

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY: YEAR A

Isaiah 58:1-9a, (9b-12)

Psalm 112:1-9 (10)

1 Corinthians 2:1-11, (12-16)

Matthew 5:13-20

FEBRUARY 5, 2023

St. David's Episcopal Church

N. Chesterfield, VA

Ruth Partlow

SALT! LIGHT!

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH!! THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD! JESUS USED SOMETHING VERY COMMON THINGS TO EXPLAIN WHO AND WHOSE THE DISCIPLES ARE!

SALT – IT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FLAVOR OR TASTELESSNESS! TO BE SALT IS TO MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE.

SOME TIME AGO, WHEN MY DOCTOR SUGGESTED I CUT DOWN ON THE SALT IN MY FOOD, I DID SO. AND I’VE GOTTEN USED FOODS WITH A MINIMAL OF SALT, BUT WHEN I EAT SOMETHING THAT IS VERY SALTY – LIKE POTATO CHIPS OR COUNTRY HAM, I KNOW IT! FOOD IS TASTIER WITH SALT. THE FLAVOR IS ENHANCED, MAGNIFIED. JUST SO, THE DISCIPLES WERE GIFTED WITH MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD AROUND THEM.

BUT SALT IS ALSO A PRESERVATIVE –USED IN CANNING, PRESERVING MEATS AND OTHER FOODS

SALT IS NECESSARY FOR OUR BODIES TO FUNCTION.

SALT HAS HEALING, MEDICINAL QUALITIES – GARGLING TO SOOTH A SORE THROAT OR SOAK A SPRAINED ANKLE .

THE OCEAN WOULDN’T BE THE OCEAN WITHOUT ITS SALTINESS. MARINE LIFE WOULD DIE WITHOUT SALTY WATER.

IN ANCIENT TIMES, SALT WAS MONEY – USED TO TRADE AND BUY GOODS AND SERVICES.

SALT MAKES A HUGE DIFFERENCE IN LIFE.

JESUS TOLD HIS DISCIPLES, “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!!” OUR LIVES ARE ENRICHED BY LIGHT – THE SUN IN THE DAY, AT NIGHT ELECTRICITY FLOWS INTO OUR HOMES. SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS FLICKING ON A LIGHT SWITCH OR TURNING ON A FLASHLIGHT CHANGES A DARK PLACE INTO A PLACE OF WARMTH AND OPENNESS. LIGHT HAS BEEN CHERISHED SINCE ANCIENT TIMES – TORCHES, OIL LAMPS, FIRES IN THE HEARTH, CANDLES.

RECENTLY I READ A BOOK *THE LAST DAYS OF NIGHT*. IT’S NOVEL BASED ON THOMAS EDISON, GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE AND NIKOLA TESLA AND THEIR COMPETITION TO OWN THE PATENT FOR THE FIRST LIGHT BULB. WHOEVER ACCOMPLISHED THIS TASK WOULD CONTROL THE DEVELOPMENT OF ELECTRICITY AND IST TO FLOW INTO EVERY HOUSEHOLD IN THIS NATION. . IT’S A THRILLER, PARTLY CIRCLING AROUND THESE THREE CREATIVE, FLAWED YET BRILLIANT MEN. IT’S CENTERED AROUND A YOUNG LAWYER WHO HAS GIVEN THE ASSIGNMENT TO DEFEND GEORGE WESTINGHOUSE IN A LAW SUIT AGAINST THOMAS EDISON OVER THE PATENT ON THE LIGHT BULB. IT WILL EFFECT THE FUTURE OF ELECTRICITY IN THIS NATION. AFTER READING THIS BOOK I REALIZED HOW LITTLE WE UNDERSTAND WHAT THE ABSENCE OF ELECTRICITY AND LIGHTS IN OUR LIVES MEANS. WE TAKE IT FOR GRANTED AND DON’T REALLY UNDERSTAND FULLY WHAT NIGHT AND DARKNESS MEANT BEFORE THE LIGHT BULB.

- JESUS KNEW -- THE IMPORTANCE OF LIGHT, THE EFFECT OF TOTAL DARKNESS ON LIFE.
- JESUS KNEW -- THE IMPORTANCE OF SALT, AND ITS EFFECT ON ALL LIFE. WITHOUT SALT LIFE DIES.

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH . . . YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD” JESUS USES THESE METAPHORS TO HELP HIS DISCIPLES UNDERSTAND HOW IMPORTANT THEY WILL BE IN THE DAYS AND YEARS TO COME. THEY WILL BE SALT AND LIGHT.

AT THE BEGINNING OF CHAPTER 5 – WE FIND THAT JESUS HAS TAKEN THE DISCIPLES AWAY FROM THE CROWDS AND IS TEACHING THEM ON A MOUNTAIN SIDE. LAST SUNDAY, HE BEGAN THE LESSON WITH THE BEATITUDES. THIS WEEK HE CONTINUES WITH SALT, LIGHT AND THE KEEPING OF GOD’S LAW. JESUS IS TEACHING HIS DISCIPLES WHAT IT IS TO BE HIS FOLLOWERS AND TO BE ONES WHO PROCLAIM GOD’S LOVE AND PRESENCE IN THEIR LIVES. TO TRULY BE HIS DISCIPLES THEY HAVE TO HAVE THE ABILITY TO SPREAD THIS TRUTH OF GOD’S LOVE AND OF GOD’S WORK IN THE LIVES OF ALL PEOPLE – TO BE SALT AND LIGHT.

THESE FLAWED, HUMAN DISCIPLES ARE GOING TO BE THE ONES WHO CARRY JESUS’S MESSAGE FORWARD AFTER HE IS GONE.

THEY ARE GOING TO BE SALT THAT ENLIVENS AND BRINGS FLAVOR AND HOPE INTO PEOPLE’S LIVES.

THEY ARE GOING TO BE LIGHT BEARERS WHO IMPART LIGHT AND LIFE TO THOSE WHO ARE WALKING IN DARKNESS.

THEY ARE GOING TO OPEN THE VEIL THAT SO MANY FROM SEEING OR UNDERSTANDING GOD’S LOVE FOR HUMANITY AND CREATION.

THEY ARE GOING TO BE THE ONES TO SHOW PEOPLE WHAT IT IS TO LOVE GOD, TO LOVE THEIR NEIGHBOR AND TO LOVE ONE’S SELF.

JESUS IS PREPARING HIS DISCIPLES TO FOLLOW IN HIS FOOTSTEPS, TO PROCLAIM HIS MESSAGE IN THE FUTURE. HE IS EDUCATING AND PREPARING THEM FOR THE REST OF THEIR LIVES TO CARRY HIS MESSAGE AND MINISTRY TO THE “WORLD”.

EUGENE PETERSON IN THE MESSAGE, HIS VERSION OF THE BIBLE, CALLS THE DISCIPLES “APPRENTICES”. LIKE ALL APPRENTICES THEY ARE TO LEARN BY WATCHING AND DOING WHAT THEIR TEACHER DOES. THEY ARE TO LEARN BY

LISTENING AND TALKING WITH JESUS, SEEING HOW HE INTERACTS WITH THE PEOPLE WHO COME TO HIM FOR HEALING AND HOPE, AND TO LEARN MORE OF GOD. THEY ARE BEING TAUGHT AND GIVEN THE GIFTS FOR MINISTRY! IN TIME, THEY WILL BE ON THEIR OWN CARRYING GOD'S MESSAGE OF LOVE, OF HOPE AND GOD'S WORK IN WORLD. THEY WILL BRING A NEW AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THIS LOVE TO THE WORLD. THEY WILL OPEN THE EYES OF THE BLIND, HEAL THE SICK, AND BRING LIGHT TO THOSE WALKING IN DARKNESS.

THESE WORDS OF JESUS – “YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH”” “YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD” ARE NOT JUST FOR THE DISCIPLES. THEY FLY THROUGH THE CENTURIES TO US – JESUS' PRESENT DAY DISCIPLES. THEY HAVE BEEN PROCLAIMED TO EVERY GENERATION OF JESUS' FOLLOWERS. THEY REMIND US WHO WE ARE AND WHOSE WE ARE.

LIKE THE FIRST DISCIPLES, WE ARE CALLED TO BE SALT AND LIGHT TO THE WORLD. LIKE THE FIRST DISCIPLES, WE ARE CALLED TO SHARE THE LOVE OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS WITH ALL PEOPLE. WE MAY NOT BE EVANGELISTS, LIKE JOHN THE BAPTIST -- LOUD AND FORCEFUL IN OUR PROCLAMATION, BUT BY OUR Demeanor AND BEHAVIOR, BY OUR GENTLE AND KIND WORDS WE CAN SHOW MORE CLEARLY THE FACE OF GOD TO ALL WE ENCOUNTER. MOST OF US ARE CALLED TO PROCLAIM GOD'S LOVE WITH KINDNESS, GENTLENESS AND WITH HUMILITY. EVEN WHEN WE ARE A BIT HESITANT IN OUR PROCLAMATION, WE STILL HAVE THE ABILITY TO SHOW GOD'S LOVE AND GRACE TO ALL PEOPLE BY WORD AND DEED, -- BY LOVING GOD, BY LOVING OUR NEIGHBOR AND LOVING OURSELVES.

MAY WE EACH BE SALT AND LIGHT IN THE WORLD. MAY WE TRY TO LIVE AS JESUS LIVED, TO LOVE AS HE LOVED, AND TO FORGIVE AS HE FORGAVE. WHEN WE DO THIS, WE WILL BE ON THE WAY TO BECOMING SALT AND LIGHT TO THE WORLD.