

Salt and Light:
February 5, 2023

I am going to show you a video...
That was going around...
Right about Christmas time... this year.

I was saving it...
For a day when it fit...
Into the lessons...
And I think it does tonight/today...

But... I have mixed feelings...
About what's happening...

So... let's watch.

[VIDEO - XMAS]

I mean... this whole situation... **[1 Questions]**
Raises a couple questions.

Anytime... you do something like this...
You have to ask if it was a fair situation...
For the participants.

Obviously... someone gave them permission...
To work with their children...

But still... I have some questions.

First... it doesn't seem very nice...
To run this kind of emotional experiment...
On children.
Kind of runs them...
Through the ringer...

Secondly... It doesn't seem right... or moral...
To put expensive gifts...
In front of children...
Especially those who come from...
Economically challenging situations.
Using something desirable...
Just to prove a point.

But. With all that said.
If we can acknowledge... and set that all aside...
For just one second... **[2 Generosity]**

And FOCUS on the generosity...
In the hearts of these kids.
Somewhere in their lives...
Somewhere along the way...

They have learned... or felt..
The power of love...
And they want to share that love...
With the people they love.

They want to give what they have given.
They want to feel the joy...
Of what it means...
To give something...
And it was important to them...

And the tears...
When they said...
I'm just so thankful.

The joy of giving...
A thankful heart...
Obvious evidence of love.

No one had to force them...
To become gracious.
No one had to tell them...
To be loving.
It's genuine.
It's who they are.

And so...
Given an opportunity...

They want to be...
Who they are.
Salt of the earth.
Light to the world.

What if... **[3 Command]**
This gospel lesson...
Is not a command.
JUST ANOTHER expectation....
That Jesus is putting on us.
A rule to be followed.

You need to be salt.
You need to be light.

_____... you need to work harder...
So that you become salt.
_____.... You need to work harder...
Do more... be more...
So that you become light.

Because if you work real hard... eventually...
You can become... what you should be.
What I expect you to be...

That's how I hear this lesson sometimes...
I immediately think...
Oh man... what can I do...
To be saltier...

What can I do...
To give more light to the world.

It always comes down to... me...
And what I can do.

But... what if...
This is not a command... from Jesus.
Telling us to be better human beings.

What if... INSTEAD...
He is simply stating a fact.
What if he's saying... you know what...
Because of your faith in me...
Right this very minute...
Whether you understand it or not... **[4 Salt and Light]**

You are salt. You can't help it.
You can't stop it.
It's who you are...
In and through your being.
You are salt.

What if the promises of God...
Have been mixed into your being...
Just like we add salt...
To make the chocolate chip cookies...
Taste delicious...

Just like salty French fries...
Taste so much better...
Than unsalted fries.

What if just a little salt...
Mixed into our lives...
Makes everything better.

And what if the salt of God...
Has been so mixed into you...
That YOU are incredible.
Take that.

What if you are incredible.
What if you are amazing.
What if you are good.
What if you are powerful...

Right this very minute.
And you don't even know it.

What if...
The promise of God...
Is pulsing through your heart...
Through your mind...
Through your whole being.

And every single minute of your life...
A little bit of that salt...
That flavor...
That power...
Is expressed through you...
Out into this world.

What if you...
Just by being YOU...
Beloved child of God...
You make life better.

What if...
You are light.
Not that someday...
You might become a light...
But what if it is true...
Right now.

What if you are...
An unstoppable force...
That shines in the darkness.

And no... you're probably...
Not a spotlight...
Or a floodlight.
Not a huge beam of light...
That illuminates everything...
All the time.

And that's ok...
We don't need those big old lights...
They just cause those light spots...
In your eyes...
And then you can't see...
A darn thing anyway.

But a little light.
Just enough light.
For the moment.
For the interaction.
For the time...
That God intends.
For you to shine...
In the world around you.

See... it's a simple question...
I'm asking you to consider...

What if Jesus isn't telling us...
How we should become...
But instead....
Is proclaiming...
What we are.

So... I can't remember. **[5 Wedding]**
This week I was asked...
To provide proof...
Actual legal evidence...
That I had married...
A certain couple...
Over 20 years ago...

That's a long time...
And I don't remember.

So... I asked them to send me the license.
They did. And sure enough...
It had my signature... right on the bottom.
Evidence... that I... in fact... did the wedding.

With that proof in hand...
I did what they asked me to do...
Filled out a form...
Had it notarized...
All that.

But I was curious...
I wanted to know...
Who they were...

So... I tried to look up their faces...
On all the social media...
Facebook... Instagram... TikTok...
Even LinkedIn...

But nothing popped up.
I couldn't see them.

So... I can't remember.

But I do know.
Pretty much...
What I said to them...
On their wedding day...

Because it's basically... the same thing...
I always say...
During a wedding.

This is love.
God is love.
Love each other.
In the name of God.

Something to that effect.

And in the process...
Of all those words...
I have spoken...
Into the semi-hearing ears...
Of all the wedding couples...
Over the years...

I hope to have planted some seeds.
Seeds of life and hope...
And yes... love.

Seeds that will continue to grow...
In holy love...
Their whole life long.

And even though I don't remember...
I'm absolutely sure...
That day... was a celebration.
And the Word I proclaimed...
Whether it was a good sermon...
Or a bad sermon... doesn't even matter.

Because...
I know the Word of God... was salt.
And the Word of God... was light.
Because that's how it works.

So I know...
That God was working...
In the midst of all that...

Even if I can't remember who they are...
Or what they look like...

Even if the bride and groom...
Don't remember anything I said that day...

Even if it's all said and done...
Water over the dam...
Or under the bridge...
And happened over 20 years ago.

It doesn't matter.
Because God's Word is... in us...
And God's Word is effective.
And accomplishes what God intends.

AND... God is faithful.
God is faithful to our past.
God is faithful in our present.
God is faithful into our future.

God who was... is... and always will be... faithful. Always.

And that's what the second part... **[6 Fulfill]**
Of this gospel lesson is really about.
Honestly... I'm not 100% convinced...
That the two halves of this gospel...
Are really connected teachings.

BUT I will say this...
Jesus said... I did not come to abolish the law...
But I came to fulfill it... he came to fulfill...
What we could not fulfill...

Jesus is the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament...
All the prophecies... from Isaiah and Malachi...
All the laws... from the hand of Moses to the complications of Leviticus...
All the Old Testament...
Was leading up to Jesus.

Leading to... the Messiah...
And his Kingdom...
Breaking into the world...

And changing our understanding...
Of our relationship with God.

And so... NOW WE KNOW...
Who Jesus is...
What Jesus did...
And that Jesus has fulfilled...
Everything... for us.

Therefore... we are changed.
We hold onto to Jesus.
And we are changed.
From the inside out.

We are a new creation.
We are the firstborn...
Of the fulfilled Kingdom of Heaven.

We play by a different set of rules...
That have been planted in our hearts...
By the presence and the power...
Of the Holy Spirit.

Therefore... since everything has been fulfilled...
In Christ... for us...

We who believe in him...
Guess who we are????
NOW... We are salt.
NOW... We are light.

We have the power of God...
To be witnesses...
By our very being...
To the life... hope... and love.
That comes from Jesus.

So, I'm not going to challenge you... **[7 Taste and See]**
To think about HOW you MIGHT BECOME...
Salt and light to this world.

I'm not going to ask you...
To change...
To be better...
To be holier...
To be good-er...

You don't have to.
It's not up to you... anyway...
And it's not up to me...
We can't be good enough...
To fulfill the law.

Jesus is the fulfillment... for us.

So what I am going to ask you...
To do... is to... take some time...
Look back over your life.

Think about who you have been...
How far you have come... by the grace of God...

Think about how God has called you...
To be a witness of God's love and truth and power... in your life.

Think about how the Holy Spirit has empowered YOU...
To live a life worthy...
Of the calling to which you have been called.

Think about all the good that God has done...
Through you... and with you...

Think about who you are... follower of Christ???
Because you should know by now...

Jesus has told you.
You are salt.
You are light.

So the world can...
Taste... and see...
The goodness of our Lord!

Thanks be to God.
Amen!