

Title: I love salt (Mark 9:38)

Today's Gospel lesson, in fact, calls us to "be salt." Yeah, I know it's not promoting the eating of large amounts of salt. I know it is only using salt as a metaphor. Got that! But I am desperate and I gotta get sympathy from somewhere. So, what does scripture really say about salt? Why does it call us to be salt? Scripture is calling us to use our influence in sharing the Gospel, the same way that salt influences a meal. Just as a little salt can flavor a whole meal, a little spiritual salt, "the Gospel" can change the whole world. Yes, God calls us to transform this world. Not only that but, we have the power. With God, all things are possible. We are God's salt. Amen

What is the problem? The problem is that we live in a world which seeks to deny the message of Christ. During Christmas 2010, in an attempt to avoid offending non-Christians, all employees of famous bank [JP Morgan-Chase] were ordered to "take down all Christmas decorations. In 2009, during class a professor at Los Angeles Community College, called a student, Johnathan Lopez a "fascist", and threatened to expel him for defending Christian marriage. In 2010, at Augusta State University, in Georgia a student, Jennifer Keaton was told she would be expelled and blocked from completing her counseling degree program "unless she altered her " central religious beliefs on human nature and conduct." In other words, Jennifer had to stop being a Christian if she wanted to be a counselor. In 2010 in Baghdad, Iraq, at Our Lady of Salvation Syrian Catholic Church, at what was to be later called the "Reformation Day" attack a gunman interrupts a worship service. A priest was ordered to lie down and then was murdered. Gunmen shot at the crucifix, and murdered more than 50 congregation members.

There is no more terrible work which Satan has done than to convince people that they do not need the Savior, Jesus Christ. There is no more terrible work which Satan has done than to convince people that the gospel is not a message of wonderful news. the wonderful Gospel news... that God loves us... and that Jesus has come to save us. That is a truth Satan does not want the world to hear.

You might think we are at war with non-believers. To be sure,... there is a battle raging around us. There is a battle raging around us, but it is not between Christians and non-Christians. The battle is between "the people of God" and Satan. This battle is for the souls of the people of this world. This battle has no bystanders. This battle has eternal consequences for those involved. Have no doubts, we ARE under attack. The Christian church IS being persecuted. But

whatever attacks we receive from humans is simply because they have been duped by Satan to do his work. The ultimate attack on the church is from Satan. Now, in one sense, this should be of no surprise. This is not NEWS. For thousands of years, the people of God have been under persecution throughout the world in one way or another.

So, in this 21<sup>st</sup> century... how do we respond to this age-old attack? Some people think that we should cluster together to protect ourselves under this attack. Some people think that the world is strongly influencing us controlling our way of life, and that we need to defend ourselves. Some people think that we should fight to defend our Christian lifestyles our freedoms... or else the world will destroy the church. I say "Hogwash!" The Christian church has stood for over 2000 years. And the chosen people of God have lived under the protection of God for millennia before that. It has withstood far greater attacks over the centuries, than what we face today, and it will weather those as well. The church is not some weak human institution. It was established by God. The Church will be here until Judgment Day... Know that for sure.

In fact, I think there is a problem with those who fear attacks on the church... who fear persecution who believe the church is in danger. If you believe that the Church is in danger you will adopt what is called a siege mentality. A siege is what a castle would do under an attack from a larger army. It would simply close its gates and let the attacks bounce off the fortress walls.... for its own safety. (pause) The problem with this type of defense is that it cuts you off from the outside world. Some people would have the church go into siege defense, to protect itself against the attacks of the world.

But there is a problem with that. The problem is that this type of defense cuts us off from the world. Why is that bad? If we allow ourselves to be cut off from the world, then we fail at our primary mission. We fail at our primary mission which is "to spread the gospel." There are Christians who believe that we need to be on the defensive. But they are wrong! Yes, we are under attack. But we are not on the defensive! Rather, as the church, we are the ultimate power in this universe! We do not need to be on the defensive. We will not be destroyed by the influences of the world. We are not to be afraid of being influenced by this world. Rather, it is WE who will be the influence on this world.

Our Gospel lesson calls us to have salt in ourselves. What does that mean? Well, think about salt in a meal. When you add salt to a meal, the meal doesn't change the taste of the salt rather the salt changes the taste of the entire meal, In the same

way in a spiritual way we are to season the world with spiritual salt. That spiritual salt is the Gospel message. When the Gospel message interacts with the world, the Gospel message is not changed but rather it can influence an entire world. In fact, we are more than just seasoning on a meal. Our influence is more than just making the world taste better. We are more like a CURE for a dying world.

In 1796, Dr. Edward Jenner discovered small pox vaccine. Until then, small pox was a deadly disease. Yet since the development of a small pox vaccine,... small pox has all but been wiped out through out the world. A little vaccine sent its influence throughout the body to heal. A little vaccine sent its influence throughout the world to destroy death from a deadly disease.

And now, this is the spiritual analogy to the Gospel. Since the time of Adam and Eve, the world has been dying of sin. Since the fall, sin has had its way with mankind. and because the wages of sin is death, we were dying. We were dying both physically and spiritually. We were dying. There was no cure. There was no cure, that is, until Jesus. The cure for that sin... was Jesus. The cure for sin is the Gospel. It is God who comes down to us and says... My son died to remove the sins which separate you and I. Come my child and enter my kingdom. That is the Gospel. Simple as that... that is the Gospel. That is the Gospel! And you know that. At the waters of Baptism, you received the inoculation against sin. When the Holy Spirit came to dwell with you, you were healed, healed from the sickness of sin. All thanks be to God.

Having been healed... God calls us to bring that healing to others. The world is filled with the spiritually sick. The world is filled with those needing healing. The world is filled with those who are hungry and thirsting to hear the true Gospel. This world is hungry and thirsting to know the love of Jesus Christ. The people of this world are ignorant of the laws with which God has created this Earth, and for this reason make bad decisions which reap bad consequences. The people of this world, think that God brings bad things upon people... The people of this world see God as a god of punishment... Or worse yet, they believe that God is a silent God... uninterested in the goings-on of the world. That is the spiritual sickness they suffer because they do not know Jesus. In this way, a little bit of Gospel can be the cure for the entire world.

For a man who thought God was mad at him. For the woman who thought that her sin was unforgiveable by God. For the person who believed that God doesn't care about them.... a little Gospel sends its influence through a person's soul to heal. a little Gospel can heal with the simple message.... God loves you. God HAS

forgiven you. Jesus died to remove the sins which separated you and God. God now says, "Come my child and enter my kingdom..." A little Gospel sends its influence throughout the world... to destroy "death from sin." This world needs to hear about Jesus Christ. The people of this world need to know that God cares and loves them. The people of this world need to know that there can be peace even amidst the suffering of this world. The world needs to hear that God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

God is calling us to share the Gospel to a world dying to know his love. God is calling us to be a cure for a dying world. We have been given the cure in his Word. We have been given the cure in His Holy Spirit. We have been given the cure through faith. God calls us to share that cure. God has called us to be the salt of the Earth. We are not to be a church in siege mode, hiding behind our walls. Matt 28:18 commands us We are to go out to all the world. baptizing them and teaching them to obey all that Christ commands. God calls us not to bend to the ways of the world, but rather to be a cure for the dying... God calls us to be the powers which change this world. God calls us to be salt in this world. But it will not be by our power that we will be able to cure the blindness which causes people to reject the ways of God. It only God who can heal. It will be only as the Holy Spirit works within them that their heart will be open to trust in Christ. We are not to be influenced by the world but rather **through Christ**, we are to influence the world.

At Immanuel First, we chosen to be an influence upon the world by making and developing friendships. As we come close to them, as our hearts come close to them it is our goal to leave the imprint of the face of Christ on them. upon their hearts, upon their minds upon their souls. I just want to encourage you... when you meet someone who needs to know Christ, do not be afraid of not knowing what to say... Scripture says that the Holy Spirit with provide the words. Do not be afraid of getting near someone who does not know Christ. Do not be afraid of sharing Christ with those around you. They so desperately need to know Christ, and many do not even know it. This world is hungry and thirsting to know the love of Jesus Christ. This world needs to hear about Jesus Christ so badly. They need to hear that God so loved the world, that he gave his only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. God is calling us to share the Gospel to a world dying to know his love. You are the salt of the earth.

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