

Sermon for February 9, 2014
Matt Five:13-20

Last week we heard that we are blessed by God just as we are. And just like last week it's easy to hear in Jesus' words today that we need do something before we become salt and light. Last week we received the blessing—this week we receive the commissioning. Jesus tells us that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Then he says things that sound really strange to my ear—if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? And just who puts candles under bushel baskets? That would either put out the candle or worse start a fire!

But maybe absurd is what Jesus is going for here; salt doesn't lose its saltiness and lights aren't put under baskets. Jesus has called us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Those are statuses that we won't ever lose. The gift that he has given us is that reliable! But we tend to forget this and we listen to what the world tells us about ourselves, so we need to be reminded again and again.

It's like the studies that have been done with young children and self-esteem. Psychologists tell us that for every negative message that young children hear about themselves; they need to hear ten positive ones to counteract just that one negative message! Children become what they are named. If a child is called bad long enough and that's the only message that is heard; they will believe it and act bad.

It's the same for all of us. Call us worthless, unlovable, or shameful and eventually we'll believe it. Likewise if we are called useful, helpful, or dependable

we'll believe that identity. I'll give you an example from my own childhood. For whatever reason my mom and siblings always told me that I didn't have a very good singing voice. At first I didn't believe them, but I never heard otherwise from other people. I wasn't asked to sing solos in the church choir or in church at all. So I began to believe that I couldn't sing. Eventually, as an adult, I got up the courage to sing a solo in a SS Christmas program. I did a good job, but my family just couldn't admit it; even their compliment was backhanded, "Boy how bad was that program if your solo was the best part!"

I've been able to get over this because I've had people I trust tell me otherwise. I know the importance of telling others where I see their gifts. God has affirmed all of us with certain gifts and God trusts that we will use these gifts for others in the world that God loves so much. And just as we needed to hear God's blessings for us last week; this week we need to hear that we are salt and light to the world. We do use our gifts and blessings from God to make a difference in the world!

So I want to begin a "Salt and Light Log" that will record where we see the members of this congregation being salt and light. We need this because there are those of you who won't believe me when I tell you the great job you're doing—after all I'm the pastor and I'm supposed to be nice! And then there's those of us who were brought up in families where you were taught not to boast of what you were doing—others were supposed to do that for you. So I want you to email me or write me or put your list under my door and we'll get this log started!

In case you're having trouble seeing where God is working through us to make this world a better place—I'll start you off with a few examples where I've seen God at work through you: Your generous giving of your time and money to the ECHO Food Shelf, the Maple river Fishes and Loaves food pantry, to malaria eradication, to our vacation Bible school, to our Sunday school, to the 30 Hour Famine, to the Luther League, funeral helpers, house fixer uppers, and the many of you who are on the prayer chain.

These are but a few of the places where I've seen God's work done through our hands. I'm sure that you can name many more that I haven't seen. God has blessed us. That blessing is unconditional and undeserving. It is also the strength that we need to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.