

Flavoring the World, Dispersing Darkness – A Sermon on Matthew 5:13-20, Epiphany 5A

What are you **doing** with your life? It is a question I think we all ask ourselves at various points in our life. It is the question behind children's dreams and stories about what they will do and be when they get big. Young people wrestle with this question as they plan their future, choose schools, pick careers, make a new home for themselves. Those of us who are older sometimes look back on the past and wonder what we have done with our life. The difficulties, challenges, and losses of life often bring us face to face with this question. It is really a question about meaning, significance, purpose. In that question, God is drawing us to himself. It is a question with which we will always struggle until we begin to seek meaning, significance, and purpose - on God's terms - and for the love of others; until we help others Experience Christ.

It is the question behind today's gospel. Jesus is continuing the Sermon on the Mount. He is speaking to those he has just declared to be blessed; the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. To **live** the beatitudes is our way forward in this life and it is also our blessing.

You blessed ones, Jesus says, are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Our blessedness, however, is not for ourselves alone. It is a gift given us to be held and used for the life of the world. The Christian life is not lived in isolation from or without regard to others. If we do not flavor this world with Christ, we are like salt that has lost its saltiness. If we do not illuminate darkness with Christ's presence, we are like light hidden under a basket. We are useless. We are not living as the people Christ knows us to be and we have rejected our blessedness.

Some of us will hear Jesus' words and think that we need to become something we are not or that we need to get something we do not yet have. That is not, however, what Jesus says. He does not say we should become salt. He says we already are salt. He does not say we are to become light. He says we already are light. We already are what we need to be. We already have all that we need. Now we must go **live the life** of ones who have been blessed, the life of salt and light.

This is really the call to make our inner life and our outer life congruent. Our actions and our beliefs must reflect and reveal each other. Our faith in Jesus, our life of prayer, our blessedness must be made visible by how we live, speak, and act. They must become the foundation for our relationships with all people; family, friends, strangers, and enemies, a family in crisis. It is one thing to **believe** in Christ. It is another to **live** a public life that demonstrates that belief – to put Faith into Action!

We can say our prayers and sing our praises to God but if they do not govern and guide our actions in this world, they are only self-serving words that fall deaf on God’s ears. Perhaps we should spend less time speaking the truth about God and more time doing the truth of God. What is that truth? How do we **do** that truth?

The prophet Isaiah is clear and concrete about how we **do** God’s truth. We loose the bonds of injustice, we undo the thongs of the yoke, we let the oppressed go free. It means we share our bread with the hungry, we bring the homeless poor into our house, and we do not hide ourselves from each other, we surround those in crisis with love and compassion. It means we don’t point at another in condemnation, and we don’t speak evil of another. We satisfy the needs of the afflicted and struggling. In short, **doing** God’s truth means doing what is right, what is Godly. We live with and care for each other in such a way that our blessedness makes a difference in the lives of others.

When this is how we live our light breaks forth like the dawning of a new day and the darkness is dispersed. That light is the presence and love of Christ. As we live for others we discover that our soul is healed, our needs are satisfied, our life is rebuilt, and God is ever present saying, “Here I am.”

The meaning, significance, and purpose of our life are found in the life and well-being of another – or a family in crisis. That is what faith-filled Christians working with “Safe Families for Children” have discovered. Keeping families together by short-term fostering with volunteer host families. Being the Circle of Support, wrapping around those families with compassion and warmth as loving Christians can do. It is a picture of salt and light.

The meaning, significance, and purpose of our life are found in the life and well-being of another. That is what the many volunteers at “Feed My Starving Children” have experienced as they collect, pack, and provide nutritious food for the hungry poor of this broken world. They are not, however, just distributing food. They are distributing salt and light.

The meaning, significance, and purpose of our life are found in the life and well-being of another.... A family in crisis, or those who are in need of food or shelter. I firmly believe that you have been graced with your own ideas of how you can help others experience Christ. Every time we offer forgiveness, seek reconciliation, or act with compassion we sprinkle salt. Every time we speak a word of hope, work for justice, or do for another what we would have them do of us our light pushes back the darkness.

Much of our world is dark and tasteless. Too many people live a bland existence amongst the shadows. The world and its people need flavor. They need light. They need you and me to make a difference. How are we being salt, flavoring the life of another? Where is our light dispersing darkness? Ask yourself, “How can I help others Experience Christ?” ... And then listen – how is God’s spirit moving you today?

We preach Christ Crucified, Risen, Ascended – for YOU! Your sins are forgiven. Your promise is a New Life. He reigns over all creation! Why would you be afraid to share that good news?!

In our Epistle Lesson today we hear Paul tell the Corinthians (and us),

“^{4b}... in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God...

“¹²Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.”

So – what are you waiting for? What are you DOING with your life? Don’t just talk ABOUT it... DO something! Put your Faith into Action.

Reflect Christ - LIVE as Salt and Light... Start today!

In Jesus’ Name. AMEN.