

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ!

Hear now the penetrating power of the gospel. You are those who are transformed by it, you are likened to salt and light! In our world today, in the darkness, in the corruption, this teaching of Jesus is vital. So let's cut right to the chase, listen to these words from Jesus "You are the salt of the earth." He said "you are," he didn't say "you should be" or "you must be", he said "you are the salt of the earth." He's talking to you and me, we who know we have no merit of our own. The word "you" is not only emphatic, but it's also restrictive because Jesus is talking to his disciples, we who follow him. Now consider, salt is indispensable for life, our bodies need it, it adds flavor, it preserves and sustains, it's the enemy of decay. Jesus calls us, and he entrusts his work to us. These words should shake us, especially when Jesus continues "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 under foot."

Jesus continues with "You are the light of the world." Again, the word "you" is emphatic and restrictive, Jesus speaking to you and me. He adds "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 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."

"Salt of the earth," and "light of the world." Oh great, how can you and I, flesh and blood sinners that we are, be salt for the earth and light for the world? How can we do this so that our good works give glory to the Father? Is Jesus serious? Has he made a mistake? We can't live up to this, can we? Especially when Jesus goes on to say "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

I know many of you sit here this morning and wonder about the future, your part in it. Well, I tell you. Jesus hasn't made a mistake. Yes we are weak human beings and God doesn't expect us to be what we are not. However, God does expect us to be who he has made us, called us, to be! We by ourselves are not salt, we are not light, but nor are we simply people! We are the people God has made! Redeemed, ransomed, righteous through Christ, adopted as his children, saved by grace through faith. Jesus fulfilled the law we couldn't, can't fulfill, Jesus did this for you and I. Therefore when he tells us we are salt of the earth and light of the world, we are. And Jesus is the key to all of it, Jesus Christ who fulfilled law and prophets, and we who have risen with him through the waters of our baptisms, baptized and set free, are salt, are light.

I asked earlier, how can we be the salt of the earth? How can we be the light of the world? On our own, we can't. It is Christ Jesus who is the salt of the earth and light of the world. We will shortly confess our faith stating we believe in God the Father, in Jesus Christ God's only Son our Lord, and in the Holy Spirit. We believe therefore in the one who has fulfilled all the law and prophets for us and in our place. Jesus who has done all that is necessary for our salvation; he is our salt and light!

In a short while, fed with the body and blood of Christ in the bread and the wine, we are renewed in Jesus with strength and vigor, to be salt and light. Yes, we are salt and light as he imbues us with his body and blood, his preserving power, his light, we are salt and light in all that we do as disciples, salted and lightened ourselves, we go forth from here as the salt and light of Christ.

By Jesus' grace and favor we can bring flavor into this world wherever we go, we lighten the darkness with the light that we carry into a world groping in the enveloping darkness. Because it is not our light that shines, is it not our salt that flavors and preserves. It is the salt and light of Jesus, working into the world in and through us, wherever we find ourselves. We don't build walls, we tear them down. We don't turn people away, we welcome them. Jesus flavors, he refreshes, he preserves, in and through us and our words and actions, because we are citizens of his kingdom, a kingdom not of this world. And the deeds of Jesus who finished the work of redemption, of salvation, on the cross and through his resurrection, are handed on to us because the work of God is still to be completed!

AMEN