

Who are you? We can think, feel a lot things about ourselves. But who are you? Some things we think might be true, it may totally wrong. Our ideas of who we are is usually better than the hard truth. I have special talents I could've been a great spy, secret agent going throughout Europe. true, but not everything we think is accurate. You may think you are a good driver, a good cook, a good parent, you may think you are nicer than most. Who are you?

Here's what you are? **You are salt.** Jesus simply declares: **You are salt.** You are what our Lord says you are. Jesus doesn't say: "You must become salt" or "You must get to work on improving your saltiness." We do not make ourselves the salt of the earth. God does. **You are light.** You do not make yourself to be light by exemplary moral behavior or keen Biblical insight. God's light shines through us. God works in us. He says. You ARE... not you will be or you could be or you should be... and LET your light shine... so that your good works may be seen.

The people listening to Jesus know salt is used to preserve, to prevent decay, but more so. Where there's salt, there's a sacrifice –a covenant, a testament cut between God and His people where He forgives, to purify, make them holy.

Salt was sprinkled by the priest with the sacrifices of Israel. Whether it was a bull or grain offering it was seasoned with salt, consecrated with light of fire and given for the holiness of the people. Salt is to address corruption; light for darkness. Sin brings, corruption, decay, death's darkness surround us all.

And there's no greater covenant, sacrifice than the one cut between God and man on the cross – in Jesus. To forgive, purify, preserve us, make us holy.

You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Until the last name is in the book of life; You are the reason the earth still spins, the sun rises. In the eyes of your neighbors and peers, who you are? You may be insignificant, ordinary, nothing to the world, unimportant, perhaps just a foolish Christian, but the faces of your angels are before your Father in heaven and your prayer command the Creator's attention.

In light of such cosmic significance, could you not bring yourself to watch with the Lord for one hour? Could you not stay alert during one divine service, make it through one Our Father undistracted, even this morning my mind, your mind daydreams, so easily distracted, instead of listening and focusing upon God's Word?

You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Could you not control your flesh and your tongue for one day? If you cannot pray without distraction, if you cannot restrain yourself from daydreams of wealth and things that breed only decay and darkness, if you cannot hear conversation without judging and lusting, then how will you have a righteousness to ever, ever enter the kingdom of heaven. **Do not think I have come to abolish the Law.** Jesus can't make it any clearer than that, God hasn't relaxed His Law: sin is still sin, the wages of sin is still death. You don't have the luxury or the authority of relaxing that Law. A stark

warning especially in our day: one of the most dangerous sins is believing that a lot of sins don't matter anymore. And we all take many sins so lightly, harmless.

Oh then too, those words, **let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.** How is that working for you? Our good works are so pathetic, how we treat others, how we share, how we speak of Christ.

In today's Gospel reading Jesus explicitly rejects, condemns synergism- that we work with God to be good to go to heaven- **Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.** That probably sent chills down their spine when they heard that, considering how nice, generous, good; how hard the Scribes and Pharisees obsess over keeping every detail of God's law. They gave more than 10%, did not ever miss church, daily study of God's Word.

Jesus isn't even nice about it. It's not about being nice, but being honest. It's not that you've do to the best of your ability, work more, and try to improve. Even the Pharisees don't make it, the godly church people come up short. In the OT God summarized what He demands, **Be holy; for I the Lord your God am holy.** Jesus taught in this same Sermon on the Mount, **You shall be perfect, just as your Father is perfect.** Holiness, perfection. That's what the Law requires. Anything less is damnable. **Unless your righteousness exceeds... you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.** That should scare the hell out of you.

Considering who you are? What you've done. What are you to do? The Law stands perfect, holy. It never changes. You cannot escape. It does not only apply to others. You are no better than any other person on this planet. Your righteousness is not enough. No one here has even come close to the scribes and Pharisees. Repent.

What are you to do for righteousness? to enter His kingdom? for salvation? Nothing. Or else it would not be called grace. Jesus keeps the Law. He does everything it demands. He fulfilled the Father's will of the Law to the very end, even when He's forsaken by the Father, made a curse, becomes sin for us.

His righteousness He gives away. He pours it out in waters of Holy Baptism, in His Word and preaching, in the Holy Absolution, Holy Supper. The Lord speaks His children righteous. He says it and it is.

Even through you are weak and foolish and lowly, you are the salt of the earth You are forgiven. You are baptized. You are mine. You are holy. You are light... His judgment of grace. Hell's fire will never touch you. Your righteousness is not your own. It is His, given you. It far exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. It is grace. You bask in it now with Christ, that you always know -who you are.