

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. Don't these words of Jesus sound wonderful? You are salt. You are light. What does it mean to be salt and light in this world? (*ask for responses. Answers I am looking for - share the Good News of Jesus Christ, help others, walk with others through hard times, stand up for those in need.*)

And so here we are – salt of the earth and light of the world. One of the aspects of these words that several of the commentaries I read pointed out is that the verb is in the present tense. You are salt. You are light. You are those things right now. Wait? What? Right now? Ah no. I need to read the bible more. I need to pray more. I need to get right with the Lord.

Sorry. You are salt and light right now. And in case you don't think Jesus is speaking to you, let's check out who Jesus was speaking to in his sermon on the Mount which began with the beatitude. You remember the beatitudes - Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are those who are reviled. Blessed are those broken people in the world including that crowd gathered on that hillside to hear Jesus and we who are gathered here this morning who heard Jesus' words in the gospel.

Debie Thomas¹ from Journey with Jesus has a great take on what it means to be salt in this world. She writes, "For better or for worse, we are the salt of the earth, and what we do with our saltiness matters. It matters *a lot*. Whether we want to or not, whether we notice or not, whether we're intentional about it or not, we spiritually impact the world we live in." Think about it. We can embitter or enhance. Too much salt embitters a meal. But just enough can make the meal amazing. It is the same with light. Too much light can blind others. Just the right amount of light can lead others out of darkness.

But there is a third option. Notice that Jesus doesn't just say you are salt and light. Both come with caveats. If salt loses its saltiness, it is thrown out and trampled underfoot. A city on a hill cannot be hid and no one puts a lamp under a basket. The third option is lose our saltiness or keep it to ourselves and hide our light. This is exactly what Jesus tells us not to do.

I get the temptation to want to hide your light. If you have ever over salted a meal making it inedible or shone a light in the wrong place as I did when I was running the spotlight for a performance and let the shutter go when the stage was supposed to be dark, you'll know the risk of using salt or shining light. You may be tempted to use your saltiness and your light very sparingly. After all, how many of us have been accosted by people determined that they were going to show us God's love with extreme saltiness and blinding light.

¹ <https://www.journeywithjesus.net/essays/2515-salty>

But going back to what Debie Thomas said – that we spiritually impact the world with everything we do. What kind of impact are we going to make? Are we going to enhance and brighten? Or are we going to be cautious and deprive the world of our saltiness and light.

I believe Jesus continues to address this cautiousness when he goes on to say that he has not come to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them and that to enter the kingdom of heaven one must be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees. A challenging ask, because the scribes and the Pharisees were all about keeping the law. It seems a bit disconnected, but if we remember the time Jesus was in, we can get some insight.

At that time, the Jews were under Roman occupation which made life very difficult for them. There were various responses. There were the zealots who wanted to kill the Romans and then there were the scribes and Pharisees who kept their heads down and focused so much on following the law and being in prayer that they missed out on the what Jesus was calling them to do which to see the people and help the people and speak up for the people. The law was not to be abolished. Jesus needed them to obey the law and do more than the law asked.

Most of us here are not the zealots when it comes to our salt and light. However, I wonder if at times, we too end up in the same place as the scribes and Pharisees. I get it. This world is so broken and insane, that it is oh so tempting to keep our heads down, say our prayers, go to church and that's it. To do more would be to just get into trouble especially with those who won't listen to us anyway.

Life is hard enough so we keep the wonderful saltiness that God has given us to ourselves and we are really careful with how we let our light shine. Episcopalians are especially good at this and I am guilty of it myself. Remember the story I told about being in the car with the Uber driver asking about what conference I had just returned from and my hesitation about saying the Rooted in Jesus conference. My response was like one of those small give away flashlights you get at conferences instead of a nice bright hefty flashlight.

How can we be salt and light? First of all, remember that you already are salt and light. You live in this world and you have a spiritual impact each and every day, wherever you go. Remember that and remember what Jesus is asking from us.

Second. Practice. How many people use salt when you cook? How did you learn to use salt? How did you learn to use light when you take pictures? Yep – practice. Next time you are in conversation with a friend who you think could use some spiritual help, share one of your experiences about how Jesus has helped you or describe how your prayer life get you through the day. Don't have any spiritual experiences? Well, I would beg to differ if you have been hanging around this place, but if you think not, start to nurture some. Show up at food pantry. Come to bible study or the Lenten class. Take home one of the devotional books in the vestibule. Pray.

Go forth and be the salt and light that you are. Sprinkle that salt at the grocery store, at work, and at the gym. Shine your light as you walk down the street, as you sit next to a friend in pain or as you see a situation which needs some help. This world needs all of us to season up and brighten up all the places we go.