

April 23, 2023
The Third Sunday of Easter
Pastor Matt Duerr

“Way Above My Pay Grade”

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen. I bring to you another Winkle dilemma with our sermon this morning and for our Easter Season. We were talking at the winkle, which is our gathering of pastors for circuit. We meet once a month, and have devotion, Bible study and fellowship. We were talking about what Saint Paul writes in Ephesians chapter 3 verse 19. He writes that people of Ephesus and he says, “that you may know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” Filled with all the fullness of God, that blows my mind! How can I, a finite being, be filled with all the fullness of God? God, the creator, who created this entire universe; and we look at the new Webb telescope and we go ‘wow it's even bigger than we thought.’ We're supposed to have the fullness of God in ourselves. It's, well to be honest, it's way above my pay grade. That's what we are going to be talking about. Way above my pay grade.

It's kind of like when I was younger and watching Saturday Night Live in the late 70s early 80s. Bill Murray was on, he had a little bit of a pot belly, kind of flabby muscles. But he was dressed like Hercules. And he was there standing before the king. And the king says, ‘Hercules I hear that you are the strongest man on the earth.’ And Hercules's response is ‘yes king I am the strongest man on the earth.’ I would like to see this, show your strength. Will you show me your great strength? Hercules says, ‘yes I can show you my great strength. How would you like me to show you? The king points at the rock and he says, ‘I'd like you to lift this large rock.’ Hercules says, I will show you my great strength and I will lift that rock.’ He goes over to the rock, and he tries to lift it and he cannot lift it. He steps back, he stretches, he does some calisthenics, and all that kind of stuff. He comes back, tries to lift the rock. He looks at the king and he says that rock is too large, I will lift a smaller rock. I believe that's oftentimes how we approach things like being filled with all the fullness of God, we say “that's above my pay grade.” It's too much. I can't do that. And yet scripture tells us in Philippians 4:13 “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.” Or in Ephesians 3:20 and 21 the scripture at the bottom of all my emails, we hear that “God can do far beyond what we can even ask or imagine.”

And so, with the sermon series “Way above my pay grade,” we're going to pick up where Pastor Tim left off and went. We had the beatitudes, that's the first about 20th of the Sermon on the Mount. What follows? The very first thing that follows

the last beatitude is, “you are the salt of the earth.” We know that salt enhances flavor. For goodness sake, I know people that add salt to their salted potato chips. In the First Century, salt was essential. The Greeks had a word for it: Theon. The divine. It was also called white gold. In fact, Roman soldiers were not paid with Roman coins, they were paid with salt. It was called solarium. It is also where we get our word salary, or the phrase “he's not worth his salt.” Salt was also used in the tanning of leather, in the dying of clothes. For the 1st century people, it preserves, enhances, it is used for preserving leather, for dying clothes, for paying the Roman soldiers. Salt is essential. It's valuable.

And today we know that salt is also required for proper functioning of our nervous system. Salt is critical for the contracting and relaxing of your muscles. Not enough salt and you will have bad cramps. Trust me, I know. Salt also helps you regulate the level of water and minerals in our bodies. It was essential then and it is essential now. It's a message to Christianity. We are of great importance. Much more importance than shall we say, the government and the legislation laws. Legislative laws are never a cure to the problems in a country. We have a lot of laws and people just break them. Laws are not solutions, people are. It's kind of like cartoon that Jackie Mettler sent to me this past week. The top part of the cartoon has Cain with a rock and his hand, hitting Able in the head. Cain killed Abel with a rock. Right below it is King David with a sling and a rock flinging it at Goliath. David killed Goliath with a rock. The bottom of the thing, It's not about the rock! It's about the people, and how they use the rock.

And how are we to use God's Word and what we have? We need to be the ones that make a difference. That takes us back values. We talked about that in the wheel on Palm Sunday. One of our values is integrity. It comes from the word integral where we also get the word integer. An integer is a whole complete number, no fraction, no decimal. So someone with integrity is a whole or a complete person. You are only a whole complete person with Christ. With Christ, you are a part of the whole body of Christ. That means you are not something else when you are with some other group. You are a Christian. You are Christ like. You are a whole person in Him. You have been transformed by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the Holy Spirit works that transformation through worship, what we're doing right now, coming to God's house. Because worship reminds us, it's not about us, it's about God! We come to worship, give Him our worth, our thanks, our praise. We come because worship reminds us, it's about God, who is creator. Boom! That's big! Who is the victor, rising from the dead on Easter Sunday. That's why we come every Sunday. Every Sunday is Easter for us. It reminds us that He is our Redeemer

who has brought us back at great price. It reminds us that He is our future, and He gives us purpose in life. It reminds us that He is our hope and our glory.

And so, we are transformed through worship, we are transformed through daily devotions. We have the portals of prayer; large print, small print, if you want medium print, we can get that too. Better yet, be ecologically sound and it's cheaper. Go online to lutheranhour.org and sign up to have the devotion sent to you every day via e-mail, to your phone, to your computer. That's how I start my day. Every day I start with my morning prayers, I open up my phone, I read my devotion. We are transformed through Bible study, feeding on God's word. We are transformed through fellowship, one with another. When we have cookies after church, or we gather together with the LWML, or men's Bible study group or breakfast group on Thursday, whenever we're getting together for fellowship. Or whenever we come to work together for a special workday, or special events, LWML, you know filling shoeboxes for Samaritans purse or sewing things for the child care center.

The old has gone, the new has come. We celebrated that on Palm Sunday corporately, but our focus in Easter is now personally and being the salt. When we go to a reunion, not being a part of the same old jokes, the same old values, the same old raunchy speech, being salt representing Christ and people will see the difference. It might be good, they may not react well, but you're being salt.

Or at work. Many see work as drudgery, or as almost a curse. Working for the old man, he's making too much money, he should share some with me. So we end up at work oftentimes looking at how can we take advantage here? Well let's see the word sick starts with S, and so ski also starts with S, so they must be cousins. So, I can call in sick so I can go skiing and be paid for skiing which is a cousin of sick because we both start with S. And you know job security is important so when it takes others 4 hours, it takes me 8 hours. Now it might look like 8 hours of work, but actually instead of the 15-minute break, I take 20. The old man he owes me. And then, well I haven't finished by the end of the day so I stayed 15 minutes to show how concerned I am about getting the job done. I also get paid a little overtime, but I leave a little extra work for tomorrow. You know, job security.

No, we're salty. We are thankful for a job and a boss or a corporation that is paying us for our work. We want them to succeed. We become efficient; we seek to please the owner. He will be pleased if we please the clients. They probably would be happy if the workplaces were happy places, and somebody brings happiness and joy and integrity to the workplace. We're different, we get done in four hours what the others take eight hours to do. And when we do call in sick, a novel idea, we are actually sick. When you call in sick, you're going to find out that your coworkers call

you and say ‘you never call in sick you must really be sick. Are you OK? Can I help you?’ Good you are being salt, and it's being noticed. And some will notice it and hate you for it because it makes them look bad. That takes us back to those beatitudes, blessed are you when you suffer for righteousness's sake. You're suffering because you're salty.

Our country, our state, even our city is a mess. Why? Well number one, there's not enough salty Christians. We need to look at that great commission, go and make disciples. We need to do that, we need more salty Christians.

Our second big problem in society today is that we have too many semi-salty Christians. They're compromised, there's no integrity there. They are swayed by society. They are swayed by friends; they are swayed by co-workers and they are swayed by family. But like but like minerals diluting salt, Jesus says, ‘when salt has lost its saltiness, it's only good to be thrown on the road.’ That was the 1st century version of roundup. You know, the mix you spray on the weeds, it kills them, roots and all. It's a salt, and compromised salt kills.

Thirdly, we have too many Christian's trying to be salty through artificial means. It's kind of like Coke, with real cane sugar, it tastes good. 180 calories. Do you remember when Tab came out? All the taste of Coke, but none of the calories. It had saccharin. Fakes! Fake sugar, in this case. It was sweet, it killed you too because it created cancer.

There is a lot of fake salt in Christianity today. One of the big ones is fake mission trips. You spend thousands of dollars for kids to go on a mission trip and they come back, and they tell you about how they went zip lining, and snorkeling, and swam with the dolphins, and things like that. Ask them, what did they do for Jesus? And did they share Jesus with anyone? And you'll find all too often they say no because it was all about them and having fun. But boy, were they Christians, because they were on a mission's trip.

We need to be salt, real salt. Everywhere, church, family, job, neighborhood. Salt that preserves, brings good taste, brings balance, brings spiritual health. Don't look to the government to do it. Don't look through the Pastor to do it. You are the salt of the earth and your saltiness combined with the saltiness of others combined with God's word combined with the power of the Holy Spirit. You can make a difference that salty Christians are our only hope. So, go be salty. In our Savior's Name. Amen