

Jesus says, you are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the World. These words follow the Beatitudes which Jesus spoke as he opened His mouth and taught the disciples. Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are meek, blessed, blessed, blessed...

No sooner does Jesus bring them into the Kingdom of Heaven He brings them right back into the world. "You are the salt of the earth." "You are the Light of the world."

Jesus blessed His disciples before they could be a blessing to others.

The order is important. He did not say If you become salt and light, I will bless you. No Jesus blesses them so that they may be a blessing to others. If our performance of being salt and light comes before He blesses us it becomes all law, and there is no Gospel. Then Jesus' blessing becomes a reward for all our good work. If Christ Jesus blesses first, then to be salt and light is all pure grace, our joy, and our delight. Because Jesus has died for our sins on the cross while we were still sinners and Christ's work becomes a blessing of forgiveness, restored relationship with God, and the sure and certain hope of eternal life. Our life in Christ's life is salt and light to others.

"You are the salt of the earth." Before moving into this call a pastor call said, "Northwest Iowa! Salt of the earth people." He gave you all a compliment. You are good people who do good things. Not to earn salvation, but because you have been blessed with God's Salvation. You are all worth your salt!

When Jesus said to His disciples whom He had just blessed, what did he mean? In Jesus' day one could not live without salt. It keeps meat from perishing in those days before refrigeration. Salt was used in basic first aid to sterilize cuts and wounds. Salt preserves and it purifies. When applied to a wound it stings and it bites. Salt heals.

Jesus calls his disciples 'salt.' He brought them into the kingdom of heaven and now they are salt. He sends disciples out into the world to have a preserving and purifying and healing effect in a world that is wounded and dying and decaying and spoiling because of sin and disobedience to God's way. They would follow Jesus for three years and after His death and resurrection and ascension He will send them into the world, He will sprinkle and scatter them onto the earth. They

will go to all nations baptizing, "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that Jesus has commanded them.

They were sent to apply the salt of Jesus' life wherever they were sent. They were to bring healing to a lost world by salting them with God's Word, and with Water and the Spirit and bread and wine. Calling sinners to repentance. By drowning the old sinful man in the waters of Holy Baptism. And feed the flock of Jesus the Good Shepherd with bread and wine.

And we, all who are believers or who would become believers in Christ are the fruit of this salting. We are the offspring of their baptizing and their teaching. And we are blessed with the same blessing they received on the mountain. And from here we are scattered and sprinkle to the places where God sends us this week: Homes and family, Workplaces and offices, School, and neighborhood.

I am not here to make an appeal for you to be the salt of the earth, "You are the salt of the earth." Through Holy Baptism when you were brought into the kingdom, We called to go out into those places and season it with Jesus' life and bring healing by sprinkling salt in those wounded places where we go. With that thought we should not be surprised when the world says that stings. That burns. Remember "blessed are you when men revile you and utter all kinds of falsehood against you."

Remember that Jesus did not say "you the sugar of the world." Remember what the dentist has told you about sugar. It speeds the decay of your teeth. Salt stops the decay and brings healing.

You are blessed because your saltiness is not yours. It belongs to Jesus, and we have been blessed with His Spirit, His mercy, His meekness, His righteousness, His pure heart, His peace, His persecution and His cross. Disciples are blessed by not avoiding His teaching or His Fellowship, or His Life or by teaching others to avoid them, but by rejoicing because we have been blessed by them.

One word of warning. It is possible for the salt to lose its saltiness. How? By taking one's baptism for granted. And over time when one has stayed away from the fellowship of disciples, neglecting God's Word, and worship and taking these blessing and trading them in for the allures that this dying and decaying world offers. When He desires sugar rather than salt, feeling that one can be Christian without the cross that guides life in thought, word, and deed. Christ little by little is leached out of them.

Here is the interesting thing here. Throughout the history of this world when the Church has settled for only Christ Crucified and Risen, by being an alternative to the world's ways it has attracted men, women, boys, and girls. When the church becomes like the world it becomes little good for anyone. And is easily trampled underfoot.

Jesus Said you are the Light of the world. IT is the same idea, so I won't spend too much time on this. But will say this, Light scatters darkness. We bring Christ's light into a world darkened by sin and evil.

You are the Light of the World. A reflection. Just like the Moon reflects the light from the sun, the disciple who is Christ reflects Christ's light. Why, so that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven. The truth is God does not need our good deeds. Our neighbor needs them more than God. God sees our faith. But our neighbor sees our faith through our words and actions: love, peace, joy, gentleness, generosity, and self-control. This is how others see that your faith is not dead.

Jesus says that others will see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven. Really? To be honest I have never really experienced that. If I did receive a letter from an unbeliever, they never did say that good work did it for me and now I will give the Father in heaven all the glory. But Jesus said it and His word always says what it says it will do. Perhaps the glorification comes when Jesus comes again in the clouds with the angels in all His glory. Then every knee will bend, and every tongue confesses, and every eye will see. They will see everything. Every healing work and deed. Every time they saw how important Sunday Morning worship was in your life. So don't get too hung-up whether your deeds were seen by others. The scribes got hung up on their good works so they could be seen by others so they could receive the glory. Let righteousness exceed that. Have your life Christ, crucified and risen for you.

So maybe these Words of Jesus can give you a new outlook in our lives in a Mind of Christ way as Paul would say. When you find yourself in a dark place, or when someone else is in a dark place, remember as a child of God you are his light pointing the way to the hope He can only give. When you find yourself where someone else has soured on life and alone your gospel saltiness can bring the sweet flavor of the gospel to others. In doing so, others can see and experience your sincerity, your authenticity of your life in Christ. Thanks be to God in Christ who blesses us to be a blessing to others.

The Peace of God which passes all understanding guard your hearts in minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.