

# "Salt & Light"

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**Trinitarian Congregational Church**

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**Matthew 5:13-16**

As you well know Jesus taught in the days long before pod casts, live video streams and YouTube. Therefore he had to utilize some techniques to help people remember his teachings and share them with others. One method was telling stories, what we call his parables - earthly stories with heavenly truths. His other method for being remembered was picturesque speech. And he used everyday things to express eternal truths. Things like mustard seeds, the lilies of the field, the birds of the air, sheep & shepherds, a lost coin, a buried treasure. The images found in this passage could not have been more common or familiar for his listeners. Let's take a look.

## **Matthew 5:13-16**

*"You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."*

We're striving to BE the church today, so let's spend a few minutes thinking about what church is all about according to our Savior. Jesus said we're to be Salt & Light.

## **I. First Salt - *"You are the salt of the earth."***

It's an expression that's still in use today. "That guy is 'the salt of the earth. Salt of the earth, right there." It means someone who stands out for one's goodness and kindness. They'd do anything for you. Someone

who by their very nature makes the world a better place to be. That's the calling of the church as well.

**A. We're called to be unique** - to stand out for what is good and right and true by how we live our lives. Salt stands out from whatever it's placed on. That's one of the basic qualities of salt - it's different from whatever you put it on. You add salt to your popcorn and it stands out. You add butter and salt to your Barkers corn-on-the-cob and you're ready to go. Salt stands out. It's different. It's unique.

I think I told you about a high school friend of mine named Denny. He was one of the coolest kids in the school. He had long dark hair and looked like David Cassidy, which was a plus for him in the 1970s. Denny became a committed Christian after high school. Went to church every Sunday. Active in the church. But he was still one of the guys at work, still had some of his old habits. One day someone said to Denny, "You're a cool Christian, Denny. Not like other church-goers who get so uptight. You're just like one of us."

It hit Denny right between the eyes. For they weren't talking about him being down to earth and approachable. They were talking about ways in which he was compromising his faith and not living what he believed. He realized his calling was not to be like everyone else. He was called to be different - like salt is different the meat and the corn it's put on. A year later Denny was a missionary in Cairo Egypt serving the poorest of the poor. Which leads us to the next point about salt.

**B. Salt is a preservative**, especially in ancient times. They covered meat in salt so it wouldn't go bad. Salt preserves and protects things. And so must the church. This is why Churches have started countless hospitals, nursing homes, orphanages, homeless shelters, food pantries, soup kitchens, thrift shops, hunger walks, civil rights marches, you name it. It's all about preserving, protecting and promoting life. That's what salt does.

**C. One other obvious thing about salt- it adds flavor.** That's why we put it on popcorn, corn on the cob french fries and potatoes. It makes it taste better. Christians ought to add flavor to life. Christians ought to add some excitement to life. Christ-followers should have a zest for life, an enthusiasm and joy that are contagious! That isn't exactly our reputation.

Robert Lewis Stevenson once wrote something in his diary about going to church. He records it as if something extraordinary had happened: *"I have been to church today and am not depressed."*

Oliver Wendell Holmes once said, *"I might have entered the ministry if certain clergymen I knew had not looked and acted so much like undertakers."* The funny thing is most funeral directors I know are delightful people and have wonderful sense of humors. But the point is modern Christianity often needs to put on a happier face. "We got the joy, joy, joy, joy, down in our hearts," as the Sunday school song says. We talk about "the joy of the Christian" as being a "deep, deep joy," The only problem is sometimes it's so far down it seldom makes an appearance.

When I think back to the church I started attending in high school, one of the things that kept me going back was the fact that Christianity looked appealing, exciting and fun. It seemed like a great adventure. We need to recapture that. That's part of being the salt of the earth.

Let's spend just a few moments with the other image -

## **II. Light - *"You are the light of the world."***

A couple of quick points about this.

**A. First it's quite a high calling, because it means we're called to be what Jesus Christ is** - John 9:5 *"I am the Light of the World."* What he is - we're called to be. Martin Luther said we're called to be *"Little Christ's"* to the world. Now of course it's not our light that we shine, but rather the light of God within us. It's like the Candlelighting Ceremony on Christmas Eve. We all receive our light from the Christ Candle. Christ lights our lives and we share that Light with one another and the world.

### **B. Another thing about light is light is meant to be seen.**

Jesus said, *"You don't light a lamp and then set it under a basket. No you put it on a lampstand for all to see. In the same way let your light so shine."* I hope some day we can get church t-shirts that we can all wear on days like this, so our community can see that we care, that we're about being a blessing within our community. *"Let your light so shine so that others can see your good works."* It's not showing off. It's simply showing that our faith is not all words and no action.

### **C. One other function for light is for guidance in the dark.**

We're called to be Guiding Lights to one another and to the world.

I saw a horrible sight yesterday. A person had set up a table/booth on Main St. down near the center of town. On three sides of the table posters of President Obama were attached. But on the face of the President was drawn a Hitler mustache. I literally felt sick to my stomach. How disrespectful to the Office of President of the United States. How disrespectful to the United States of America. How insensitive to the 6 mil. Jews killed by Hitler and the over 2 mil. Christians killed by Hitler. Our political discourse must be better than that. There's enough darkness in the world, let's be about spreading the light. Let's be an example to one another and to the world of how to handle our differences, how to respectfully disagree. Let's spread civility. Let's spread light.

Author Rita Snowden writes of her visit to a small town near Dover, England. She was having afternoon tea when she noticed a beautiful smell in the air. She asked the waiter where it was coming from. He explained to her that just down the street was a perfume factory. And every afternoon when the workers left the factory they carried with them the fragrances that had permeated their clothes throughout the day. Snowden remarked how that's a beautiful image of the church. We come here each Sunday to experience the beautiful fragrance of the presence and love of God. As we leave here and go out into the world, may the fragrance of God's love permeate us so that those we meet might experience something of God's fragrance on us.

Amen.