



SUNDAY 5TH February 2023. SALT AND LIGHT.

Have you ever thought you would like to change the world? How are changes made in our world? Who makes changes? What is our role as a church in changing our world? Do we even have a role?

What are a few major changes that have happened?

Commonwealth Franchise Act signed 1902 votes for women.

Invention of LSD in Switzerland 1943

Israel's independence 1948

Rosa Parks Movement 1955

Landing on the Moon 1969

Internet 1983.

Berlin Wall falls 1989

Covid Pandemic 2019

These are just a snippet of events that have changed the world and we need to recognise the many people involved in them.

Our readings today encourage us to make a change in the world. Isaiah is telling the Israelites that just acting "religious" and attending worship service misses the point of living a vital relationship with God. It is much more important that genuine compassion is shown to those suffering.

God wants our worship to go beyond our own personal growth to acts of kindness, charity, justice and generosity.

This links into our reading from Matthew where Jesus is sharing two small parables about “being salt and light to the world.”

1) Salt

What are the two purposes of salt?

a) Preservative In the days before iceboxes and modern refrigeration, salt was the main means of preserving perishable food. Food would be heavily salted to keep it from spoiling.

If fish sits out for a few days, it gets very smelly. In Jesus day, fish was one of the main staples of the diet. Fish had to be transported from the seas to the various markets in the towns and villages. Fish would be salted to preserve it from rotting and decay.

In our passage, Jesus isn't speaking directly of salt keeping fish from stinking. It is used metaphorically of followers of Christ as their character of Christlikeness. As followers of Christ, we are to be a preservative in the world. Sin is rampant in our world, and we are to impact our world to preserve it from moral decay. Salt also adds...

b) Flavour. This is the most obvious property of salts, especially since we no longer use it as a preservative. Some foods are terrible without salt. Like hot chips without salt, or some other flavouring, they are tasteless. We are to add flavour to our world. It is sad to witness many who claim to be followers of Christ, walking around as if the weight of the whole world lay upon their shoulders – it doesn't God deals with it, when we release it to Him.

c) Purity The Romans saw salt as a symbol of purity because it came from two pure things – seawater and sun. Most salt in ancient times was acquired by evaporating seawater.

It seems strange that Jesus would talk about salt losing its saltiness. How could that be? Jesus isn't giving a chemistry lesson. The salt we use today is very pure and therefore doesn't lose its saltiness. In that time, salt was often mixed with impurities.

If we don't try to affect the world around us, then we are of little value to God. We all know about peer pressure, that push to be like, act like and even dress like others. We can be lured into trying to blend in with others, instead of affecting others positively.

Just like the salt – if salt is never added to the food, it cannot bring out the best flavour in food. If we do not add a Christian flavour to the world, we cannot lead people to God.

2) Light

Jesus said in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world." Now He tells His followers, "You are the light of the world." What does He mean? How are we the light of the world, when Jesus said that He was the light of the world?

a) Reflection We don't make our own light, but we reflect the light of Christ, in the same way that the moon reflects the light of the sun. To call ourselves "Christians" or "followers of Christ" is to reflect Jesus' light. The only question is: What kind of reflection

are we? We are a reflection: good or bad. What kind of reflection are you? What is the main purpose of light?

b) Illumination The main purpose of light is to give light. In Jesus' day, most houses were only one room with no windows (or maybe one small window). One lamp could illuminate the one-room houses if it was put on a lamp stand in the house.

In that time a lamp was a shallow bowl-shaped piece of pottery. The wick floated in oil. It was difficult to light the wick, especially since they didn't have lighters or matches. The lamp would be placed on a stand in the middle of house or on a ledge in the wall. From that vantage point the whole house would receive light. Everyone could see to do what they needed to do.

That's why we have light in the ceiling and not the floor. Even lamps are placed on tables or poles. Lights can only bring illumination only if they are...

c) Uncovered What happens when you cover a light? What happens when you cover a lamp that relies on a flame? The light becomes useless. When a thick blanket of clouds covers the moon, it does us no good.

As followers of Jesus, what sense does it make to cover up our reflection of Him? A follower of Christ without light is as useless as a covered lamp. Is your light covered?

Think of a lighthouse as it shines to direct the ships safely to shore, so they avoid dangerous rocks and undertow. We can guide others around the things that could harm them, the

undertow of worldly temptations and show them what Christ is like.

If we remain quiet when we should speak up, if we go along with the crowd and deny Christ in our life and not reflect Jesus' light to others, then we are shutting the light off from the rest of the world. A secret follower of Christ is no follower at all.

We are salt and light. We bring preservation, flavour and purity while reflecting the light of Jesus, illuminating our world for all to see. We cannot be saved without faith in Christ, but if our faith does not reach out to others, then it is not sincere.

As Christians God requires us to make the world better. Think for a moment about your life. In what ways are you salt – in what ways are you making life better by living a Christian life?

People see us doing good things because of our love for God and it makes them want to find out more.

I wonder if you are allowing your light to shine or are you embarrassed or ashamed to let people know about God – this is like putting your light under a bowl.

We are called to treat others with compassion and care, but this should never take away from our beliefs. We can heart about other's beliefs but God wants us to take a stand to share the flavour of Christianity – the true hope in this world.