

The Rev. Dr. David K. McIntosh
February 9, 2020- 5th Sunday after Epiphany-A
Given at St. Mark's, Bridgewater, CT

Isaiah 58: 1-12; Psalm 112; 1 Corinthians 2: 1-12; Matthew 5: 13-20

**“You are the light of the world... let your light shine
before others, so that they may see your good works
and give glory to your Father in heaven.” †**

“You are the salt of the earth! ...You are the light of the world!” These are perhaps some of the more famous, more recognizable phrases of the Gospels. I’m sure they are familiar to all of you. And Jesus uses these analogies — of salt and light — when referring to his followers. Praying over this passage, I’ve pondered what it means— we are salt, we are light. And so, I’d like to spend the next few minutes considering what these analogies mean for us at St. Mark’s today.

First, consider salt... Salt is useful in so many ways: It provides flavor to things that are bland, providing an edgy, yet satisfying taste to food. Salt is also a preservative, keep things from spoiling and going bad. And salt also stimulates thirst. Salt changes the status quo. So, if we are to use salt as an example of what it means to be faithful or righteous, perhaps it means that the righteous/ the faithful, must be challenging and willing to try to change things, both in themselves and in others, from the way they are into something different. And the faithful must also be supportive, helping to preserve what needs preserving, to prevent things from going bad, whether people or church buildings. And finally, the faithful must stimulate thirst, a desire for more. Think about how these features might apply here at St. Mark’s.

Now, let’s consider light... Light overcomes darkness, it is a source of illumination, providing new ideas. It is something meant to shine and not be kept hidden. As we discussed last week, candles and their light should not be shut away in a drawer or memory box, but set up in a prominent place to shine forth and illuminate the room. If the faithful are analogous to light, if we are analogous to light, we must be willing to shine brightly. It means we must look deep within ourselves and look into the darkness, the blind portions of our own lives. We must not hide our gifts and our abilities, no matter how ‘dull’ we fear them to be; instead, allow them to shine forth toward others. As Jesus said, if we are the light, we must show forth our works and

our gifts, not for our self-gain or glory but as a conduit of God' glory, so that those who see the light may give glory to our Father. We must strive to be, as the prophet said, "a light for all peoples," that all nations may know of God's justice, mercy, and love. If we are truly 'the light of the world,' we should shine forth the Light of Christ, loving others with all our heart, our soul, our mind, and our strength, and our neighbors as ourselves. Again, how might these things specifically apply here in Bridgewater?

We are Salt... and we are Light...

We are in this world to challenge and change those around us, to bring new flavor to the scene... to shine forth and serve as witnesses that darkness cannot overcome God's light. We are to convince ourselves and others of the truth St. Paul shared in his letter to the Corinthians, "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him!" Pray this week about what that means for you. If we believe we are salt and we are light, then nothing can keep us down, and nothing can prevent us from shining forth God's glory! †