

**Sermon Notes – October 18, 2020***“Are You Shining Your Light?”*

Matthew 5:1-2, 13-16

One of my favorite Peanuts cartoons in the paper is one with Peppermint Patty and Charlie Brown. Peppermint Patty looks over at Charlie Brown and she says, “The first day of school and I’ve already been sent to the Principal’s office. It’s all your fault, Charlie Brown!” Charlie looked at her and said, “How’s it my fault? Why is everything always my fault?” She said, “Well you’re my friend, aren’t you, Charlie? You should’ve been a better influence!” God calls us to have an influence on other people. We are a living advertisement – whether we’re conscious of it or not. We affect other people – positively or negatively.

Jesus, in this gospel reading, used a description to tell us and the disciples who we are. He said, “You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.” Jesus often talked about light. We know that the metaphor of light is used in the Old and the New Testaments. In fact, the first words in the Creation Story are, “Let there be light. And there was light.” In the Psalm reading today, David the Psalmist said, “The Lord is my light and my salvation.” Isaiah the Prophet told that there was one who would shine the light and “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” He prophesized the coming of the light – Jesus the Messiah. Jesus, in John 8, says, “I am the light of the world. He who follows me shall never walk in darkness but he shall have the light of life.” Light was important. Have you ever walked in a dark room and stumped your toe or fell over something?

There’s a cute story told about Dr. Albert Einstein, who was a great scientist and inventor. One day he went to work at the Institute where he was employed and he was hobbling and using a cane. One of his colleagues says, “Dr. Einstein, what happened to you?” He said, “Well I was walking in the dark last night to go to the restroom and I stumped my toe. Now I’m on a cane. The problem is this is about the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> time I’ve done it in a week and I had to visit the doctor to see if I had any

broken toes.” His colleague looked at him and said, “Dr. Einstein, wouldn’t it be less trouble and less pain if you just turned on the light?” He said, “Well, I never thought of that.” Sometimes we need to turn on the light. Christ is the light of our lives. He lights the darkness -- He dispels the darkness of our sin and death. ***He is the light of the world and we’re to be reflectors of that light.***

Jesus said that we are “the salt of the earth.” What did he mean by that? Salt was something that was of everyday use to people of that day, just like it is today. Salt was a preservative - it preserved the meat and the fish from spoiling and rotting. It enhanced the flavor of the food. It also had antiseptic purposes - healing purposes. How many of you have ever had a sore throat and you gargled with warm salt water? Just like us, they knew that salt had some healing and antiseptic purposes. Salt was also used to pay the Roman soldiers. It was a symbol of prosperity. So, salt was important to them and Jesus knew that. Salt flavors food. Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth.” ... You are to flavor people’s lives with God’s goodness - His love - His mercy - His compassion - His gentleness - His patience. We are to bring out the best in others and affect them positively. ***We are to shine the light so that others see Christ in us. We are to live in such a way by who we are, what we say, and what we do that others see Christ.***

You say, “Miss Peggy, how do you be salt and light in the world today?” I want to give you three verbal snapshots of what that looks like:

1. There was a Lutheran Minister whose youngest son (17-years old) had a cancerous tumor in his abdomen. He was to have surgery during the Christmas break - on the last day of the year - December 31<sup>st</sup>. He was scared and anxious and his parents were worried about the surgery and making sure that the doctors got it all. The doctor had already told them how long the surgery was going to last, but it took longer than they anticipated. The family was pacing the floor with worry - in anxiety, and praying, “Lord, please let our son be okay.” Finally the doctor came out and he said, “I want you to know that I’m sorry the surgery took so long. I removed the

tumor that I had seen on the earlier scans. While in there, I felt led to look in a different part of the abdomen. When I went deeper, I found a small tumor and two suspicious looking lymph nodes. I had to take those out as well. I feel sure that I got all the cancer – but I’m sorry it took so long.” The Lutheran Minister looked at the doctor and said, “What made you look in that area of my son’s abdomen? It wasn’t what you saw on the scan, so why did you look deeper?” The doctor said, “I know you’re a Minister and I know what you do for a living. You’ve been here praying for your son and I know that you have a strong faith in God. I was raised by Jesuit priests. I grew up knowing about God. In fact, as a young man, I thought I would be a Jesuit priest and I studied in the seminary for a year. I found out at the end of that year that wasn’t my calling and I went on to medical school to be a doctor. But, you will understand and appreciate this because of your belief in God and my belief in God. I felt led and guided by the Spirit of God to look deeper in your son’s abdomen. I hope you understand what I’m saying.” *Led by the Spirit of God -- that doctor gave a humble witness of God’s guiding hand in surgery.*

2. Second snapshot of shining the light of Christ -- there was a man who worked for an engineering firm. It was during the Easter season and they had a big project that was to be done right after Easter. During Holy Week they were going to have to put in overtime to get this project done by the Wednesday after Easter. The boss came in and asked one of his employees if he would work some overtime that Thursday night and Friday. He finally told his boss, “Sir, I want to go to the Maundy Thursday Service at our church. I’ve not missed one in ten years and it’s important to me to be at that church service because of my relationship with God. I will be glad to work overtime for you that night, because our worship service will only be one hour. I’ll work Thursday night, Friday night, and even Saturday. I promise you that I will get my part of the project done before Sunday.” He did, and the boss approved him to do it. *This employee allowed someone else at work*

*to know that his relationship with God and worship of God was important in his life. He was shining the light for Christ.*

3. Another snapshot of being salt and light in the world -- there was a lady and her three children who went to the local Presbyterian Church in a small town in Illinois. She told the Pastor that her husband had left her for another woman and moved out of state. She said, "I'm the one who stayed at home with the kids and raised them. He had the job and I have no finances. All I have is a little bit of money in my pocket to pay the utilities and buy some food. Could you please help me? Could your church please help me with my rent until I can get a paycheck? I've been approved for a job, but I won't get my pay for 2-3 more weeks." He thought about it, prayed about it, and he went to talk to one of the committees. They decided that they would help this lady with her rent and utilities. He figured since they gave her help, he would never hear from her again, but about five months later, he received a letter (written to the church) that said: "Dear Pastor, I just wanted to thank you and your church for meeting me in a time of my need - for being a light in the darkest night of my life when my husband walked out on me. I want you to know that I am now living in North Carolina; I have a job and I have an apartment. By the way, I am now going to church and I haven't been since I was a child. Please find enclosed a small check -- it's not very much, but I hope you will use it for somebody else who is in a similar circumstance to mine. Thank you again for being the light in my darkness and helping in my time of need. Blessings..." and she signed her name.

You know -- when a church shows the compassion and light of Christ to keep someone from being homeless, when a doctor can give a humble witness to the guiding hand of God in surgery, when an employee is not afraid to say, "My relationship to God is important to me and so is our Maundy Thursday worship service" - then the light of Christ shines brighter and the seasoning quality of salt is preserved.

Jesus said that you and I are to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. I remember a few months ago that Tim Lail gave his testimony. Two of the people he talked about that had a Christian influence on him were JV & Patsy Randall. He talked about their love, acceptance and prayers, and how the light of Christ shined through to him. I asked Jennifer Lingle, one of our church members, "Who is the person shined the light of Christ in your life? Who has seasoned or flavored your life as a Christian? Who's made you thirst and want to know Christ more?" She gave me the names of two people when she was a teenager here at Trinity. One of those persons was Eric Davis, who was a former Youth Minister here. Many of you knew him, especially if you had teenagers during that time. The other person she mentioned was Rodney Lawing, a member of this church who assisted Eric with the youth during that time. She said that no matter what they were doing during that time, Eric and Rodney taught her the love of God and showed it in what they said and what they did. They were an example to her of the light of Christ.

I want to ask you -- who has shined the light of Christ in your life? Who has seasoned and flavored your life? Who has flavored your life with the love, the hope, the forgiveness, the mercy, the compassion of Christ? If that person is living, I hope you will write a note or call them. If they have gone on to be with the Lord, I hope you will thank God for the influence that they've had in your life. And, then I ask you, will you go shine the light?

I heard a cute story about a man that was on the road and he had car engine problems. He pulled off the side of the road, saw a little service station (that was closed), and two men standing outside of the service station. He pulled over and asked them, "I'm having car problems and just need to know if one of you is a mechanic?" One of them answered, "Yes. We just closed our shop. What do you need?" He said, "Well my car is having problems. It's knocking. Would you look under the hood and see if it's okay for me to get home?" He looked at the other worker and said, "Would you get the flashlight out of my car?" He opened the hood and started looking around. The helper, holding the flashlight, got

distracted and he started talking to the man who owned the car. All of a sudden, he shined the light in a different direction. The man under the hood said, "Would you shine the light? What are you here for?"

I wonder if sometimes God doesn't say to us, "Shine the light! Do you remember what you're here for?" ***You are the salt of the earth. You are reflectors of the light of Christ. Go shine your light because you are a living advertisement - who you are, what you do, and what you say. Go live out the goodness and the love of Christ and service to the world - and give God the glory!*** Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father." Further over, in Matthew, Jesus would say to the Pharisees and reprimand them, "Don't be showing off your good works for your own ego and pride - your alms-giving, your prayers, your fasting." But here, Jesus tells us to do it for the glory of God. Do it because He commands us. Do it for the glory of God and for the kingdom's use.

Go, shine the light. Go, be the salt.

May God bless us as we are "the salt of the earth and the light of the world." Amen.