

## You are the Salt of the Earth

Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time – February 5, 2017 – Matthew 5: 13-16

At the time of Jesus, as it is now, salt was an important commodity. It was extracted out of the earth and used to enhance the flavor of food. It was also used as a way to preserve both meat and fish. People bartered and traded for salt. It was used as currency as its value in sustaining life was priceless.

So when Jesus says, “**You are the salt of the earth.**” Is he saying that we, as his disciples, flavor the very essence of his mission, we are important in the preservation and enhancement of the gospel?

Jesus does say that “...if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything, but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.” So the value of our work to the gospel must not be taken lightly. It must have an impact. We are called to bring to the world a new and irresistible flavor for what is right and what is just!

Jesus goes on to say, “**You are the light of the world. A city set on a mountain cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and then put it under a bushel basket; it is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house.**”

This image only makes sense if we consider the nature of light in the ancient world. When the sun went down at the time of Jesus, it was dark, completely dark. The only light might have been a small oil lamp or a fire in the middle of the camp. There was a necessary dependence on the community, and ultimately on God, to keep one safe from wild animals and other hazards. The eventual coming of dawn was a time of joy and release from the dangers of the night. Likewise, to have traveled into the night in the dark and then see the illumination from a distant city would have given the traveler hope that the arrival at the destination was possible.

Scripture scholars will indicate that throughout the scriptures light is associated with God, with good and with what is right and just. Might Jesus be saying to the disciples (and to us) that the work of the gospel requires us to illuminate the world with actions of justice, mercy and love? Are we not to be the very thing that brings the same hope and calm to difficult situations through our witness and testimony to the mission of Christ?

On this fifth week of Ordinary Time, our challenge is to bring flavor and light to a tasteless and sometimes dark world where despair and sin still reside. In living the gospel, in bringing forth the gospel message of justice and mercy we become the salt and the light in our own time and place.

Blessings!

  
Sue Schettler