

Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 10th 2014

Matthew's Gospel challenges us to ask and answer "What does it mean for us as believers to be salt and light?" Upon reflection, Jesus's words are quite direct and specific: "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." There is a strong emphasis that Jesus calls each of us to be in and for the world by being salt and light.

Jesus often uses ordinary images, like salt and light, to convey extraordinary insights. The discerning reader knows that 'ordinary' does not necessarily mean 'simple' and indeed these images are deep and complex. In the context of the time, salt was a valuable commodity and it was traded like we might treat gold and stocks today. Salt was essential as a food preservative and functions as a flavor enhancer. As followers of Jesus we are called to penetrate, purify and preserve the world from the manifestations of sin. As Christians we also seek to influence the world for good under the guidance of the Holy Spirit—"enhancing the flavor" of the world and those we touch in our daily lives. Where there is anxiety and sorrow we are to be the working hands of the Spirit in the world to bring comfort and peace.

The image of being a light for the world is less subtle but just as profound. A real lamp enables sight in the darkness and helps people to avoid stumbling. As followers of Jesus we are to live in the light of God's truth and eternal love. Our presence in the world is in part to be bearers of light in our words and deeds so others may see the truth of God's word and be freed from the burden of their own darkness. We shine a light, not for our own sake or for selfish recognition but so that those who look on might see the glory of the Father in heaven.

In our day today, with those we touch, with the work we do how can we be the salt and light of the world?

Mark Latta