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Mathew 5:13-16

*13 ‘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.*

*14 ‘You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16In 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.*

***Salt and Light***

 In that brief but powerful passage, Jesus takes 2 basic essentials of life – salt and light – and draws great wisdom for all of us. He starts with salt. Salt is such an amazing substance. It is an essential of life – it is a necessary component of life. Our bodies need salt to live and thrive. Thinking of salt reminds me of 2 people in particular. One is my grandfather Blake Gratton, who had some unusual eating habits which included limburger cheese and some other stuff I could never identify; and the ever present salt. He loved salt. I remember vividly when radishes were in season, he would get a whole bunch, pour out a big pile of salt on the table, then roll the radish around in the salt before each bite. It was something to watch. He always said that somehow the salt really helped enhanced and brought out the flavor of the radish. The other person is my father who has always been a salt fanatic. I remember the first time we had fresh watermelon – I looked forward to the sweet juicy taste as my Dad cut it up. As I was about to take a big bite, I looked over to my Dad, and he was holding his piece of watermelon up in the air, and he had the salt shaker, and he was just covering the watermelon with salt. It just gives me chills thinking about it. But, he said the salt made the watermelon so much tastier, so much more flavorful. Salt. Salt is amazing and even has other properties; it helps preserve foods as well. As a matter of fact, salt is a vital, critical ingredient that our bodies must have – we cannot live without salt. I believe Jesus was aware of this in some way and used this to help people see how important they were and how valuable they could be.

 Jesus also used the concept of light – another vital, essential part of life. In so many ways light is critical. For instance, did you ever drive down a road at night, one that did not have any street lights? That is difficult and scary. But when the road is lighted you can see and it’s so much easier. And who remembers the storm back in March? Wow, that was something – no electricity for many people for several days. What many people learned during all that – or maybe re-learned – was that when there is no electricity at night, the lights don’t work. And when the lights don’t work, you can’t see. And when you can’t see, it gets dangerous, scary and difficult. Light is so important. And, light, like salt, is also necessary for life – light is necessary for living things – us, plants, etc, to grow. Remember that whole photosynthesis thing? You need light for that. And you need photosynthesis for life.

 Salt and light. Light and salt. Two basic, vital, necessary essentials of life. You can’t live without them. Really – you really can’t. They not only make life better, easier and more enjoyable – they make it possible and sustainable.

 I love that as we sit listening to Jesus right here, he is suing two simple staples of life to make a powerful point. You see, everyone knows salt and light are important to make life possible, better, easier and make life what it should be. And Jesus, knowing that we know that, makes a powerful and inspiring point when he tells us simply and plainly that **we** are the salt and the light of the world – that **we**, his followers, his disciples, are the basic vital ingredients the world needs to live and enjoy all of life; he is telling us that **we** are the ones who can enhance life for others, that **we** can make this world better, more joyful, more worthwhile. You and me, salt of the earth; light of the world.

 I take this very seriously, particularly being the light of the world. At my ordination to the ministry as a Presbyterian minister, which happened 10 years ago tomorrow, a group of kids sang a song, “Go Light Your World”. The first time I heard that song was the moment I decided to go back to seminary, finish my degree, and become a minister. The song and its theme mean everything to me about my call in life. Taking Jesus and his life, which we have met and which **we** have, and sharing it with others in various ways is the main call on my life. Taking the light of God’s love to the world. That’s it – because that light makes a difference. And for me, that song exemplifies what I see our ministry here doing at Ogden Presbyterian church – bringing light to the places that need it.

 Sisters and brothers, over the past few weeks we have talked about how we do this here, bring God’s light. We talked about 3 ways in particular: how we bring that light to each other by the many and beautiful ways we care for each other – those gathered as part of this community of God. We talked about how we bring that light to those who need it out in God’s world through our mission activities. And we also talked about how we keep that light burning and strong in ourselves by our worship and learning how to be Jesus’ disciples. Those are the three essential ways we here share and shine God’s light into the world, and between each other. And as we talked about those 3 areas, we talked about how we need to keep doing all those things as we move into next year: “Oh the Places We’ll Go!”

 And as I have been saying, I believe God has many places for us to Go! I believe our “Going” involves strengthening some of the current places we go with our light; I also believe it involves some new and exciting places we will carry our light. And so, because it is Stewardship Sunday, I ask you to continue offering your financial support to the mission and ministry of this congregation. Your support has been fantastic and generous and I hope it continues that way. And as you share your blessings with this congregation, I hope you are able to see the many and important ways your support has already shined God’s light, because it has. And I thank you for that. I thank you for all the support you have already given and pledged. Your kindness and generosity are a blessing.

 Sisters and brothers, I really want this group of people to be God’s light in the world. I believe the neighborhood around us, the city and the whole world needs our light, the light of God. Let us continue to run to the darkness and bring the light of God – and when we do, “Oh the Places We’ll Go!” Thanks be to God. Amen.