

## **It's Who You Are** **Matthew 5:13-16 (17-20)**

When was the last time you had a chance to meet someone new? I imagine if you are a long-time resident of Northfield, not very often. But for me, even after being here a few years, it seems I am always being introduced to someone. We all know how those conversations go. What's your name, where do you live, and most often - what's your job? And once you are past that then you ask - are you married, do you have kids, what's your cultural background, what are your hobbies and your passions. People want to know who you are. We would never ask someone to name their inner nature, or their core character. It's just too difficult and too personal to do.

So, it may shake us up to see Jesus boldly name his disciples' identity for them. After proclaiming those who are blessed in the realm of God, he turns to these very same people and says, 'You, you are... you are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world.' Did you catch it? Jesus is not talking now about who we are in God (as vital, necessary and strengthening as it is), rather he is talking about who we are in the world and who we are for the world. We are salt and light. Not that we become salt and light, we are already salt and light. God has made you that, period. Why? How? He doesn't say, but I suspect it is because we are already blessed; as God said to Abraham, 'I will bless you...so that you will be a blessing.' (Gen 12:2)

So, what did Jesus mean by identifying us as salt and light? Well, we know their character. Salt enhances the food we eat; it gives it pizzazz. It also preserves things giving many products a long shelf life. But those are just two of the multiple characteristics of salt. Its uses are extensive, well beyond food. It is a de-icer, cleanser, and sealant. It is one of the world's major resources in the production of everything from pottery and paper to cloth and fuels. We too know the character of light. It brings visibility to dark places, reveals what is, extends knowledge, creates energy, lifts moods, brings life to plants, warms, dries, sanitizes, brightens and cleanses.

All those are true. All those are good. And they are all a benefit to the world. That is what Jesus is driving home. We are for the world; we are God's salt, God's light, to benefit all God's creation. And that seems like a very tall order. But remember, Jesus did not say, 'you are the sun'; rather he said 'you are more akin to a lamp. You are not 'the great salt flats'; no, you are just a few grains – but you do have a purpose. And if you don't use it, you may very well lose it – like tasteless salt or a

hidden lamp. That is not what they were designed for, that is not what you are designed for. You are designed to be the God-flavor, God-color of the world. So shine that light, let it glow; get out of that salt-shaker and mix it up with the turkeys and mashed taters. It will do you all good, which is the intention all along.

So, what does that really mean for little ol' me and little ol' you? What does it mean for us, for this little ol' community church? Well, first, I think, it means to encourage us because there are days when I feel flat and bland, dull and very, very dim. How about you? And Jesus would say – don't but into that. You, You Are... regardless. So, sprinkle your gifts, yourself, around; just a dash can make a world of difference. A little candlelight can illuminate a room, or set the mood. Use what you have, be who you are, let the 'good works' you do be 'out there' so that others can recognize God's presence and goodness, and maybe even rejoice.

That, my friends, is the good news. The gospel in work clothes. And as a church we are, and are striving, to be God's salt and light right here in our town. We are salt at Pam's Table, and the community meals, the food pantry and 'Loaves and Fishes'. We are light to the people at Dial Self, in our support of Afghan and Ukraine refugee relief, and One Great Hour of Sharing. We may even be a bit of shelter for the 350<sup>th</sup>. All this and more are the ways in which God's rich colors shine through us, and God's zest seasons and preserves our world.

So let us continue to shake it up and to shine, to stir up all we are and all we can be – for the glory of God. After all, its who we are.

Amen.