

Before I begin I'd like to invite you all to take a look around... look at the love, the joy... the faithfulness... and I know those of us here can't see our friends at Radville, Carlyle & Abbey.... but we can imagine that they are pretty awesome to look at too. And if you are worshipping with us from home or the lake... just take a moment to appreciate your own amazing capacity to love, share joy and live in faith.

Okay do it... look around.

You, friends, are the ones Jesus was encouraging when he started talking about saltiness and light and letting it shine.

Just look at all you salty people...
all you light-filled people.

Its true... you are.

Salt and light.

This is what Jesus taught on the hillside in his well know sermon on the mount.

A sermon that began with a very important reminder...
a reminder to those who had gathered were the blessed ones of God...

So I want to read that for you now... cuz I think a place of blessing.. is a good way to start.

Often referred to as the beatitudes.

Jesus said:

Blessed are the poor in spirit

Blessed are those who mourn

Blessed are the meek

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

Blessed are the merciful

Blessed are the pure in heart

Blessed are the peacemakers

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake
Blessed are you when people utter all kinds of evil against you
falsely.

Once reminded of these blessings amidst the struggles and
challenges of life, he looked out into the crowd and said, "You are
the salt of the earth... don't lose your saltiness"

He said, "You are the light of the world.. don't hide your light
under a bushel."

I think its pretty clear what he was talking about here...
but is it clear that this message wasn't just for those who were
gathered with him on the hillside that day?

That this is a message that is just as relevant today as it was
then.

This is a message that we need to hear...

that we need to embrace...

that we need to live...

and that we need to live now... today.

I don't know about you but I hear an urgency in this message.

I don't hear Jesus saying, "you're light is almost bright enough to
shine... so whenever you are ready... whenever you are
comfortable... you should consider maybe letting it shine..."

And I don't hear him saying, "you're saltiness is almost salty
enough to make a difference... let your salt become a little more
salty and you'll be ready to go"

A light, no matter how dim, is still a light.

Salt is salty... cuz its salt and that's what salt is... it can't become
more salty, or less salty... it can only be what it is.

I hear in Jesus words, first an affirmation, and then a commandment

"you are the salt of the earth, go and be salt"

"you ARE the light of the world, go and be the light."

And this message wasn't for just for some... it wasn't for the privileged, the strong, the rich, the talented, the mainstream... this message was for everyone...

he was addressing the whole crowd...

He wasn't singling anyone out...

and he didn't list certain requirements...

he was simply addressing a wide diversity of assorted people who'd gotten up that morning and made their way to the hillside to hear this man Jesus whom they'd heard so much about.

They got up.. just as we did today, deciding, for one reason or another to make our way here... or to click on that YouTube link.

And here you are, listening to those same words that he spoke so long ago.

And what was true of the people then...

is just as true for the people of today...

for us. (pause)

Whatever brought you here this morning, I have a hunch that, like those Galileans on the hillside, you didn't come here convinced... beyond any shadow of a doubt...

of your saltiness

or of your ability to shine a light that can make a whole lot of difference.

And I suspect, some of us anyway, may feel quite the opposite.

Kinda like the weather of this past week...

we are more aware of the clouds and the rain and the wind in our lives than we are of the sunshine.

But this morning, I want you to hear Jesus calling...

I want you to hear Jesus calling to *you*...

to feel his eyes, looking at you with compassion and love and an abundance of hope...

Jesus' speaking that truth...

you are the light... a brilliant, beautiful glowing light...

and you are the salt... the saltiest of salt.

You have within you, and around you, all that you need to be who you are called to be in this world.

Who are you called to be?

Blessed. A blessing.

A beloved and loving child of God.

Just like those on the hillside, no one is being singled out; we are all hearing the same message from him.

And isn't that amazing... that we today are living in this beautiful reality...

Yesterday a number of us gathered to walk together in this year's Pride parade...

It is such an amazing experience – to walk together with our McClure family but also to be walking with folks from other United Churches... and other denominations... and other faith groups – All gathered together to walk in solidarity with and in celebration of the diversity of sexualities and gender identities..

Together – all of us – lighting the way...

Adding spice to the world around us.

Now I know that sometimes its hard to believe and to live into this truth that Jesus is speaking.

We all have things that occasionally..
or more than occasionally..
get in the way of our ability to hear... to believe... and to hold onto
these words of Jesus.
There's things we've done...
There's things we've not done...
There's things we've been told (either through words or actions)
about our value... about our worthiness.
Things that cause us to doubt...
that cause us to look over our shoulder to see who Jesus is
talking to...
I mean, it can't possibly be me – can it?

Of course it can... it IS you.
Jesus is looking at you!
He is saying to you...
"You are the salt of the earth."
"You are the light of the world." (pause)

Okay.. so now what does it mean that we are called to be these
things... salt and light?

Well... when I hear these words there are several people who
immediately come to my mind.
People who light up a room by their presence...
People who offer comfort in times of sadness, faith in times of
doubt, hope in times of despair, love in times of anger and hate...
People who offer guiding wisdom in times of uncertainty.

And salty people... so important, aren't they.
Salt changes ordinary food into something tasty.
If you forget one teaspoon of salt in your favorite recipe.. you
notice.

And for those listening to Jesus on the hillside, salt was a miracle preservative.

It was salt that allowed meats or fish or other foods to last.

Salt kept families from starving.

And salt is a healer too, isn't it?

Gargling with warm salt water helps sore throats and canker sores.

So the salt of the earth is healing, preserving, enhancing.

Jesus is telling us this morning that we are light... we are salt.

Jesus wants us to hear and to believe that this is our identity...

this is how God sees us...

not because of anything we've done but because we are made in God's image... an image that is love

Love... the essence of our call.

So how do we let go of those things that get in our way of living that love?

of being that light... that salt?

That's a question for each of us to grapple with.

What gets in my way?

And what do I need to do to let it go... or to move through it, or to learn to be all who I am in the midst of it?

How do I recognize my light and let it shine when I feel surrounded by darkness?

Within each of us is the light of God.

Its there... truly...

And to ignore that radiance is... quite frankly... selfish.

God's greatest desire is for us to know who we really are... not just for our sake, but for the sake of the world.

The world needs our light and our saltiness.

It really really does...

My favorite quote and one I carry with me is a quote from Marianne Williamson's book "A Return to Love". She says, "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 most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, and fabulous?"

Actually, who are you not to be?

You are a child of God.

Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you.

We are all meant to shine, as children do.

We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us.

It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as 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."

Sometimes we feel the need to hide ourselves... to hide who we really are, or at least some part of ourselves.

There are many reasons we may lose track of who we are in God's sight. (pause)

In God's eyes we are born beloved, valued "salt of the earth," shining light for the world, treasured and precious and beautiful and fabulous...

To be light, shining in the darkness, to be salt to a world that's hurting and afraid, we need to come together as a beloved community.

So that means not only being open to seeing our own light and letting it shine... but also seeing the light that is in others and encouraging those lights to shine as well.

And together our light grows...
shining brighter and brighter and brighter.
And this light is and will continue to be a beacon of hope in a world that so so so desperately needs it.

Our world needs you... it needs all of us.
God needs us all of us to allow our lights to be a reflection...
and what better reflection in the world than that of a rainbow people?

Let it shine friends... let it shine.