

The Rev. Jason Churchill
Sunday, February 5, 2017

Salt of the Earth

You are the salt of the earth.

Salty.

Why salt, why are you the salt of the earth?

Perhaps some history about salt might help..

Salary, your paycheck...that word was derived from the word salt. In ancient Rome and across the ancient world, salt production was controlled. Salt was very expensive and used as a means of currency and paying one's wages. Their salary.

Salad, another word from salt and Rome. Romans used to salt their leafy greens when they ate them. Their salad.

Salt preserves food. It seasons food, bringing out the flavor that already is there. Humans, like most life on earth, depend on salt.

Sodium Chloride, NaCl, sodium...salt.

Cities were built around salt and nations went to war over it.

And here we are, intently listening to the second installment of the sermon on the mount and Jesus tells his disciples and us - you are the salt of the earth.

Is Jesus telling us that we are the preservers of the earth, like salt preserving meat for the long winter ahead? Are we, the people of faith, like that salt? Do we preserve our faith in such a way that we continue to pour out the divine love of Christ and teach generation after generation about the Gospel - during the long winter, this long wait for the second coming of Christ and for the kingdom of God to be firmly established here on earth?

Perhaps, so go on and keep teaching, because if you don't far too many will be without the preservation of the Gospel.

Or could Jesus be telling us that we are the seasoning of the Gospel? The Gospel was there all the time, it was there in the beginning with God when God created the heavens and the earth. The words of the prophets were spread among centuries of teaching and speaking, or warning and predicting...yet the Word of God was still lost to us until Christ came and taught us. Are we the enhancers of the Gospel that was there from the start just like the flavor in the meat was already there, it just took some salt to draw it out and make it more flavorful?

Perhaps, so go and be the salt of the faith and enhance what has always been the truth of God - to do justice, to love mercy, to walk humbly.

Shout out and don't hold back Isaiah tells us.

For it is in the truth of the Lord that we become the salt of the earth...and it's not in our own way of seeing things, it is all in the way in which God has always been.

Some truth telling...

Since the Women's march on the 21st, my head has been spinning. I have a deep passion for politics, ask anyone that has known me and they will tell you. I also have deep passion for theology, and when the two truths in my life collide, sometimes I spend a lot of time in my head sorting or at my desk writing.

But what has gotten me is this new phrase or concept that was recently introduced... 'alternative facts.'

Alternative facts - like there could actually be something other than fact or fiction.

So I read articles in the Post, in Forbes, articles from psychologists and philosophers...and of course theologians.

And the irony struck me yesterday. While I was visiting with Lydia it hit me that Jesus also says something further about salt.

But if the salt loses its flavor, it is no longer good for use.

Salt is one of the most stable elements where the sodium and chlorine atoms share an electron and really have no desire to lose their bond together. Perhaps this is why we sometimes hear this reading at weddings - in fact at Craig and my wedding over three years ago, we used this Gospel reading. The preacher said that relationships with couples entering into holy matrimony are much like the bond that Sodium and Chlorine make - nearly unbreakable when it is a bond that is right.

Much like the way Christ and the church are bonded together.

Much like the truth of the Gospel is bonded to the way in which we are to live and act and have our being.

But in the chemical world of salt, it means salt really will not lose its flavor unless a serious chemical reaction or dilution happens.

And that's when it hit me.

Alternative facts are simply a breakdown or dilution of reality.

Friends, we do not have that sort of faith, we are not sodium free Christians, we are salty Christians where facts and truth are one in the same...

Again, as Isaiah says

Is not this what God chooses:

to loose the bonds of injustice,
to undo the thongs of the yoke,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
and bring the homeless poor into your house;
when you see the naked, to cover them,
and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

We are not a sodium free faith, we are not an alternative fact to God, we are the faith that Christ has called to season the world, to preserve the Gospel...

Christ continues on and tells us that your light should shine - it shall be a beacon.

Your light shall break forth like the dawn, your vindicator shall go before you, the Lord shall answer your cry - your light shall shine in the darkness.

Then and only then can we ever be a city upon a hill, the light of the world is not a nation or a person, but a faith...a faith where I can give thanks to God during times like this, during Black History month, when we remember the prophetic words spoken by people like Dr. King - who clearly understood what it means when your light can shine so bright...

When you have salted the earth with the Gospel truth then we understand his words..."darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."

This is what Christ is teaching us, this is why we can stand up and be the light this world needs in such a dark time. For our facts, our truth teaches us that we are nothing unless we are the salt of the earth - unless we are the welcomers of the poor, where we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger in our land, and shout out like the Psalmist, Hallelujah, happy are those that have great delight in God's commandments.