

**All Saints Episcopal Church**

**Steenrijk**

**Willemstad, Curacao**

**Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany (A)**

**February 5, 2022**

**A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Parrish**

**DRAFT**

**“How are we salt and light for the  
world?”**

**The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus  
Christ according to Matthew 5:13-20**

Jesus said, "You are the salt of the  
earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can

its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth

pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

Dear Lord, help us to be better salt and light for the world. Amen.

There are three characteristics of both salt and light which make them good illustrations of the Christian life.

One feature is that both salt and light must penetrate in order to be effective.

The second characteristic is that the value of both salt and light is in how they affect other things.

And the third common feature of salt and light is that they both work silently.

Penetration, affecting other things, and silent action all relate to salt and light.

Our Christian lives, our life in and with Christ, can be evaluated on (1) how well our lives penetrate the world with Christ's good news, (2) how much effect we have on others, and (3) whether we act silently or have to parade our accomplishments in order to make ourselves feel good. God sees the good we do; why do we need others to pat us on the back when we are only doing our duty as disciples of our Lord?

These are not easy lessons for us. We all have an assignment this year to bring one new person into our church fellowship as a new member. How well are you doing? I'm still struggling. But there is still time left. How far have you gotten in your effort to bring in one new member this year?

Are we penetrating our family, our neighborhood, our friendships?

Are our lives positively affecting others?

Are we able to do good without requiring great publicity? Our good works

are to be visible, but we don't need to "toot our own horns," so to speak. Let someone else do that, toot our horns !

Do we penetrate our community?

Are we positively affecting others?

Can we do good works silently?

Penetrate, positively affect, and produce silently are our tasks as Christian.

Are our Christian lives really worth much? Is the word of God in our hearts mainly there just to prevent us from doing evil or rather to enable us to do good? Are we a positive influence as Christian, or do

we come across as a very negative personality? Do people enjoy being around us, or do we push them away? Are we making new friends, or are we only losing old friends? How would you rate your life, honestly?

Salt and light may help us get back on the track.

Let's see what salt and light do.

Salt and light are very small things, physically. Salt is a collection of tiny molecules of two chemical elements, sodium and chlorine. If you take pure sodium and drop it into a container of

pure chlorine, however, you will get a tremendous explosion; a powerful force is released. What happens is that an electron from the sodium atom is stolen away by the chlorine atom. That transfer of one electron between the sodium and the chlorine releases a huge amount of energy, and as a result the material which is formed is extremely stable. A person would have to add a huge amount of energy to move that electron back from the chlorine to the sodium. It can be done, but it takes the input of the same amount of explosive energy, but in a controlled

process called electrolysis. And, as I said, the product produced by adding sodium to chlorine is the very stable stuff which we call salt, common, ordinary table salt. We use salt mainly to season our food to make our meal taste better. If you have high blood pressure or poor kidney function your salt consumption has to be carefully regulated. But historically salt had a much bigger role to play in civilization. Until the invention of the first icebox and then the refrigerator, salt was the main way one could preserve meats and fish. Jesus probably performed his

miracle of the multiplication of the loaves of bread and fish using a young boy's lunch of salt-preserved fish.

There were no refrigerators out there in the wilderness! Salt was the key preservative. The way salt works is to penetrate into the meat or fish into every place a bacterium could penetrate. And since salt is a much smaller entity on a submicroscopic scale than is a bacterium, salt can theoretically get into the tiny crevices and channels of a piece of meat and inside the cells and prevent the bacteria from eating the piece of meat

before we have our chance to eat the meat. Salt causes the water inside a bacterium to rush out, shriveling the bacterium and killing it, or salt can get into a bacterium and burst it open. So, salt works by penetrating the thing the salt is supposed to preserve.

Light does the same thing. Light is even smaller than salt. Light comes in bundles called photons. Einstein discovered that one bundle of light, one photon, can release one electron from a photo cell. The light photon penetrates the photo cell atom and causes it to release

one of its electrons. The way we see things happens in two different ways. Light with a variety of wavelengths, we call it white light, white light goes into the surface of an object and some wavelengths are absorbed, but other wavelengths are reflected. The wavelength of light that gets reflected is what we call the color of the object. If the object absorbs green light, it reflects back to our eye red light. If the object absorbs blue light it reflects back to us orange light, and so on. And if the object is thin enough or transparent enough we can also

see light through it on the side away from the initial light beam. Again, if the object absorbs the red part of white light, the green and the blue part of the light still comes through. A piece of green glass absorbs red light, and a piece of red light absorbs green light. The original light tells us nothing about an object until it has at least penetrated the object and has reflected off the object or has passed through the object. The light beam must penetrate the object or reflect off it in some way in order for us to see anything about the object.

If our lives don't somehow penetrate the lives of others, we will not be able to understand them or to influence them. We must penetrate if we are able to be effective workers for Christ, a casual encounter is usually not enough. We need to get to know something about someone else to be able to connect. Our Christian light of course must first be turned on if we are to penetrate another life with the good news of Jesus Christ. Our love and concern for others go a long way toward affecting someone else to make a decision for Christ and for God's kingdom which

will change their lives for the better.

Penetrate, and influence!

The second point is how do we affect or influence others. Salt in and of itself has no particular value. Salt is not gold or oil or diamonds. Salt itself is not precious. However, salt brings out the flavor of food. We enjoy a meal better if there is at least some salt on or in the meal . Salt helps molecules "unglue" from each other. And when they are unglued our taste buds can taste them. Salt also conducts electricity, and that also seems to play a role in our being able to taste

things. Electrons travel much easier through a salt solution than they do in pure water. Salt brings out the character and sense of taste. In similar manner, a light beam helps us to see the color and size and texture of an object. Light has a value only if it is illuminating something else. We turn on a flashlight, or we light a candle, to find our way in the dark. Light and salt have value in how they affect other things, steadily penetrating. We too have a value in how we positively affect or influence others, for the kingdom of God. By how we love others, we will

certainly affect their lives. Our love can help someone turn their life around and find the joy of Christ.

And finally, salt and light are silent in their work. Salt diffuses into our food, and salt diffuses into the ice on the sidewalk, and it works miracles, but salt works silently. Salt makes our way safe, but salt acts silently and persistently until all the ice and snow are melted. Light shows us the way to go, but light also works silently with the miracle of sight in our eyes. A very quiet chemical and electrical reaction occurs in the back of

our eyeball, on our retina, to give us the pleasure of sight.

We too work silently to give someone the pleasure of knowing Jesus Christ and of being known by him. When our silent efforts have been effective, we can bring someone into our church family. Our silence may involve talking to someone quietly, but often it is our quiet action of doing something loving for someone else which seals the contract of heart to heart, which seals kindred spirit to kindred spirit. The world treats so many cruelly. But the Christ in us always treats them

with care and concern. How have our silent actions and quiet conversation made Christ real in someone else's life?

A young boy went fishing with an old fisherman. At sundown the sky filled with beautiful colors of red and gold and purple. When the boy asked the old fisherman, "Can you see God?" the old man replied, "It is getting so I can see nothing but God. " "It's getting so I can see nothing but God."

How have we helped one other person see God this week?

What can we do today and tomorrow to help someone see God and God's love for them through God's Son Jesus? How can they see Jesus through us?

Let us penetrate our society for the cause of Christ 's gospel.

Let us have a positive effect on one other person this week who has given up on God. Let us give them hope.

And let us continue to work silently as disciples of our Lord to help one lost person see Christ's love for them. May we be the salt and light of the world this very week. Amen.

Description: Jesus calls us to be the salt and light of the world. How can we be the loving presence of our Lord this week so that love penetrates the hardest of hearts and the heaviest of feelings?

Tags: Jesus, salt, light, love, hope, silently, working, steadily, penetrating