In the passage that Steven read for us earlier, Jesus was continuing his Sermon on the Mount following last week’s passage on the Beatitudes. Through his teachings, Jesus was challenging the allegiance and commitment of his followers. Like everything else there is a price that needs to be paid. Jesus used a couple of metaphors to illustrate what it means to be his true disciples….that is we are to be the “**salt of the earth**” and the “**light of the world**”. But what does that really mean anyway? Those images still seem a bit abstract, don’t you think?

First of all, to be disciples and followers of Christ calls upon us to a dramatic shift in how we see ourselves and how others see us. Today being Super Bowl Sunday, I will use a sports analogy like an athlete who puts on his team’s uniform and helmet, the moment he steps onto the field, he is no longer representing his team, his city, or his country. In the same way, when we say Yes to following Christ, to become one of his disciples, we all must put on this new identity – not only on the outside but from within, as the **“Salt of the Earth”** and the **“Light of the World”.** We no longer represent ourselves, but we represent Christ in all that we do, speak, or how we behave and relate with others.

**Salt**

First of all, when Jesus said that **we are the Salt of the earth!** He meant that we are to be like Salt that can draw out the taste and bring out the best flavor of God, so others may come and taste[[1]](#footnote-1) the goodness of God. I understand that in the Jewish culture, salt symbolizes the covenant that is made between two parties, especially in a relationship such as a marriage. The Arabic word for “salt” is the same as the word for a “pact” or a “treaty”.[[2]](#footnote-2) So to be the salt of the earth, we are to develop and build relationship with others. In the Asian cultures, salt is even being used as a preservative agent in order to keep food fresh (such as fishes, meats, or even vegetables) to last for a very long time.

Through the metaphor of salt, Jesus was telling us that we have the capacity to transform and affect the way we taste and experience our relationships with God, as well as others.

**Light**

Second of all, Jesus said, “**You are the Light of the world**” because many people in this world are still living in darkness and the brokenness of sins. The world has often been deprived of the truth and is in dire need to be exposed, awakened, and guided by the Light of Christ. Only the light of Christ can take us where we need to be and navigate through the darkness of this world.

As prophesied through the prophet Isaiah, God called Israel to be a light to the Gentile nations by setting themselves as examples and leading others to the Light of Christ through our actions and in our lives.

In our passage today, Jesus challenged all of us to be the citizens of ***“a city on a hill that cannot be hidden”,*** that means we are to let God shine through us and reflect Christ’s light to others, even if we may be different and be forced to “stand out” in the midst of a crowd. Others will look toward us like a beacon or a lighthouse by the seashore where those who are lost or in need of some clarity and direction may find their way. In times like these, we are challenged to take a stand on various issues of our time, our voices shall no longer be silenced but be heard, especially when we see injustices happening all around us. That’s part of our calling as Christ’s disciples today as the salt of the earth and the light to the world.

A couple of weeks ago I went to see a movie called “*Hidden Figures*”. How many of you have seen it or heard of it? It’s about the story of a group of African-American women engineers, scientists, and mathematicians who were hired by NASA as human computers. Yes, back in the 50’s and 60’s, before the days of electronic computers, all calculations had to be done by hand. These women were the brains behind the space program that sent men into space and to the moon, and safely brought them back.

Working in a segregated office environment in the basement, with separate the coffee pots, water fountains, and bathroom facilities, these aspired black women demonstrated their brilliance in science and mathematics that very little people even knew about, or at least documented or photographed. Public photographs, television footages, or other documents would only show mostly white men who had taken all of the credits of the space programs.

What made this part of American history even more remarkable was how these black women demonstrated their resiliency, grace and dignity. They believed in themselves while confronting the odds of systemic racism and gender inequality that sadly had been widely accepted and normalized in America. Everything was clearly Black and White during the segregated Jim Crow Era of America. America was still in the dark and was in need of a light to be awaken. These black women stood up for what they believed was their rights and vowed to become the “salt and light” in challenging the social injustice of this world, not only as women, but as people of colors.

A few years ago, I had the personal privilege and honor of working alongside with one of these special ladies who happened to be a Presbyterian elder as well. Elder Christine Darden of Hamption, VA and I were serving on a committee that was charged to update the churchwide Anti-Discrimination Policy of our denomination – the Presbyterian Church (USA). That policy has been in place since 1986…well, a lot has happened since 1986, but unfortunately a lot remains the same as well, especially when it comes to racial and gender inequality both in our society and in our church today.

Although we have made strides over the years, there are still more works that need to be done in order to create a more just and fair society for ALL of God’s children, both in our churches and in our society as a whole. ***“What does the LORD requires us? But to do justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with our God.”***

As the Light of the world, Jesus challenged us to **penetrate ourselves into the society** **by** **identifying the various needs** and **be a part of the solutions**. Light is necessary in order to expose the darkness of this world. As a beacon of the light of Christ, we may often find ourselves in a center of spotlight because of who we are, the way we look and the values that we uphold and fundamentally believe in. At times, we may choose to remain silent, declining to take a stand, or claiming that it does not affect us, but it does affect us. Or at times we may be called upon to speak our minds upon the various injustices around us. We may be too timid in sharing our thoughts and conviction in our faith as God calls for, fearing rejections or whether it may offend others. But by doing so, we have suppressed and dimmed the luminal potential of the light of God as shining forth through us.

As the Apostle Paul reminded us that *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God-- what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.”[[3]](#footnote-3)*

Our passage today reminds us that despite the challenges and obstacles that we face in society, **we must not let our personal faith be compromised.** Remember that we are NOT the light literally, but we are merely a reflector of the Light of Christ that will illuminate the path that ultimately leads to Christ.

By the virtue of our baptism, Jesus has held His disciples and to all of us today to be accountable to a much higher standard than others. The fruit that we bear is worth the price and the risk that we must take as our part of our Cost of Discipleship.

Jesus has given us this new set of commandment that ***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."[[4]](#footnote-4)***

Furthermore God has also commissioned us to **“*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you…”[[5]](#footnote-5)***

**To be the Salt of the earth and Light to this world means that we are to infiltrate God’s love into our society, or wherever we are being sent.** As one theologian describes that this light is the light of the gospel, and it draws all people to its warmth and radiance.[[6]](#footnote-6)  Together, we shall unite our hearts in mission and purpose as we strive to further the Kingdom of God, by doing justice, loving kindness, and walking humbly with our God.[[7]](#footnote-7)

Where have we placed our lamps today? Can others see the light of Christ shining through us? As Jesus said, “*a city built on a hill cannot be hid. Do not put your lamp under the bushel basket, but put on the lampstand and gives light to all in the house.”[[8]](#footnote-8)*

The numbers and the facts certainly do not lie. Our figures shall not be hidden anymore. The truth of Christ shall ultimately set us free. **The sky may define how far we can see, but it does not determine how far we can go or achieve, so long as we place our faith and trust in the light of Christ – a light that** **will outshine all the other lights within God’s creation.**

***Arise, shine, for the light has come, and the glory of the LORD has risen upon you.[[9]](#footnote-9)* Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father up in heaven![[10]](#footnote-10)**

In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. *Psalm 34:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *http://www.truthortradition.com/articles/what-is-the-covenant-of-salt-i-have-seen-in-weddings* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Romans 12:2-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. *Luke 10:27(Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18)* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *Matthew 28:19-20* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Cook, Charles James, *Feasting on the Word, Year A, Volume 1, P.335-6* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *Micah 6:8* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. *Matthew 5:14-15* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. *Isaiah 60:1* [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. *Matthew 5:16* [↑](#footnote-ref-10)