bowl?”  
Do not let your salt lose its taste.

It is sad to say, but you and I may be the only Bible that some of our neighbors will ever see. We are each called to be authentic in our walk ... to let the salt work .... to let our light shine.

And I think a real key here is to be authentic. We should not try to appear to be perfect people, when we know fully well that we are anything but perfect.

We just need to recognize those times that we may fall into the trap of wearing a mask ... that is where we act and think we are better than we are.

In Ancient Greece, they had great theatrical events and plays, which were presented in large amphitheatres. They did not have microphones to make their voices heard, and they did not have cameras to magnify their images, so they had to get creative.

So, they developed large masks. These masks were made to look like the characters they portrayed. Then, built into the masks were megaphones that could somewhat amplify their voices.

Obviously, the actors on stage got behind their masks, and they became somebody else ... someone different than they really were. The Greeks called these types of actors “The Hypocrites.”

I wonder if everyone of us at times have worn a mask similar to these ancient Greek masks?

And I wonder if some of us wear the mask so often that we have forgotten who we really

are?

I suspect that all of us have worn the mask of the "The Hypocrites" at some point in our lives.

Yet, we should remember that our Lord warns us of the consequences of staying behind that mask of the hypocrite.

This is what Jesus says in Matthew 23...

"Woe to ... you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean."  
Mathew. 23:27

God wants to change us, but not superficially. We need a heart transplant. We need to be transformed from within so that we no longer desire to put on the mask.

In fact God calls us to be transformed ... to be conformed to the image of His Son.

God calls us to be the good news ... to be authentic light ... to be authentic salt.

A Peanuts cartoon, showed Peppermint Patty talking to Charlie Brown.

She said, "Guess what, Chuck? The first day of school, and I got sent to the principal's office. And it was your fault."

He said, "My fault? How could it be my fault? Why do you always say everything is my fault?"

She said, "You're my friend, aren't you, Chuck? You should have been a better influence on me."

While Peppermint Patty was seeking to pass the buck, she was in a very real sense right. We should be a better influence ... a more positive influence on our friends.

We are always some type of influence to those around us.

You, as followers of the crucified and risen Christ, are the Salt of the Earth.

So, what are you doing as the salt of the earth to reflect the light of Christ in a more positive way to those around you?

Salt is a seasoning, a preservative, but unless it is BROUGHT INTO CONTACT with another OBJECT, salt's influence is completely wasted!

Salt becomes invisible to have a visible effect.

Salt by itself is nothing more than little fine particles, and in that state, it is worthless. BUT when it is rubbed into meat, or added to food, it becomes INVISIBLE, THEN, it becomes what it was intended for ... INFLUENCING something else.

Are you having a similar effect on the world. Are you influencing the flavor of those that God has put into your life?

Salt that sits in the shaker is of no use. It is much like those, who become complacent; who no longer share grace; who refuse to take a moral stand; or who refuse to share their faith.

They are doing nothing but sitting in a salt shaker, influencing nothing or no one!

It is time to be authentic. It is time to step out from behind your mask. It is time to give up forever playing the role of ... the hypocrite.

Take your salt off the shelf, and start bringing flavor to the people that are in your life. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Today is the day to dedicate (or rededicate) your life to the Lordship of Christ.

Today is the day. You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world.

I pray to God ... that from this day forward ... you will act like it. Amen!