

10.30am - Sunday February 9, 2020
Salt and Light – Making a Difference

This week, like with Reverend Terry last Sunday, we continue our exploration of what faith looks like and how we are called to be the person God created us to be.

Matthew 5 to 7 is known as the sermon on the mount. Jesus teaches that those who claim to belong to God's kingdom have a responsibility to function as salt and light to the world. Jesus explains that a disciple who does not live this lifestyle of the kingdom is worth about as much as tasteless salt or invisible light – can you even imagine anything like that?

Jesus wants his followers to be of good character. The images of salt and light evoke less of what we do than who we are. Salt is salt not only because of what it does but because of what it is. Can you imagine salt that has no taste? It will no longer be salt – I have no idea what it will be called but it definitely cannot be called salt. Salt can do what it does – make a difference flavouring and preserving food only because of its character of saltiness. Salt cannot stop being salt! If it were to do so it will no longer be of any value. If you open your salt shaker only to find the content tasteless – what do you do? You empty the shaker into the bin.

Imagine some miners trapped underground by a roof collapse. A narrow shaft is opened to the tunnel where they are trapped and a paper is lowered with a message, "What do you need most?" The paper returned with the message, "Send us a lamp, it's dark down here!" So a thin torch was lowered switched on. The first miner grabs it and shoves it in his pocket. His mates shout angrily, "What are you doing hiding the light in your pocket? Shine it around!" The selfish one replies, "No, I won't. It's my light. I was chosen to receive it and I'm not sharing it with anybody." I think we can all understand if his colleagues fly at him and snatch the torch from his pocket and shine around so that everyone can benefit.

I just asked you to imagine an impossible situation. But so did Jesus when he preached the sermon on the mount. Just imagine, Jesus said, a man lights an oil lamp and puts it on the floor of his dark home. Then he takes a basket and covers the lamp with it. What an absurd thing to do! His family and friends would start a riot to force him to share the light with everyone.

Just like the salt, light is light because of its character. It is by being light that it can do what it does – give light, vision and clarity. A disciple or follower of Christ should be as obvious as a city set on a hill and be no less visible than a well-lit city at night. If we live for Christ, we will glow like lights showing others what Christ is like.

But how do we keep our lights hidden? We hide our lights

1. When we are quiet at a time we should speak up
2. At those times when we find it easier to go along with the crowd
3. When we live in such a way that we deny the light of Christ
4. During periods when we let sin dim our light
5. At those times when we ignore the needs of others

So, how can we let our light shine?

Salt does not have to try hard to be salt, it is naturally salty. Light doesn't need to work hard to be light – it is what it is. These two illustrations encourage us to simply be who we are. And who are we? We are followers of Christ, we must live by the principles and values of God's kingdom and these values must be seen in our characters and in our actions. When we prioritise doing good, then we are being salt and light in the community and this will make a great difference, probably more than we will ever know or imagine.

As most of you know, I have been away in Nigeria setting up a foundation for training and developing teachers. Did I have clue the foundation will have the impact it has grown to have? No. It

started like something good to take my mind off my own problems, but it has grown to touch so many lives and has made such a massive difference to the lives of many school children who have no idea of who I am.

Just to give you an idea of the work I do for the foundation. For the past 3 years, over 6,000 Nigerian teachers receive a monthly newsletter through which I share inspirational messages, resources and best practices for teaching and learning to use in their classrooms. Think of the ripple effect of the learning passed down through those teachers to their students! Think that each teacher has about 30 students and each teacher spends an average of 25 years in teaching! And I am just being myself not doing anything hard or challenging.

My January newsletter message included this video of a 4 year-old which I'd like to share the video with you in the hope that it will show you what we all need to do to be salt and light in our community and how to do it.

As disciples of Christ, we must recognise that what we do impacts others and make every effort to see that our impact makes positive differences to peoples' lives. One big decision is not going to do it. We must recognise that change comes in many little moments.

Every moment we choose to forgive, every moment we choose faith instead of doubt or fear, the moments when we choose to be grateful and thankful, every moment we choose to do what is right instead of what is easy, moments when we choose love instead of hate, each time we put others first, those are the moments we make a difference. Whenever we choose to do good we are letting our light shine and we are being salt flavouring the lives of others.

Let us take a moment to ask God for opportunity to be salt and light to the world.