

Being Salty

The gospel for this coming Sunday (Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany) is Matthew 5:13-20. It has segments: Salt and Light and Christ Came to Fulfill the Law.

Taught, blessed, and strengthened by Good News from the Son of God and Servant of the Lord, Jesus' disciples now receive their calling and identity as he continues to teach with authority (13-16). Jesus commands His disciples to be salt and light. In the rest of the sermon, He will spell out specific ways in which they fulfill this calling.

By their way of life, Jesus' disciples are to be as useful as salt is. Salt was produced by drying seawater from mineral deposits near the Salt Sea preserves, so it reminded the Israelites that God would preserve His covenant with Abraham, including the messianic promise that through Abraham "all the families of the earth" would be blessed (Gn. 12:1-3). Ultimately, this was fulfilled in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ.

The impact of the salt and light metaphors has to do with the beneficial effect Jesus' disciples have on the *world* in which they live as disciples. The real tragedy, then, should the salt become tasteless, is that the *earth* will not "be salted."

The good works of Jesus' disciples will be carried out in their "ordinary" vocations. Those works and those lives, however, are to be *extraordinary*, as Jesus' later teaching makes clear (especially in 5:21–7:12). Jesus' disciples are called to lives of *remarkable* purity, faithfulness, piety, love, and generosity.

The Law Jesus was talking about was what is our OT. Jesus points out that he has not come to do away with the Law but to fulfill it. This is not something we can do. It also meant that his sacrifice on the cross was accepted by the Father. To show complete Jesus' fulfillment is expressed in the words "iota" and "dot." "Iota" is the smallest letter in Greek. "Dot" is smallest markings in the sacred text. There is also a strong warning about diminishing any doctrine in one's teaching.

True righteousness is the result of a right relationship with Jesus. Good works are a fruit of faith in Him (Eph. 2:8-10), something that most scribes and Pharisees did not possess.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to be good salt and a shining light wherever I am. Jesus, when I read and study the Scriptures, help me to see my sin and to see you, my Savior. Amen. (TLSB)