

**Matthew 5:13-16**

**February 5, '17**

**“WHAT YOU ARE – YOU ARE!”**

**THOSE OF YOU WHO READ CLOSELY WILL HAVE NOTICED THAT THE SERMON TITLE YOU SEE IN THE BULLETIN, ALONG WITH THE ONE ON THE SIGN OUTSIDE ARE DIFFERENT FROM WHAT WAS ANNOUNCED AS THE TITLE IN THE NEWSLETTER THIS WEEK.**

**THE CHANGE IS EVER-SO-SLIGHT, BUT EVER-SO-SIGNIFICANT.**

**IN THE NEWSLETTER, I INDICATED THAT I HAD NEVER USED THAT TITLE BUT HAD READ A SERMON MANY YEARS AGO THAT DID.**

**SHORTLY AFTER THE NEWSLETTER HAD BEEN RUN, I DISCOVERED TO MY AMAZEMENT THAT I**

**HAD, IN FACT, USED THAT VERY TITLE A DECADE  
AGO.**

**IN CONSIDERING THE DIRECTION I WANTED THE  
SERMON TO TAKE, THOUGH, I REALIZED THE  
WORDING COULD BE CHANGED TO CONVEY THE  
MESSAGE I WAS FEELING FROM THESE WORDS  
FROM THIS SECTION OF THE SERMON ON THE  
MOUNT.**

**YOU SEE, THE TITLE I SUGGESTED IN THE  
NEWSLETTER & THE TITLE I HAD PREVIOUSLY  
USED, ENDED WITH A QUESTION – “WHAT YOU ARE –  
ARE YOU?”**

**THE ALTERNATE TITLE REMOVES THE  
QUESTION & REPLACES IT WITH AN EXCLAMATION –  
*“WHAT YOU ARE – YOU ARE!”***

**THIS PASSAGE FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT DOESN'T HAVE JESUS ASKING A QUESTION BUT MAKING A DECLARATION.**

**I HAVE STOOD ON THE TRADITIONAL SITE WHERE THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT WAS DELIVERED.**

**IT'S A BEAUTIFUL, PEACEFUL PLACE.**

**IT LIES NEAR THE BOTTOM OF A GENTLY SLOPING HILL, OVERLOOKING THE SEA OF GALILEE.**

**JESUS WOULD HAVE STOOD – OR, MORE LIKELY, SAT – WITH HIS BACK TO THE SEA WITH THE SWARMS OF PEOPLE WATCHING & LISTENING TO HIM WITH THE BEAUTIFUL WATER IN THE BACKGROUND.**

**YOU CAN ENVISION THE PEOPLE COMING FROM THE TOP OF THAT HILL – WALKING FROM EVERY**

**DIRECTION – AND DESCENDING DOWN THROUGH  
THE ROCKS, TOWARD JESUS, CLAMORING TO GET  
CLOSER SO THEY COULD HEAR HIS WORDS.**

**THIS ISN'T A GROUP OF WEALTHY ARISTOCRATS  
& LEARNED SCHOLARS.**

**THEY'RE EVERYDAY PEOPLE – LABORERS,  
FARMERS, HOMEMAKERS, CHILDREN & YOUTH.**

**THEY'RE NOT MUCH DIFFERENT FROM YOU.**

**WE HAVE TO KNOW THAT TO UNDERSTAND THE  
SIGNIFICANCE OF JESUS'S WORDS.**

**THESE WORDS ARE EARTHSHAKING.**

**THEY'RE WORDS THAT TRANSFORM THE  
WORLD.**

**THEY'RE WORDS THAT ECHO THROUGH THE  
CENTURIES & ACROSS THE GLOBE.**

**ONE SOMETIMES WONDERS HOW SO MANY  
PEOPLE COULD HAVE HEARD JESUS SPEAKING.**

**HE DIDN'T HAVE A MEGAPHONE.**

**THERE WAS NO FIRST-CENTURY SOUND SYSTEM.**

**HOW COULD 5,000 OR MORE GET CLOSE ENOUGH  
TO EVEN HEAR WHAT HE WAS SAYING.**

**AS I SAID, I'VE STOOD IN THE SPOT WHERE IT'S  
LIKELY THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT WAS  
DELIVERED.**

**EMMA SUE WENT FAR UP THE HILL – PROBABLY  
AS FAR AWAY FROM THIS PULPIT AS THE OTHER  
SIDE OF WASHINGTON AVENUE.**

**I SPOKE IN A VOLUME THAT I'M USING RIGHT  
NOW & SHE COULD HEAR EVERY WORD I SAID.**

**I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS THAT CAUSES THE  
SOUND TO TRAVEL AS IT DOES.**

**MAYBE IT’S THE SLOPE OF THE HILL OR THE CONFIGURATION OF THE ROCKS OR THE BREEZE FROM THE LAKE.**

**WHATEVER IT IS, THE WORDS FROM THAT SPOT SEEM TO TRAVEL.**

**AND THEY CONTINUE TO TRAVEL TO THIS VERY DAY.**

***“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”***

**NOW, REMEMBER – JESUS ISN’T TALKING TO THE POWERFUL OR THE ELITE IN SOCIETY.**

**HE’S TALKING TO YOU.**

**I THINK IT’S WORTH NOTING THAT WHEN JESUS BEGINS THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT WITH THE BEATITUDES, HE’S MAKING THIRD PERSON REFERENCES – *“BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT,***

***BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, BLESSED ARE  
PEACEMAKERS.”***

**BUT THEN HE SWITCHES TO SECOND PERSON.**

***“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. YOU ARE THE  
LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”***

**IT’S AS IF HE’S STARING AT YOU – HE’S LOOKING  
INTO YOUR EYES – AND SPEAKING DIRECTLY TO  
YOU.**

***“YOU, MY FRIEND, ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH &  
THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”***

**NOW WE COULD SPEND A GREAT DEAL OF TIME  
THIS MORNING JUST FOCUSING ON WHAT IT MEANS  
TO SAY “YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.”**

**WE COULD CONSIDER THE FACT THAT THERE  
ARE MORE THAN 14,000 KNOWN USES FOR SALT.**

**SALT WAS WORSHIPED BY THE EARLY GREEKS.**

**HOMER CALLED SALT “*DIVINE*” & PLATO  
TERMED IT “*A SUBSTANCE DEAR TO THE GODS.*”**

**IN INDIA, SALT WAS REFERRED TO AS “*MAGIC,  
WHITE SAND.*”**

**IN THE FIRST CENTURY, WHEN JESUS MADE THIS  
STATEMENT ABOUT SALT, ROMAN SOLDIERS WERE  
GIVEN PART OF THEIR PAY IN SALT.**

**THAT PART WAS CALLED “SALARIIUM” AND IT’S  
FROM THAT WORD THAT WE GET OUR WORD  
“SALARY” IN REFERENCE TO ONE’S PAY.**

**IT’S BEEN SAID THAT “*MORE WARS HAVE BEEN  
FOUGHT OVER SALT THAN OVER GOLD.*”**

**AND, OF COURSE, THE BEST THING YOU CAN SAY  
ABOUT A PERSON IS, “*SHE’S THE SALT OF THE  
EARTH! HE’S THE SALT OF THE EARTH!*”**

**AND THAT’S WHAT JESUS IS SAYING ABOUT YOU.**



IN T. S. ELIOT'S THE CONFIDENTIAL CLERK, ONE OF THE CHARACTERS SAYS, "*OF COURSE, THERE IS SOMETHING IN US, IN ALL OF US, WHICH ISN'T JUST HEREDITY, BUT SOMETHING UNIQUE, SOMETHING WE HAVE BEEN FROM ETERNITY. SOMETHING...STRAIGHT FROM GOD.*"

NOTICE EVERYTHING JESUS *DOESN'T* SAY HERE.

HE DOESN'T SAY, "*YOU SHOULD BE SALT.*"

HE DOESN'T SAY "*YOU COULD BE SALT.*"

HE DOESN'T SAY "*YOU OUGHT TO BE SALT.*"

HE SAYS "*YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.*"

*YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.*

THIS ISN'T A QUESTION – IT'S A DECLARATION!

WHAT YOU ARE – YOU ARE!

AS INCREDIBLE AS IT IS THAT JESUS TELLS YOU THAT YOU'RE THE SALT OF THE EARTH, HE THEN

**GOES ON TO SAY SOMETHING THAT MAY BE EVEN MORE INCREDIBLE.**

***“YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”***

**I THINK IT’S INTERESTING THAT IN JOHN’S GOSPEL, JESUS SAYS, *“AS LONG AS I AM IN THE WORLD, I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”***

**BUT HERE, HE SAYS *“YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”***

**HOW DO YOU RECONCILE THE TWO?**

**HOW ARE THEY NOT CONTRADICTORY?**

**YOU HAVE TO INCLUDE THAT INTRODUCTORY PHRASE – *“AS LONG AS I AM IN THE WORLD...”***

**THINK OF THE IMPLICATIONS OF THAT!**

**WHAT IS JESUS SAYING?**

**IN ESSENCE, HE'S SAYING, "*ONCE I'M GONE,  
SOMEONE ELSE HAS TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD  
& THAT SOMEONE IS YOU.*"**

**BRACE YOURSELF, BECAUSE WHAT HE'S SAYING  
IS - "*YOU ARE CHRIST TO THE WORLD!*"**

**IF THAT'S TRUE, WHAT DOES THE WORLD THINK  
OF CHRIST WHEN THEY LOOK AT YOU?**

**WHEN PEOPLE OUTSIDE THE WORLD OF  
CHRISTIANITY LOOK AT YOU & THINK THAT YOU  
ARE THE REPRESENTATION OF JESUS CHRIST IN THE  
WORLD TODAY, DO THEY HAVE A PROPER  
UNDERSTANDING OF WHO JESUS WAS - WHAT HE  
TAUGHT & HOW HE LIVED & WHAT HE  
PROCLAIMED?**

**WHAT DOES THE WORLD SEE WHEN IT LOOKS  
AT YOUR ACTIONS, YOUR ATTITUDES, YOUR  
BELIEFS, YOUR CONVICTIONS?**

**YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH.**

**YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.**

**WHEN HE WAS 12 YEARS OLD, ROBERT LOUIS  
STEVENSON WAS LOOKING OUT INTO THE DARK  
FROM HIS UPSTAIRS WINDOW, WATCHING A MAN  
LIGHT THE STREETLAMPS.**

**STEVENSON’S GOVERNESS CAME INTO THE  
ROOM AND ASKED WHAT HE WAS DOING.**

**HE SAID, “*I’M WATCHING A MAN CUT HOLES IN  
THE DARKNESS.*”**

**WHAT A MARVELOUS PICTURE OF WHAT OUR  
TASK SHOULD BE AS THOSE WHO ARE CALLED TO  
BE CHRIST TO THE WORLD – PEOPLE WHO ARE BUSY**

**CUTTING HOLES IN THE SPIRITUAL DARKNESS ALL  
AROUND US.**

**THOSE WHO LISTEN TO THIS WORD OF  
COMMENDATION FROM JESUS & THEN ACTUALLY  
LIVE OUT WHO THEY ARE AS THE SALT OF THE  
EARTH & THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD, DO SO, NOT  
FOR FEAR OF PUNISHMENT IF THEY DON'T.**

**THEY DON'T DO IT TO GAIN SOME SORT OF  
REWARD.**

**THEY DO SO BECAUSE CHRIST HAS CHANGED  
THEIR HEART & THEY CAN DO NO LESS.**

**WHEN YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH & THE  
LIGHT OF THE WORLD TO THOSE AROUND YOU, YOU  
ARE SIMPLY FOLLOWING IN PRACTICAL TERMS THE  
WORDS OF OUR OLD TESTAMENT LECTIONARY  
READING FOR TODAY FROM ISAIAH.**

**THE PROPHET TELLS US THAT WHAT GOD  
DESIRES OF US IS – *“TO LOOSE THE BONDS OF  
INJUSTICE...TO LET THE OPPRESSED GO FREE, AND  
TO BREAK EVERY YOKE...TO SHARE YOUR BREAD  
WITH THE HUNGRY, AND BRING THE HOMELESS POOR  
INTO YOUR HOUSE; WHEN YOU SEE THE NAKED, TO  
COVER THEM.”***

**SOUNDS FAMILIAR, DOESN'T IT?**

**AS IN THE WORDS OF JESUS IN THE PARABLE OF  
THE LAST JUDGMENT?**

***“I WAS HUNGRY & YOU GAVE ME FOOD, I WAS  
THIRSTY & YOU GAVE ME SOMETHING TO DRINK, I  
WAS A STRANGER & YOU WELCOMED ME, I WAS NAKED  
& YOU GAVE ME CLOTHING, I WAS SICK & YOU TOOK  
CARE OF ME, I WAS IN PRISON & YOU VISITED ME.”***

**WHEN YOU LIVE YOUR LIFE IN THIS WAY,  
DEMONSTRATING THE DIFFERENCE GOD’S GRACE  
MAKES IN REAL HUMAN LIFE ON A DAILY BASIS,  
YOU ARE LIVING AS THE SALT OF THE EARTH & THE  
LIGHT OF THE WORLD.**

**YOU’RE TAPPING INTO THAT “*SOMETHING  
UNIQUE...*” THAT T. S. ELIOT’S CHARACTER REFERS  
TO – THAT “*SOMETHING STRAIGHT FROM GOD.*”**

**MAKE NO MISTAKE – “*WHAT YOU ARE – YOU  
ARE!*”**

**AND NO LESS THAN JESUS TELLS YOU WHAT  
THAT IS -**

**“*YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH!*”**

**“*YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!*”**

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