

February 8 Worship

Readers- Linda Mikkola, Cathy Johnson

Announcements/Joys

Time Of Quiet Meditation- *“Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer every one.” Colossians 4:6*

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Opening Scripture- Psalm 112:1-10(page 529)

Opening Chorus- 116- God Is So Good

Responsive Call To Worship-

Leader: God sends light to us this day and invites us to meet one another in this light.

People: Light breaks forth like the dawn, drawing us into relationship with one another.

Leader: Humble yourselves for the worship of God, that you may be empowered to serve.

People: God calls us to trust with steady hearts and to serve with righteous compassion.

Leader: Seek not for lofty words of wisdom, but for powerful demonstrations of God's way.

People: God makes us to be the salt of the earth and lights to show God's works to the world.

Hymn of Praise- 37- When Morning Gilds The Skies

Unison Prayer/Lord's Prayer- God of mystery and of judgment, who has made us to be salt and light in a tasteless, shadowed world, guide us in this time of worship. Grant us understanding and spiritual discernment so that others may see your good works through us, give you the glory, and be moved to serve you. Help us to pray as You have taught us, saying...*Lord's Prayer...*

“Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”

Gloria Patri- Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. As it

was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be. World without end.
Amen, Amen.

Old Testament Scripture- Isaiah 58:9-12(page 638)

Special Music-

Gospel Scripture- Matthew 5:13-20(page 838)

Children's Time/Echo Prayer/Passing of the Peace

Hymn- 225- When I Survey The Wondrous Cross

New Testament Scripture- 1 Corinthians 2:1-12(page 992)

Message

“Salt And Light From The Cross”

In just 10 days we will enter into the most important period of time in the Christian calendar, Lent. This is the season that leads up to the death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There are a multitude of symbols that remind us of what this season means, the most important of these is the cross. Why does this object that is made from 2 pieces of wood and is considered to be an instrument of extreme torture have such a massive effect on our lives? The cross that we hang on our altars, wear as a piece of jewelry, or otherwise place in our homes and churches is not a thing of beauty or something that we should admire. It is, after all, a representation of the brutal execution used by dominant societies to control and punish their subjects and keep them under control through severe means. Why in the world should we honor or revere this horrific thing. 2,000 years ago, the cross was a symbol of terror, something to be feared as the penalty for disobedience to Roman authority. It was where you went if you did not obey, without question, the rules of the Roman Empire. For those who were sentenced to the cross, a long and extremely painful death was the end result. It was meant to instill fear among the people and it did a fairly good job of deterring people from breaking the laws. It is not that we should worship the cross, we must draw lessons and meaning from it and how it applies to our faith. There are so many objects that are used to remind us of the life and times of Jesus but the cross has become the most dominant and universal symbol of Christianity.

Simply put, the meaning of the cross is death. In Christianity, the cross is the intersection of God’s love and His justice. We all know what is said to us in the

gospel of John 3:16; “For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” From this showing of God's love comes the justice that is required through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We have all been called, by Christ, to take up our cross and follow Him. The cross is not meant to be a burden, it is meant to be a blessing. The cross reminds us of all the lessons that Jesus tried to teach His followers.

In our gospel reading this morning, Jesus tells us that we are meant to be two things, salt and light. What does it mean to be salt and light? Salt had two purposes in the Middle East of the first century. First, because of the lack of refrigeration, salt was used to preserve food, especially meat, which would quickly spoil in the desert environment. Second, salt was used then, as now, as a flavor enhancer. In the same way that salt enhances the flavor of the food it seasons. These concepts are to teach us that we, as Christians, are to preserve our heritage so that the evils of the world can not spoil the meaning of God's love for us. The followers of Christ stand out as those who “enhance” the flavor of life in this world. Christians, living under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and in obedience to Christ, will inevitably influence the world for good, as salt has a positive influence on the flavor of the food it seasons. Where there is strife, we are to be peacemakers; where there is sorrow, we are to be the ministers of Christ, binding up wounds, and where there is hatred, we are to exemplify the love of God in Christ, returning good for evil.

In the analogy of light to the world, the good works of Christ's followers are to shine for all to see. The presence of light in darkness is something that is unmistakable. The presence of Christians in the world must be like a light in the darkness, not only in the sense that the truth of God's Word brings light to the darkened hearts of sinful man, but also in the sense that our good deeds must be evident for all to see. What sorts of things can hinder or prevent the Christian from fulfilling his or her role as salt and light in the world? The passages in Matthew clearly state that the difference between the Christian and the world must be preserved; therefore, any choice on our part that blurs the distinction between us and the rest of the world is a step in the wrong direction. This can happen either through a choice to accept the ways of the world for the sake of comfort or convenience or to contravene the law of obedience to Christ. We cannot allow the principles of our Christian faith to be bent and molded to fit in with the world views as the right way. The worldly views need to be made to embrace the Word of God. It is very tempting to attempt to change what scriptures tell us to fit the cultural morals of the day.

We are responsible to make sure that the Word of God is communicated to others in such a way that the meaning is not changed or watered down to fit whatever the attitudes or morals of the time want to reflect. Have you ever tried “reduced salt”

items from the grocery store? What happens when we lower the light in a room? Now I fully understand the need for a reduced salt diet and there are times when the lights are too bright in a room but when it comes to expressing our faith, well we are called to be the salt and light, not the reduced salt and light. Be the saltiest you can be. Let your light shine so brightly that it make people squint. Now I don't mean that you have to go around singing and preaching the Word but do everything you do as if God was right beside you watching. He is, you know, watching, all the time.

There are so many things that Jesus tried to teach His disciples, that includes us, it seems impossible to remember them all. Use the cross as your filing system. Take all the examples that Christ gave us and attach them to the cross. Whenever we find ourselves in a place where we need lifting up or we need a good swift kick, look to the cross and let it inspire us and remind us of our Savior who died on that cross.

In just a week and a half we will begin Lent. This is the time of year when we need to step back and contemplate the meaning of not only the life of Jesus but on His death and resurrection. Allow the cross to be your focal point and allow the salt and light to stream out of us into a world that does not know the value of salvation. Praise Be to God. Amen.

Prayers of the People- There is no part of life you do not touch, O God, infusing your rich fragrance, gritty and real, getting in underneath the surface, drawing out and lifting up winding love around until defenses are lowered, barriers broken down and the power of your love reveals the beauty you intended for all your children. May our actions draw attention to you, to the richness you bring to all life and the abundance you share, setting the scene for us to share too. Help us to bring light into all the darkness of life, spreading hope for a better world, a world where justice is made real by your children living together in harmony. Help us to bring salt into the blandness of life, encouraging vitality and joy in living in a world that dares to hope for the future that you promise where all your children will know themselves loved and valued and treasured, created in your image, bringing you glory forever. Amen.

Closing Hymn- 230- Near The Cross

Benediction- May our love be like salt that makes life tasty and worthwhile. May our Christian living be a light to those who live in darkness. May our Christian communities be cities of light to be seen from afar as signs that God lives and works in his people. And may God bless you all for this mission: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.

