

'A BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY OF CHRISTIANS AS SALT & LIGHT'
5th Sunday Ordinary Time Year A ~ 9th February 2020



MATTHEW'S GOSPEL & OUR CALL TO BE SALT & LIGHT

Today's Gospel from Matthew highlights our calling to be **Salt and Light**.
With such a hard time of drought and bushfires
and deep concerns about climate change for so many,
let us turn back to the prophet Isaiah in the Old Testament for inspiration.

Today's first reading is from Isaiah 58:7-10.

It is chosen to link with the symbol of Light in the Gospel passage.

Let us expand the Reading by adding verse 6 and verse 11 from the Bible.

ISAIAH 58:6-11

This inspiring passage from the Word of God

- Begins with overcoming injustice and setting the oppressed free.
- Calls us to acts of charity to our neighbour
- Making such a difference that your light is breaks forth like the dawn
- Knowing that God goes before us, leading the way
- Knowing that God protects us as our rearguard
- We need to call, to cry out to God in prayer
- God will uplift us, freeing us from the paralysis of fear,
- Freeing us from blame (finger-pointing), and evil intentions,
so that we bring light to the darkness
- Being charitable to our neighbour,
so that we bring light to the darkness.
- Open to journeying with God, who will guide us continually
- We all have needs – the earth, humanity, ourselves.
- As we work with God, God will reach out to the parched areas of our lives
to satisfy our basic needs.
- We will become a healthy garden with God watering us.
- God is the eternal spring in our lives and community.

*"Is not this the fast that I choose:
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?*

*Then your light shall break forth like the dawn,
and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you,
the glory of the Lord shall be your rearguard.*

*Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
you shall cry for help, and he will say, Here I am.
If you remove the yoke from among you,
the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,*

*if you offer your food to the hungry
and satisfy the needs of the afflicted,
then your light shall rise in the darkness
and your gloom be like the noonday.*

*The Lord will guide you continually,
and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and make your bones strong; and you shall be like a watered garden,
like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.”*

The Psalm explains that **the light is for the upright.**

The light of an upright person entails:

- They are gracious, merciful, and righteous
- They conduct their affairs with justice.
- They will never be moved and will be remembered for ever.
- They are not afraid of evil tidings;
- Their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.
- Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
- They will endure and overcome evil foes
- They distribute freely, they give to the poor;
- their righteousness endures forever

PSALM 111 (112) verses 4-9

*“They rise in the darkness as a light for the upright;
they are gracious, merciful, and righteous.
It is well with those who deal generously and lend,
who conduct their affairs with justice.
For the righteous will never be moved;
they will be remembered for ever.
They are not afraid of evil tidings;*

*their hearts are firm, secure in the Lord.
Their hearts are steady, they will not be afraid;
in the end they will look in triumph on their foes.
They have distributed freely, they have given to the poor;
their righteousness endures forever; their horn is exalted in honour.”*

MATTHEW 5:13-16

Jesus calls us to be salt of the earth and light for our world.
We can agree with the statement,
but do we appreciate the rich tradition and deep meaning behind it?

Matthew’s Gospel 5:13

***“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 underfoot.”***

Matthew 5:14-16

***“You are the light of the world.
A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.
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.”***

It is worth the time to dive down into the depths of the Bible in its use of these images.
Images so powerful, that Jesus chose them to explain –

- our purpose in life
- our meaning in life
- our mission in life

Let us to sit with Readings and pray with them.

SALT OF THE EARTH

There are many types of salt today in our multicultural cuisine.
But if it loses its taste?

Mark’s Gospel 9:50 gives more detail about how it applies to us

***“Salt is good; but if salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?
Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”***

Today in Matthew’s Gospel 5:13, it compares salt to something within us.

***“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 underfoot.”***

Salt is compared to peace with one another,
And the Christian disciple is the salt of the earth.
The Christian both gives **flavour to our world**
and is the **flavour for our world**.
And it should never be taken for granted.
Otherwise it will lose its saltiness.

We know from the Old Testament that salt can be given as a covenant.
In **Numbers** 18:19 it is a covenant
to one important part of Israelite religious society.

*“It is a covenant of salt forever before the Lord for
you and your descendants as well.”*

In **2 Chronicles** 13:5 it is given as kingship in covenant to David’s line.

*“Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel
for ever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt?”*

Jesus, in the line of David, in Matthew’s Gospel,
calls the disciples the salt of the earth.

As salt, we are to live out the covenant and its two greatest commandments:
Love God and Love Neighbour.

We experience what it is like when love disappears
and becomes indifference or even hatred.

One only has to look at an individual or group or nation
that has been terribly and unjustly assaulted.

There is the strong temptation for hatred to take over,
and the **salt of love has lost its saltiness**.

But whereas **salt can’t recover its saltiness**,
God continues to love us.

God calls us be truly just.

The injustices must be faced and justice restored.

But God’s love is also healing, it is restorative and merciful.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

We ponder Jesus Christ as the Light.

And our own calling in Jesus, to be disciples of Jesus and children of the light.

- **MATTHEW’S GOSPEL**

4:16 “... the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.”

- **JOHN’S GOSPEL**

9:5 “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

12:46 “I have come as light into the world,
so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in darkness.”

- **2ND LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS**

4:6 “For it is God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’,

who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”

- *LETTER TO THE EPHESIANS*

5:8 “For once you were in darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light—for the fruit of the light is found in all that is good and right and true.”

- *1ST LETTER TO THE THESSALONIANS*

5:5 “for you are all children of light and children of the day”

- *1ST LETTER OF JOHN*

1:5 “... God is light and in him there is no darkness at all”

2:10 “Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light”

We might take some time this week, to ponder the Gospel. And to let the quotes from the Bible, flow over us. Enjoy the richness of God’s Word.

Let us lovingly respond to the invitation of Jesus to be salt and light to our world, Always giving thanks and praise to God. And remembering, at the same time, Jesus invites us to be humble in our response. Amen.

Fr Gerry

[Readings: <https://universalis.com/Australia/20200209/mass.htm>]

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