



THE
LORD
is **MY**
LIGHT

February 9, 2020

Psalm 27:1

We Gather for Worship

Prelude & Entrance of Christ's Light

Gratitude Moments

*Call to Worship

L: Jesus calls us to be salt and light for the Kingdom of God.

P: We come here to learn what that means for us in our lives and in our congregation.

L: In our worship, we learn about following Jesus and ministering in his name.

P: Let us worship him; let us learn from him; let us grow in Spirit and truth because of Jesus!

*Hymn "This Little Light of Mine" UMH #585

A Time for the Child in All of Us

Ministry of Music

Prayer (unison)

Holy God, Jesus teaches us to shine our lights for all to see, and we know that we are not able to do that without the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to invite the light of Christ to enter and then trust the Spirit's work to help us shine that Light to others. May we offer your love and grace to others; may we be helping hands and loving caregivers; may we make a positive difference in our neighborhoods, towns and cities, and in our world. Amen.

Sung Response "Glory to God in the Highest" TFWS #2276

We Proclaim the Word

Reading the Word Matthew 5:13-20

L: The Word of God for the People of God.

P: Thanks be to God.

Message "Being Light, Being Salt" Rev. Dr. Deb Hanson

*Hymn "Bring Forth the Kingdom of God" TFWS #2190

We Respond to God's Word

Prayers of the People

Silent Prayer and Pastoral Prayer

The Lord's Prayer (unison)

Our Father, who are 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 trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil, for Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

Giving of Our Tithes and Offerings

*Doxology (Please join in singing the following) UMH #94
Praise God from whom all blessings flow; Praise God, all creatures here below; Alleluia! Alleluia! Praise God, the source of all our gifts! Praise Jesus Christ, whose power uplifts! Praise the Spirit, Holy Spirit, Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia!

*Prayer of Dedication (unison)

O God, receive these gifts that we offer as we seek to shine the Light of Christ through our giving in order to help others and continue building the mission and ministry of our church. Amen.

We Go Forth to Serve

*Hymn "I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light" UMH #206

*Choral Benediction (Congregation encircles the Sanctuary)
May the Lord, gracious God bless and keep you forever. Grant you peace, perfect peace, courage in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and seek his face and his grace forever. May the Lord, mighty God bless and keep you forever.

*Pastor's Charge

Postlude

**Please stand as you are comfortable*

*TFWS = The Faith We Sing UMH = United Methodist Hymnal
Large print bulletins are available from the greeters*



UPCOMING EVENTS

2/11 - The Peace Circle will meet at Yvonne Griffin's home at 9:30 am. The lesson is Martha, Chapter 3 in our study book. All are welcome to attend.

2/12 - Wentworth Senior Living worship service at 11:00 am. All are welcome.

2/15 - Celebration of the life of Steve Westcott at 11:00 am. The congregation is invited.

2/16 - SPRC meeting after worship.

2/18 - Church Council meeting will be held at 6:00 pm.

2/26 - Ash Wednesday service will begin our Lenten season with a service held in the sanctuary at 12:00 noon.

Sundays - Church Service starts at 10 a.m. Sunday School is right after the children's sermon and we look forward to catching up with you during coffee hour after the worship service...see you there.

Everyday - Be a Prayer Warrior and lift up the world and it's people in prayer.

Sometime this week - write a note, card or visit one of our family members who are either living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound.

2020 Flower chart - is posted in the Narthex. You can bring your own arrangement or have the church order them at a cost of \$25 to you. This is a great way to honor, remember, thank or let someone know they are appreciated.

Altar flowers - Are in honor of Rev. Deb and Dave Atkinson celebrating fourteen years of marriage.



PRAYER LIST

Dave Richards
Dan Strange
Bobbie Noble
The Westcott Family
Sylvia Bartlett's Family
David Richards

Julia West
Judy Doyon
Mohr Family
Rev. Charles Hartman
Emily - for the Fernandez Family
Our Denomination
Our Church Family

All those living in assisted living, nursing care or homebound



WORSHIP TEAM

Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson
Pastor's Assistant - David Richards
Liturgist - Dave Atkinson
Lay Leader - Susan Sarosiek
Acolyte - Alexa Langs
Director of Music - Bevan Bloemendaal

Greeters - Joyce Blanchard &
Marilyn Stebbins
Ushers - Ken & Jenya Westbrook
Sound Tech - Sue Sarosiek
Worship Service Tech - Sue Richards
Photographer - Dave Atkinson
Sunday School - Aerial Sillanpaa &
Kaya Sarosiek



FUMC PORTSMOUTH A RECONCILING CONGREGATION

We, the congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, are dedicated in worshipping, learning, and serving with all people as we embrace Jesus Christ's message of love and acceptance. As a United Methodist Church we stand fully behind the statement "Open Hearts, Open Minds, and Open Doors". We celebrate our diversity and invite all persons regardless of age, gender, racial or ethnic background, sexual orientation, marital or socioeconomic status, nationality, physical or mental ability into full membership and participation in the life of this community of faith.



New England Annual Conference Tri-State District
The Rev. Sudarshana Devadhar, Bishop
The Rev. Taesung Kang, District Superintendent

FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
129 Miller Avenue - Portsmouth, NH 03801
Office Phone 603-436-6038 office@fumcportsmouth.net
Pastor office hours - Tuesday and Thursday 9 am - 12 pm
[call to ensure availability]
Pastor - Rev. Dr. Debra J. Hanson

Check out our website at www.fumcportsmouth.com

Like and Follow Us On:   



SERMON TRANSCRIPT GIVEN BY
REV. DR. DEB HANSON

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:13-20

THEME: We are salt and light for Christ.

When I was in Israel, our tour included a visit to the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is an interesting phenomenon because the water is full of minerals and salt that mysteriously flow into the sea from unknown sources, and they stay there. Apparently, there is no outflow to any other place. To look at the Dead Sea, one would think that it was a great place to go fishing, but there are no living creatures in the sea - they can't survive the high salt and mineral levels. However, it is a resort area with beaches and bath houses. When we walked out of the place where we changed into our bathing suits, the smell was very strong - sulfur, salt, and other assorted scents greeted us, and I wondered about swimming in it. By the time I reached the water, most of the tour group was already in the water, so I waded in, and my friend Jan said, come over here and float with me. I slogged over and noticed that she didn't have any floatation devices, so I asked, "What do I do?" She said, "Just sit down." After a few hesitant tries, I finally just sat down on the water, and it held me up - what a weird sensation!

This is an example of dead salt - the salt isn't worth anything - except maybe to float a few overweight clergy! (Although, there is a processing plant that manufactures salt from the sea.) In our Matthew scripture passage today, Jesus is teaching his disciples about what it means to follow him and to live in the world as God's children. The images of salt and light would have been very familiar to his listeners. Salt has been an important commodity for thousands of years, and it was seen as a highly valued item to the point that it was sometimes considered as valuable as money. In fact, as one commentator pointed out, "Our word 'salary' is derived from 'salt.' If one traded salt for a poorly-performing slave, one might say the slave was 'not worth his salt.'" (John Petty, found at the commentary section of Text This Week under the gospel lesson for today.)

Salt was valuable for life since there were no refrigerators in those days, salt was used to help preserve food. When we use salt today, we find that when used in moderation, salt enhances the taste of food. I occasionally will watch the Food Network, and I have learned that a small amount of salt added to dishes will bring out some of the flavors; too much salt over-rides the flavor. By telling the disciples that they are the salt of the earth, Jesus was teaching them that they were of great value; they ALREADY were the salt of the earth - it isn't a future event but it is RIGHT NOW. They were in mission and ministry with him, so their value was like the salt's value - they added flavor and "spice" to their world around them, not to be the "stars" by bringing attention to themselves, but to bring out the message of God's love through the way they live their lives and pointing to Jesus.

How are we or are we NOT being salt and light in our world? Professor Alyce McKenzie tells this story: A woman was checking out at the grocery store one morning. The young cashier handed her the receipt and said cheerily, "Have a nice day!" To which the woman replied, "I'm sorry, but I have other plans."

Maybe she did have other plans, or maybe she just didn't appreciate being told what to do by someone she didn't even know.

"Have a nice day" is not the sort of thing Jesus ever said to anyone when leaving them or when they were leaving him. He said things like, "Go and sin no more," or "Rise, take up your bed and walk," and "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations . . ."

In these verses (Matthew 5:13-16), he is saying, "Go, be salt and light." Of course, lots of people, then and now, respond with, "Sorry, I have other plans." Who likes to be told who to be and what to do by someone they don't even know?

There are days when we may not want to live in the ways Jesus has taught us. It's hard work! Yet, we as the church, are called by Jesus to be "salt and light". In some ways, we have a job description

of what it means to be a disciple. We are told to shine the light of Christ to others and to bring hope through our own “faith living.” This isn’t easy! We live in contentious and competitive times, as well as worrisome times. It’s hard to be salt and light in a difficult world. But we are surrounded by those who are “light and salt” to us, and we can learn from them.

Think of people who have been salt in your lives. My first mentor Carl Daley was salt for me. When I first met Carl and his wife Susie, I was a little put off because they were SO cheerful all the time! I just couldn’t believe that people could be THAT happy and cheerful! As I came to know them better, I learned that they each had gone through some very rough times. What they both came to know was that they weren’t alone in their journeys, and they had the love of God in their hearts which they couldn’t suppress. When Carl became my mentor, I told him about my first reaction to him, and he asked if I felt differently which I said I did. I shared that I saw that his joy came from the presence of God in his heart. Carl’s life pointed to Christ. He was salt.

Jesus also told his followers that they were the light of the world. Earlier Matthew called Jesus the light of the world, but now he calls his disciples “light.” Notice that again he uses the present tense - you ARE the light of the world, not “you will be the light of the world,” and he uses the symbols of a candle and a city on a hill. We wouldn’t put a candle under a basket not only because it’s not safe but it would also extinguish the candle which would, of course, make it worthless. And in Israel, there are towns that are built on what they call a “tell” which is made up of layers of villages. Over the decades, villages would be abandoned or destroyed, and rather than try to find new locations, the new residents would just build on top of the old village which by then had a pretty good layer of crust over it. That’s how the archeological digs know that there were civilizations from centuries ago - they gradually would uncover the layers of villages. Part of the reason to build where a village had already existed was for water reasons. Most villages were built near some sort of oasis or water source which was also very needed in Israel.

As villages upon village was build, they rose higher and higher, so the village could not be hidden from view; it was as if it had been built on a mountain. It was visible, out in the open, clearly shining for all to see. Jesus’ disciples were light because their mission and ministry was in the public arena. Their light was the light of Christ reaching out to care for the poor and needy, the sick and imprisoned, the lonely and outcast in their society. When they tried to be the star player, they snuffed out the light and put their own needs and wants as a top priority.

Who is light for us? Who lives their lives so that we see Christ? For some reason, some churches struggle to live that out. Sometimes they don’t stop to consult God on what should or shouldn’t be done because they have their own ideas of how things should happen. When it doesn’t happen the way THEY think it should, they get upset or offended. They might stop listening to others and say that this is the only way to do something. I think it’s good to ask ourselves if WE have done that or if we have a tendency to do that. It’s easy to measure everything from our perspective, which is a normal human reaction.

Our light as a church, though, is to set a different example. It’s to listen to each other, to work together to find consensus - which does NOT mean that we all agree, but it DOES mean that it’s what we all can live with. That happens when we consult Christ - call on God for guidance and vision. It happens when we catch God’s vision. What happens when two people have two very different visions, thinking it is God’s? Well, we go back to prayer and asking for guidance. I know of a church that divided because of controversy over what color the carpet was going to be in the sanctuary. They ended up forming two break off groups, and that church closed. Is carpet really worth breaking up your church family? Their salt was thrown out and trampled under their own feet and they hid the light of Christ because they forgot their purpose.

At the end of today’s passage, Jesus tells the disciples that their righteousness should exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees were not bad people. Most were well educated and knew the scriptures very well. There were some who abused their position of privilege and power, as we have seen throughout the gospels, but basically, they did their best to

teach the people what they thought God wanted through interpretation of the commandments and the Torah. Jesus assured his listeners that he wasn't trying to undo that, but to bring it to a new level of understanding. Jesus was looking for justice for the "least" of these, meaning the outcasts and undervalued people of his day. "Poor" could mean economically poor, spiritually poor, emotionally poor, or anyone who had been marginalized by society.

If the scribes and Pharisees continued to teach that the poor were to be cast out of the kingdom, they had misused their power and ignored the Old Testament teachings of caring for the poor. They were oppressing God's children rather than valuing them. In Jesus' eyes, EVERYONE had value, including the scribes and Pharisees - unless they exploited and ended up not seeking justice for those who had no voice. We are salt and light for Jesus. We spice up the world by living faithfully in it. We are transparent enough to let the light of Christ shine in and through us. We are the hands and feet and heart of Christ in the world. YOU ARE SALT and LIGHT!

Author Maryanne Williamson wrote: "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that frightens us most . . . You are a child of God . . . We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us; it's in all of us. And when we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others." (from Text This Week at Kate Huey's reflection under commentaries for this week's gospel lesson).

We do not need to fear being the salt of the earth or the light to the world because we do not do this work alone. Jesus, through the power of the Holy Spirit is with us, and then God has sent companions to be with us on this journey - just look around you. Some of them are sitting right here in this sanctuary, and others are around us in our families, neighborhoods, maybe even far away, but the church of Jesus Christ is active in the world, and our calling is to live so that Christ can be seen in and through us. Being salt and light might mean that we reflect Christ to the world, and do it with pizzazz! I had a colleague who was a powerful preacher and always had a smile on his face. He wasn't a flashy dresser, although he always looked nice, and he didn't force his ideas on people, but would ask questions to understand where they were in their thinking. As you might guess, he was a great listener, and a loyal friend. He spoke out against injustices, and pastored his congregations with love. That to me, was pizzazz. It was clearly his commitment to his calling, but more than that, it was living out his faith, using the gifts God had given him.

That's what we are called to do as God's children, as Jesus' followers, as those who are told to "be salt and light" to the world. It's not easy, this "being the Church" and "being salt and light." Yet, the more we live it, the more it becomes a natural part of who we are.

What is our gift - or our gifts - that we can use to be salt and light? Where is God calling us to use them? How will we keep using the ones we have and discover more? How will we pray for each other and our world as part of that? The possibilities are endless! And God will lead us and guide us, of that we can be sure, but we can only hear when we listen. Let us never tire of doing the Lord's work, and let us persevere in prayer, actions, and words as we seek to be faithful disciples of Jesus Christ.

Let us pray: Eternal God, give us the strength to be salt and light to the world who needs our flavoring and our illuminating, as we point ultimately back to our Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

(The Rev. Chris Thomas serves as the pastor of First Baptist Church of Williams, Jacksonville, Alabama, Day 1, found at Text This Week under sermons.)