

Super bowl Sunday. As some of you walked out of church last week you asked me who I was going to cheer for? I told a couple of people that I always root for the underdog. My Detroit Lions are always the underdog, but I will be in heaven before they reach the Superbowl. I take a lot of ribbing about my team every year from the Packer, Bear fans at Open Bible. Anyway, I was rooting for Kansas City for two reasons. First, they have a Christian quarterback who lets his light shine. Patrick Mahomes devotes time to building homes for veterans and helping kids achieve their dreams. He is humble. Second, Kansas city hadn't won anything in 50 years. Those were my reasons. Usually, the best things about the super bowl are the funny ads. And I am amazed at the cost of these ads. This year a 30 second ad cost 5.6 million dollars compared to \$37,500 in 1967. Sad to say, there were no ads in 2020 that encouraged people to read the Bible and learn about Jesus.

God's plan to get the message of the gospel out into the world involves using ordinary, garden variety people like you and me. We are salt of the earth and the light of the world. Philippians 2 says that we shine like stars in the universe as we hold out the word of life. This is a great privilege and also a great challenge. So today Christian. Be Like Salt & Be A Light!

On the back of cars in Florida, I see a sign, it says Salt life. Basically it means that the best life you can have is on the beach, swimming, fishing, surfing, and enjoying the sun. Although this sounds like a great idea, it is not the kind of salt life God intends for us. Rather, God tells us the word salt has a different meaning.

At the time of Jesus they did not have refrigerators to keep meat from spoiling but they did have salt. I remember from my childhood how one of my neighbors would cure bacon and ham by placing it into large crocks filled with salty brine. The bacon and ham was then smoked with apple wood for several weeks. The result was meat that could be hung in the cool basement without the need for refrigeration.

What happens to meat if it is not refrigerated or salted? It will rot very quickly and it will perish. If people do not come into contact with Jesus and have him as their Savior they will perish forever. Job said, "Man decays like a rotten thing, like a garment that is moth eaten." Jesus says this about people who do not have him as their Savior. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." Without Jesus people perish. With Jesus they will live forever.

We are the salt of the earth. We have the privilege of letting the world know what Jesus has done to remove our problem of sin so we will not be condemned forever. Further, we help preserve the world from moral rotteness. When you walk away from the inappropriate joke being told by one of your foursome on an executive course, you are being salt. When you have pure speech even among those whose talk is course and take the Lord's name in vain, you are salt. When you pray before a meal at a restaurant, you are salt. When you stand up for your faith like the girl I heard about recently who was involved in an exercise in a classroom where kids were to stand either on one side of the classroom if they believed in evolution and on another side of the classroom if they believed in creation and debate their position. This girl stood all

alone for the whole class and took the sometimes demeaning remarks of her classmates in faithfulness to her Lord. She was salt.

Secondly, Christians we are called to be light. A sunrise coming up over Lake Miona as I take a morning walk in Lakeside Landing. A sunset at Key West, or over Anna Marie Island. The aurora borealis in a winter night sky. So Beautiful. Jesus says, You are to be like light.

Palestinian homes were generally dark, having one small window. They did not have electricity and light bulbs like we have. Their light consisted of a lamp which was a bowl filled with oil that had a wick. When they needed light the lamp was placed on a lamp stand. The most difficult thing of having this light in the house was in lighting the lamp. Remember they didn't have matches or cigarette lighters. As a result, no one wanted to let their light go out because it took too much work to get the wick lit again. But when people went out of the house it was dangerous to leave the light on so for safety reasons when they left their homes the lamp would be taken from its lamp stand and placed under an earthen vessel where it could burn risk free. As soon as someone returned they would put the lamp on the stand. No one lights a light only to put it under a basket or earthen vessel we are to let our light shine to the maximum.

We are to dispel darkness. "Arise; shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the Lord will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising".

As people look at you, they should see a loving, caring, giving spirit in. When a non-Christian hangs around you, they should eventually have a desire to know why you are the way you are. That will lead them to question you: Why are you so caring? And that will lead you to tell them about how Jesus has made a difference in your life. That will lead to praise for your Lord in heaven. Your example may move them to want to come to church with you. If that is what church and your God does for you, I want that to happen to me. Again, as they come to church with you, our Father in heaven is being praised.

We are His light in the world. By our actions, by our speech, by our attitudes we teach, we enlighten, we strengthen. There is a reason why the Bible says "Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever." (Daniel 12:3) People remember especially those who taught them heavenly things. I may have taught my daughter how to have a good work ethic, how to love basketball and football, but the thing that made the biggest difference in her life is what she learned from me about Jesus.

Even Christians, who are the salt of the earth and the light of the world, need to be reminded how we became salt and light in the first place. Left to ourselves, we aren't very salty or bright. Actually, we are far from tasty or savory. We are nothing close to bright. We aren't even faintly lit or dim. Each one of us is tasteless and bland. We are filled with darkness and gloom. Listen carefully to Jesus in verse 19 this morning, "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven." One of the least of these commandments! How many times do you think you have

broken one of God's commands even in the least bit? Even just the slightest inappropriate thought? That one burst of anger? That bad word you couldn't keep in? That rumor you just had to spread? We do those things all the time! And those are just the little things! But Jesus said that if you sin at all, then you will be called least in the kingdom of heaven!

In the same way, Jesus says in verse 20, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." The Pharisees were the strictest of the strict. They added 613 of their own laws to God's laws. They even counted how many steps they took on the Sabbath Day. But unless we can outperform the most zealous of all people, "You will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." To be save ourselves, our righteousness must not only exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees it has to be equal to God's righteousness. The point is, God demands absolute perfection. Trying hard isn't good enough. Being mostly good isn't good enough. God wants us to obey him and be like him. But that is a huge problem, because our lives are filled with sinful darkness. Here is the good news as we hear it Romans 3, "But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify." There is a righteousness that we cannot find in ourselves by keeping the law. It is found in Jesus who kept every law perfectly in our place for us. He even died to wipe away from our account every unrighteous thing we have ever done. This righteousness is a free gift. It cost Jesus everything to provide it for us, but it cost us nothing. God's plan is to use us to let the world know about this righteousness that is found only in Jesus. This is a challenge because every human being in their natural condition wants to cling their righteousness for the hope of being saved.

The love Christ has for us, has completely transformed and changed us. It has changed us from bland and disgusting sinners to seasoned and delicious salt of the earth. It has changed us from gloomy and dingy darkness to bright and radiant lights in the world. It has changed us from being sinners doomed to hell to saints bound for heaven.

And so in this world ugly in sin He has placed beautiful things - you and me, His redeemed children. We are beautiful as salt;; beautiful as light; and beautiful in Christ. So Pass the Salt and Turn on the Light! Or as little children would sing, I'm goin shine, I going to let this little light of mine shine! So Shine On!