

INTRODUCTION – Be what God has already made you

In the gospels, we read, “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:14-15) And again, “And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.” (Matthew 4:23). Matthew and Mark tell us that Jesus came to preach the good news. But more specifically, they tell us that Christ came to this world to preach the kingdom of God. They equate the gospel with this kingdom. But what does this mean. The modern American church has failed in many respects to understand its role in the world because it can’t adequately answer this question. We don’t think in kingdom of God terms. We think in pietistic individualistic terms. And as a result, we have become nominal to the society that we find ourselves in. Because of the way we approach Scripture, we miss the point of this kingdom language. For the Bible is not a list of timeless truths that are meant to be memorized like a book of catechism questions; it is a story of the person and work of Christ.

And the story goes something like this: God created the world as His kingdom. Adam and Eve were commanded to rule over the kingdom as God’s covenantal representatives. Our first parents were given the cultural mandate to shape and control the world into an ordered society for the glory of God. But Adam violated this covenant and disrupted the kingdom program. For a time, rule of the world fell into the hands of Satan, to whom Adam submitted in the Fall and all mankind with him. Adam was unable to fulfill the cultural mandate which was still binding to humanity. Noah was given the same mandate after the flood as was Moses, David and the nation of Israel through the prophets. Therefore, God sent his son Jesus Christ, the second Adam to be the covenant head of a new body that would build a new world. The story of Biblical Redemption is the story of the Kingdom of God. Through sin, the Kingdom was lost. Christ came to build a new kingdom, one that will spread into all the world and endure forever and ever.

God reveals himself in history in terms of covenants and a promise. From Genesis to Revelation he promises that He is redeeming a people for himself, a promise most gloriously expressed throughout Scripture by the formula, “I will be your God, and you will be my people.” God’s goal for history is the recreation of a fallen world where there will be a new heaven and a new earth that will be purified from all sin and where a people will commune with the Trinity forever. History is not cyclical. It has a beginning and an end. History is not chaotic. It is controlled by our creator and is outlined in such a way as to progress towards God’s intended end. History is the Lord’s. And that intended end is to re-create this fallen world, to redeem it from the bondage of sin and restore it to a beautiful garden as it once was. This is the story of the Scriptures. Man was told to faithfully bring the world under subjection and to order the world as a kingdom which would manifest God’s glory. Adam’s sin sacked this kingdom. In order to

reestablish what was lost in the fall, in order to transform the fallen kingdom back into what it was meant to be, the king himself had to come to recreate what was lost.

In our text today, Christ exhorts his listeners to understand their role in God's redemptive plan in recreating the world. We come to the Sermon on the Mount, where he describes who the citizens of the kingdom of God are, how they relate to the world and how they are to live out the kingdom life. Just as in Christ's day, we come to this text with baggage about our understanding of what the kingdom of God means and what it is to look like. And this baggage has slanted our understanding of our role which we find ourselves in as we walk in the fallen world around us. The reason that the North American Church is seen to be irrelevant to the culture around it today stems in large part from a misapplication of this text. We fail to grasp the reality of our position in the world. We are salt and light, a visible city intended to manifest Christ's authority on earth.

THE ROTTENNESS OF THE WORLD

The descriptors, salt and light, necessitate a certain understanding of the world around us. Although God created a world that he declared as good, Adam's sin in the garden corrupted all creation. Thorns and thistles now grow in abundance, suffering and death now reigns. The world now decays. This pattern is seen in mankind prior to the flood, left to our devices, man spirals downward into further depravity and darkness. Left to ourselves, we seek the dark places of sin, hating God and despising his commandments. The world then needs salt and light because it is becoming putrid/rotten and is hiding in the dark places.

We see many images throughout Scriptures that describe this fallen world. Babylon; a nation bent on turning from all obligation from its creator to look to itself for peace and prosperity. Sodom and Gomorrah; a city operating on a depraved and insane level that lives as though there is no God. Egypt; the nation of bondage and captivity. The pagan nations of Canaan who worship false idols and look to themselves for blessing. The images of our text further expand this view of the world. The world is rotting meat. The world is utter darkness.

This world of depravity is at odds with the Kingdom which Christ came to establish. The Messiah came to redeem the world. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.... Earlier in Matthew we read, "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Matt 4:23) Matthew here tells us the theme of Christ's ministry, he, the anointed one (the Messiah), came preaching the good news of the kingdom. That prophecies like Isa 61:1-3 came to fruition. "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim

liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to *them that are* bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that he might be glorified.”

Matthew is pointing to the promises in Isaiah, The messiah is preaching good tidings to the meek, binding up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort all that mourn. Isaiah and Matthew use similar labels for the members of God's kingdom, meek, mournful, brokenhearted; these are the beatitudes. These are the characteristics of the members of the kingdom. The Kingdom has come in the person of Christ. All those who put their faith in Christ are citizens of the kingdom.

Here then are the two sides, on the one hand is the kingdom of the world, fallen and corrupted full of sin and depravity. On the other hand is the Kingdom of God, established on earth in the incarnation of the anointed one sent from the father to rescue the meek, the mournful, the brokenhearted from their captivity. The year of Jubilee, the jubilee of jubilees has finally come and fulfilled in Christ. Christ himself preached on this very text in a Nazarene synagogue where he proclaimed, “This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.” This begs the question, what does Christ tell us the relationship is between these two kingdoms? Matthew here tells us what that relationship is to be.

In verse 11-12 we read that men revile, slander and persecute citizens of God's kingdom. In Christ the Church is too different from the world to be tolerated. The world sees the kingdom of God as a threat to its own ways, and so it seeks to destroy it. But if this is the response of the world to the kingdom of God, how are those who belong to the kingdom to live in the world? And how can they live in a way that will make an impact for God's glory among men? It is to these questions that Christ now turns his attention in his Sermon recorded here in Matthew. He uses two pictures drawn from everyday world of his time to illustrate what it means to be a Christian in a pagan society; Christians are like salt; Christians are like light. What salt and light were to life in first century Palestine, the Church is to the society in which it lives. In these verses, Jesus shows both how totally different from the world and yet how closely related we are to it as a church.

YOU AND YOU ALONE

In the Greek text of Matthew 5:13, emphasis is placed on the pronoun, “you”. A more literal translation of the text should read, “You, and you alone are salt of the earth”. What encouragement this is to the weak and suffering of the world. Who is Christ talking to here? He is talking to a bunch of fishermen, peasants, to unimportant people. “But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to

confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (1 Cor 1:27). It is too easy to despair as Christians because we brow-beat ourselves into thinking that we are worms deserving death. Being good Calvinists, we see humanity as totally depraved. That is, all aspects of our nature is corrupted by sin and deserves the punishment of death. How could God possibly use such a group of sinners to do battle against the wickedness of the world when we ourselves are sinners. But this is exactly what Christ is saying. You and you alone are salt. Nobody else can hold claim to this position. He chooses the weak to confound the mighty.

But who should we understand this personal pronoun to be referencing. Is it to the Jews only. This is the traditional dispensational view. The addressee of this sermon is the nation of Israel alone and has little relevance to the Christian church in this era. This misses the point of the story which the Scriptures are saying. The citizen of the kingdom are those who are meek, who are poor in spirit, who mourn, who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who receive persecution. In the beatitudes, the character of a kingdom citizen is described. This is not focusing on the national Jew, it is rather describing a person who is regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit, who has Godly character imputed to their account, that is Christ's righteousness. All those who are united to Christ via the covenant of Grace, are true citizens of the kingdom. Let me say that again. All those who have been baptized into Christ and now bound to their king are citizens of the kingdom. But we will talk more about this further on in the text.

THE ETHICAL INDICATIVE OF SALVATION

By using the indicative mood, Christ is making a statement of fact about their position in the kingdom. An indicative is a statement, it is not a command or an appeal to do something. I am a man. That is an indicative. Be a man, that is an imperative or a command. Christ starts off with an indicative statement to the crowd and proclaims that they are salt as a matter of fact. He is not starting his sermon with a call to be salt, he simply says you and you alone are salt. He is not urging the disciples to be something that they are not, he is telling them what they are as Kingdom people.

What did Jesus mean when he said that Christians are salt? Remember the context of this passage. In the preceding verses, Christ explains that conflict will come between the world and those in his Kingdom. Persecution was to be expected because they were so different from the world. Like salt, Christians may seem to be small and insignificant, without any power in power-mad society. Yet they have the ability to influence every part of that society. Salt is cheap, its value is minimal. But salt has unusual properties that far exceed its' own value. So it is with citizens of the kingdom. Its just too easy to despair when we look at the land before us which is ours by right, and see mighty giants roaming the land. We will never be able to knock down their strongholds, they are too strong.

Never give in to Satan's lie that we can only be effective when we have large numbers in order to show physical strength.

More obvious, however is the fact that in Jesus' day salt was a vital preservative. In the days without refrigerators, salt was used to preserve meat so that it would not spoil. Jesus is primarily using the salt imagery in this context. We are to retard and prevent decay of the world. Salt, then has a negative function. It combats deterioration. Similarly, Christians, by showing themselves to be what they are, are constantly combating moral and spiritual decay. How often does this happen, when a Christian enters the room at work, do their co-workers apologize for swearing or stop telling an off-color joke. By just being there, wickedness is curbed.

Besides preserving meat, salt can also act like a disinfectant. It can stop the spread of disease within a wound. But when we pour salt in an open wound, it hurts. The natural reaction to pain is to fight it off. The world fights the church because when it acts as it should, the world is exposed to pain. This pain is necessary. In order to cure the wound, pain is necessary. How this goes against the trends in our current doctrines of outreach to the world. The sinner has to be made comfortable in the worship service if he is to attend the church. We are supposed to be relevant by conforming our methods to the modern worldview if we are to be effective in this changing world of ours. This completely goes against Christ's teaching here, when we are called salt, we are to act as a preservative of what is holy and a disinfectant to what is impure. You can't have the resurrected life in the Kingdom of God without being buried with Christ. The pattern is death, burial resurrection not comfort, conviction, happiness.

Contemporary worship services who cater to fallen man in order to be made relevant contradicts Christ here. Pain is a necessary condition to rebirth. Now there is a limit to the level of pain generated here. We don't want to go poking people in the eye about their sin. We don't need to be overt about it. Salt acts secretly. It counteracts decay and we don't see it happening. But the influence is real nonetheless. And with this pain comes persecution. When persecution comes for Christ's sake, remember that this is what God made you to be. When the world persecutes you, it is simply acknowledging that you are salt; that you are what you are.

SALT LOOSING SALTINESS

After explaining to them what they are called in the kingdom, he pronounces a heavy judgment if they do not live as they should based on their position. The indicative is here closely linked with the imperative. The statement of fact is closely related to the command. We are salt and we are to be salty. If we lose our preservative and disinfectant characteristics we are good for nothing and deserve to be trodden on by men. In Palestine, the salt dug from around the Dead Sea containing many impurities. This type of salt could contain so many

impurities in fact that it was considered good for nothing. During the days of Christ, this salt was stored in the Temple to be scattered on the marble floor when it rained. It's only use in life was to be walked on by men.

Notice what Christ is saying here. Those who are salt can lose their saltiness. He doesn't say that only those who are salty are really salt. He tells the crowd that those who are salt can lose this status. This is often explained away with Theological gymnastics that bend and twist the passage to split the truly salty as the invisible church and saltless as members of the visible church only. This takes us down the wrong path when we use these terms. The whole visible church is salt. Not a sub-culture within the church. Christ is describing the visible church in history, the historic church. He is not talking only to those who are elect to salvation before the beginning of the world. The elect will never lose its savor ultimately, but those in the visible church can. In this historic church, there are some who become good for nothing. We miss the point of this text because we miss our position in Christ as covenant members of his visible/historic church.

Christ is not trying to make you doubt your position in the Kingdom, rather he is pointing out that acting contrary to the covenant goes completely against your nature. Saltless salt is good for nothing. How silly it is to live in such a way that goes against your new nature in Christ. The emphasis is your position, not the ease in which this position can be lost.

Regardless, it can happen, salt can become good for nothing. How does this take place? Salt loses its savor when it acts like the world. The enemy knows the battle lines. The world knows what's at stake. They want to live in autonomy from God. To do this, they have to be able to name or construct a society that fits this worldview. Man is sovereign for his actions and has no higher level of accountability. Naming is everything. What is a family? Who can marry? How many spouses can you have? How can a family be split up? What is education? What is the role of parents of the state in training its citizens? The church loses it's savor when it gives in to the definitions of the world on how society is to live and what is acceptable and not. Many within the church want to be accepted within the world so they try and play by the world's rules. By doing this, it is hoped that they can be influential from within. They hope to be salt and light. But by the time they get their place at the table, there is so much compromise that they no longer in accordance with their nature as salt. The meat has made them rotten instead of them preserving the meat.

Salt also loses its savor when it fails to be rubbed into the meat. Although we are distinct from the world, we are to be in the world. When we separate the salt from the rotting meat, we are failing to carry out our function as kingdom citizens. We build our own Christian ghettos that mimmick the world in how we worship, work, and entertain ourselves. We think that by leaving the world, we protect ourselves from its decay. This is also a lie. When this happens, we are not

guarding purity, we are failing to live up to our nature and become worthless deserving to be trodden under the foot of men.

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

We have seen that in the main, salt has a negative function to preserve and disinfect the world. Light on the other hand, has a positive function and shines openly, publicly. The two metaphors therefore compliment one another. As to light, Jesus says, "You are light of the world." Jesus himself is the light of the world. (John 8:12). We are light in as much as we are in Christ. Those who are in the kingdom are light to the world because they reflect the true source of all light in God the son. We are never light in ourselves. Our righteousness, goodness, purity, holiness is derivative in nature. It is secondary. Christ is the light lighting (John 1:9) and the church is the light lighted. All those in covenant with Christ have been brought out of the kingdom of darkness and into the kingdom of God. "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated *us* into the kingdom of his dear Son: (Col 1:12-13) Because we have been translated into His kingdom we can now be considered 'light in the Lord' and children of the light, having nothing to do with the deeds of darkness (Eph 5:8-14).

Once again, the inference that Christ makes here is should not be overlooked. The world needs light, it is in utter darkness. And the Christian church alone casts out the darkness. Not man-made reason or philosophy or any other activity will illumine their position. This is the great contrast in worldviews between the Kingdom of God and the world. For you see, the world talks of the enlightenment as the beginning of true light and understanding. Since the Renaissance of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, man took a new interest in seeking knowledge. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools to worship the creature, that is man's reason over their creator. In the eighteenth century came the enlightenment where men put reason ahead of Scripture. The word choice here is significant. The world thinks itself to be light. Through this label it attempts to name the world in a positive manner. Reason is the depository of light for the world. The Scriptures use another term, it calls the world darkness. We cannot get trapped into the world's labels and methods. Science in itself is not evil. But the scales of reason and science are not to be our sources of light. Christ our king is the true light of the world.

Even though we now have refrigerators, we can still pretty easily grasp the imagery of salt as a preservative, but unless you have experienced rural life, it may be a little more difficult to appreciate the concept of darkness. If you live in the city, you will rarely if ever experience total darkness. My family and I lived in England for a few years and during that time we visited many castles. Invariably, if there was a tour available, we would be led to the crypt or dungeon where the tour guide would turn off all the lights so we could experience for ourselves the

environment of darkness. I Couldn't see my hand before my face. It was an eerie feeling. This is the true state of the world and you alone shine forth to cast out the darkness.

This is the world that we live in. Men have lost their sense of moral bearings and are blind to the result. How else can we explain the wickedness of abortion. 31 years ago yesterday, the Supreme Court ruled to legalize the killing of unborn children. The highest court in the land declared that it was more important to allow Mothers the right to choose if their children would live or die than it was to protect the innocent child from murder. What utter darkness.

To further make his point, Christ uses two ideas here: a city situated on a hill and lamp set on a lampstand. In both instances, these ideas relate to the visibility and radiance of Christ's Church on earth. This light is meant to shine forth. Just like a city on a hill, it will cast its light to the surrounding territory. You cannot hide it. Just like a lamp being lit, you would not be foolish enough to hide it under a bushel. We are intended to give light to others. Look to the world and see its position. It is in utter darkness. You church are the city that mankind needs.

The city besides being visible was also the center of the community. The anemic church of our day fails to shine forth to a dying world because it attempts to hide its place in the world. The church is to be the center of our society on how we live. Instead of doing this we think in singular terms. Think about it like this. How do many churches illustrate the Christian's call to be light to the world? Typically, a lighthouse is used to make this point. There it is, a solitary beacon on an empty cliff casting its light into the fog over the sea. How different this picture is from what Christ says here. We are not solitary, but communal. We are a city on a hill that cannot be hidden. We are not isolated to our own subculture within a community. The town center is to be the church, not the mall or the secular city hall. We are to be the light to the world.

This emphasis is further developed in the illustration of the lamp that is intended to give light to those who are in the house. He is beating this idea into our brains. It is ridiculous to imagine a man lighting a light and then putting it under a bushel instead of putting in on a candlestick. This is contradictory to the purpose of lighting a light. For a foolish man to cover it with something which prevents the light from exposing the darkness is futile and makes absolutely no sense. And yet Christ makes this point in regards to light twice. He says here, "I have made you light. Are you deliberately concealing it? Well, if you are, apart from anything else, it is something which is completely ridiculous and foolish. The essential characteristic of light is that it is light, and gives light, and it really has no other function whatsoever. The moment it ceases to act as light it has no value. It's essential quality is its only quality, and once it loses that, it becomes entirely useless. You see what he is saying here. Light, if it fails to do the work of light, is not really light. Our faith, if they are not accompanied by works is not

really faith. Salvation in Christ, entrance into the kingdom, being made citizens of the kingdom is not accomplished by works. We don't become salt and light in and of ourselves. Entrance into covenant is not accomplished by works. They are not merely a test or an evidence of saving faith, they are inseparably bound up in the character or the nature of citizens in the kingdom. It is not faith + obedience, but the obedience of faith. How foolish it is to think of salt that isn't salty and to take a light and then hide it. How silly it is for us to believe that faith can be salvific and barren of any work.

So we see the nature of light is to shine. But how must we shine. We read in verse 16 that we do this by doing such good works as men may see, and may approve of, such good works as are a good report. It is in the church that the nations see Christ. Our good deeds will be seen and others will be drawn to the light to glorify God through this witness. These deeds are a gift. Obedience to Christ is a gracious gift meant to display Christ to the world. We are not to puff up ourselves in the work. Notice in just a few verses Matthew warns the church not to let the world see our good deeds in the giving of alms for there is no reward in this. Works that are done to get the spotlight on you has no reward in it. But works meant to cast the spotlight on Christ and who he is to a pitch black world are a glory of the father who is in Heaven. This is the difference of these two verses, The proud were giving to the church to receive glory. This is intolerable. A meek heart will always cast the glory from themselves to God. A selfish and contentious heart will always seek its own glory.

James affirms this in saying, "Who *is* a wise man and endued with knowledge among you? let him shew out of a good conversation his works with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife *is*, there *is* confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, *and* easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. (James 3:13-17). It is not hypocritical to say that sinners can impart good deeds to the world so long as obedience is seen as a gracious gift which vindicates the status or nature of citizens of the kingdom.

Not only are we glorifying God ourselves when we faithfully obey his commandments and walk in a manner worthy of his calling, we must also bring others to glorify Him. This is where the imagery of light as it fits into the story of the Bible is very handy. Light beckons the nations to come and worship the king. Listen to the author of the book of Hebrews, "Let us hold fast the profession of *our* faith without wavering; And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some *is*; but exhorting *one another*: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." (Heb 10:23-25). We do not gather together to shield us from the wicked world. We gather in worship to encourage and exhort one another in love and good deeds. By huddling together to hide

from the dark shadow of the world we are acting like the apostles were pre-pentecost locked in their room. But we are a post-pentecost church. Just as the apostles boldly preached to the world after the Holy Spirit came upon them, we should also boldly take the gospel to the nations and beckon them to worship. We come together as a people, before the throne room of God, offering our good works of praise to His glory. As salt and light especially, we do this visibly in the world so that they will join us in glorifying our Lord in worship.

The regeneration of men's souls is a sovereign work of God's grace. We cannot restore his kingdom by our own works. But it is our responsibility to live a new life, to worship in Spirit and in Truth in order that others may be drawn to it. It is our responsibility to shine for Jesus Christ so that others will see his salvation expressed in the flesh and blood reality of our daily lives. Kingdom life is displayed and not just described. We proclaim the gospel message; that the light of the world has come and we do this in our words and in our deeds.

Peter echoes this thought when he says that we are a people chosen to declare the praises of him who called us out of our darkness into his marvelous light. "But ye *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:" (1 Peter 2:9). Peter is saying that the church is a priesthood for the world. It is the church that represents the Kingdom on earth.

Peter is quoting Moses from the book of Exodus. "Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth *is* mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These *are* the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel." (Exodus 19:5-6) Moses says that the world is God's and that God's covenantally faithful people are a royal priesthood to the nations. We are the light of the world. This must be seen in covenant terms with God selecting us to lead the world in worship. All these passages point to marvelous truth. The world is God's. He has won. The two armies are not on equal footing. The kingdom of the world has already lost to God's Kingdom. The land is being reclaimed. We are doing this in our worship of God. Church we must repent of our worship that focuses on fallen man. We are a chosen people come to worship our creator and redeemer. But when we cater to the unconverted, and try to make our service relevant to a darkened world, we are not light. They should see a peculiar people on a mountain worshipping their King. All the nations should see this and come. And they will.

Listen to the prophet Isaiah "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."

BE WHAT GOD HAS ALREADY MADE YOU

I would like to close with an exhortation from our church calendar. The historic protestant church over the centuries recognized this Sunday as falling within the season of epiphany. A time starting on Jan 6 following the 12 days of Christmas and concluding Ash Wednesday which begins the season of lent. This period of the church calendar looks to mission of the church to the world in light of the nativity. It remembers the first Gentiles coming to worship the incarnate king. It was a light that shown the way for the Gentile kings to come and worship at the feet of the Christ child. A bright star showed the way in the darkness for the rulers of the gentiles to bring their offerings to Christ. This fits well with what Christ has proclaimed the mission of the church is to be. We are his representatives on earth.

Jesus is very honest with us. He tells us what to expect as the Kingdom of God confronts the Kingdom of man. We must expect persecution. The saltier that the salt and the brighter that the light is, the more the world will despise us. Pressure will come from the world to be less salty and bright. The temptation for us to lay low and fit in, because only fools like fighting and pain. If we stop being a preservative and a light then they'll leave us alone. So we must be courageous. We must understand the story and our part in it. Of course there will be strife between the darkness and the light. So what. You are by nature different then the world. The world should see that. The king has come, the time is fulfilled the Kingdom of God is in your midst so act like it. Be what God has already made you to be, salt and light. Show Christ to the world in all that you say and do. Christ has come for every tribe tongue and nation.

“And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb *is* the light thereof. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it.”. Christ is the king and we are his citizens. Christ reigns on earth and he does it in his church. May God be glorified as we shine to the nations.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank you for revealing yourself to us in Jesus the Christ, we who once were not your people but whom you chose to adopt as your people. We realize that we were not chosen because of our own righteousness, or our own superior wisdom, or strength, or power, or numbers. It was simply because you loved us, and chose to show us that love in Jesus. May we, through your guidance and our faithful obedience, find new avenues in ways that we have not imagined of holding the Light of your love so that it may be a Light of revelation for all people. We thank you for your love, praise you for your Gift, ask for your continued Presence with us, and bring these petitions in the name of your Son, who has truly revealed your heart. Amen