

**Epiphany 5A**  
**February 6, 2011**  
**Family of Christ Lutheran Church**  
**Chanhassen, Minnesota**  
**Pastor Jerry Wahl**

Grace and Peace to you in the name of God our Creator Christ our Redeemer and the Holy Spirit our Comforter and guide. Amen.

Today's text is a continuation of the Sermon on the Mount, or Beatitudes that we focused on last week.

Today Jesus calls the faithful together and describes the life of his followers as salt and light. Like a city on the hill- a light to guide our way.

As I share my message today the slides on the screen will focus on the young people of our church who are the salt and light of life. Pictures are from Mission Trips.

Last week we talked about the meek and the humble being blessed. Humility is the attribute of not thinking too highly of oneself. It is often seen connected to deference. We put ourselves second. In fact the humble and the meek are often seen as powerless. Subject to the forces of the world with little ability to change either oneself or the world around us.

Jesus' Words are a contrast to our understanding of humility, and meekness.

Jesus says

You are salt and light! It seems so straight-forward and direct. And St. Paul's assertion that, "We have received...the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God" affirms something powerfully essential about us too.

We have, perhaps, taken to heart something that Paul has also suggested, to not think of ourselves more highly than we ought. But these passages also seem to say that we make an equally terrible mistake by thinking of ourselves more lowly than we ought. For we can focus on our inadequacies, doubt our capabilities, with Minnesota nice humility we can say- I am just OK. Never boast; never think too highly of one's self, see others first, often better than us. To think this way is to actually begin to live this way. We do not try knowing we will fail, we do not aspire to greatness lest we be seen as arrogant or conceited. This thinking shapes our culture, our communities and our way

of life. We become what we think about ourselves. We become locked into place so that we become even more of what we believe.

In contrast to this false sense of self deprecation come the words from Nelson Mandela which challenge the interpretation of humility and meekness that may guide us as we consider our call to be salt and light in the world.

Mandela said this:

**Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous? Actually, who are you *not* to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."**

It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness. (Confucius)

Christian faith can provide spiritual seasoning that gives life joy and meaning. To keep life from being bland and unrewarding, we season it with Christian commitment and understanding of God's love for his children. Being salt to the world means adding flavor to life wherever and whenever possible. It means adding a zestful spirit to life and love. It means pursuing meaning in all we do and in all we encounter. It means acting in love with all whom we touch.

We often look to the great leaders of our time who brought light into darkness whose salty determination was an inspiration and source of encouragement to us. The great public saints,  
Martin Luther King Jr.

Mother Teresa  
Nelson Mandela

When asked, each of these people spoke of single, small acts of love and grace that changed people's lives. They focused on the power of one on one. They called individuals to participate- to make a difference.

Every church has ELVIES. I met her in my first call. She drove a rusted van with the back seat taken out. In an upper middle class community she bravely parked next to fancy mini-vans and SUVs.

Elvie taught Sunday school, sang in the choir, organized the church food program, headed up the refugee resettlement committee, visited shut-ins and provided day care in her home for families who could not afford child care.

Elvie was the first name the pastors called. Elvie had little time for Elvie. We had a brief disagreement one day. We wanted a Bible study for women on Thursday- Elvie said no. I didn't understand – Pastor we can't have a Bible Study on Thursday because that's garage sale day, and I need to be up early.

I didn't know the full effect of what Thursdays meant to Elvie until I saw her garage. It was filled with high chairs, cribs, children's clothing, Men's suits, kitchen utensils. Everything a person needs to set up a household. Elvie welcomed and cared for those whose lives had gone amiss.

Long after I left the congregation, I saw Elvie receive an award as one of the Kare 11's People Who Care.

She received her award quietly then thanked friends, family and people in church by name. The host finally had to cut her off. Not once did she use the word I.

The church is the vehicle of light to the world.

In Jesus name we:

Gathered 20 million dollars for Haiti

Gave millions of dollars and constructed thousands of homes for the victims of Katrina.

It is the church that brings light to dark places from battlefields, to after school programs in urban communities, to schools and medical stations, from new young congregations, to housing advocacy, to ... the list goes on.

In a world where power and might rule, where those who set the agenda for those without, In a world where we need to be reminded that behind every soup can collected, every coat shared, every family housed, there are people. God's children.

Jesus said you are it. This is how it works. The new kingdom, the love of God, the care of others will come through my people.

St. Augustine said - To love God is to love another. To love another is to love God.  
It is impossible to separate.

I am weary of the big stories- and fascinated and intrigued by the personal. The one on one. The human word of comfort, the extended hand the encouraging word.  
There is need for some salt and light in our homes and community AND in our lives.

We thank God for those who have brought flavor into our lives and whose light guided our way.

May we be salt and light for others. Amen.

Anne Morrison words from Nelson Madela

Dr. Alan Lose, Luther Seminary