

## Matthew 5:13-20

### Light Shall Rise

In Pakistan, Gauri learned how to cut and sew at an early age. As an adult, this knowledge allowed Gauri to contribute to her family's income by working as a seamstress. After her husband was killed in an accident, Gauri's income was not enough to provide for her family on her own. She was selected for a Presbyterian World Service & Development project that provides emergency food assistance to families in need, as well as longer-term support through small business training and development. The food aid the family received made it possible for Gauri to save a portion of her monthly income that would have otherwise been spent on food. With the money she saved, Gauri was able to further her child's education and stock her tailoring shop with more materials.

This is one example of many of how the Presbyterian Church in Canada is impacting and transforming lives through the work of Presbyterian World Service and Development. Known by the acronym, PWS&D. Today is a day to highlight that work and how we can be a part of God's work in the world locally and globally.

But let me start with the scripture reading as scripture is the basis for our understanding for how we, as Christians, are called to be in the world. A quote from Archbishop William Temple is "The church is the only organization on earth that exists for those who are not its members."<sup>1</sup>

Hear that again, "The church is the only organization on earth that exists for those who are not its members." The church exists to bring glory and honour to God who desire abundant life for all people. Not just those who are lucky and privileged enough to be born into a country or family with opportunity and enough money to make the choices they want or to be able to supply their daily needs. The world is filled with people in countries, families, and even local communities where money and prosperity are not certain or even attainable.

In the Gospel of Matthew Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth" followed up with "You are the light of the world". We need to note that the you in these statements is heard in the plural sense, more like "you all" are the salt of the earth you all are the light of the world. We have this within ourselves but for Christians it is not only an individual

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<sup>1</sup> Cook, Charles James. *Feasting on the Word: Year A Volume 1 Advent through Transfiguration*. Editors David L. Bartlett, and Barbara Brown Taylor. Westminster John Knox Press. Louisville. 2010. P336.

way of being in the world, but the qualities of salt and light that we are together is what can transform communities.

Professor Melanie Howard writes on the Working Preacher site, “that which comprises the human essence already (for example, “light”) is simply instructed to be made even more manifest than what it already is. It is not for humans to accomplish any particular work. Humans are simply to allow their core essence to be made more evident.”<sup>2</sup>

That blows my mind when I really start to think about it this way. The salt and light are already embedded in us as human beings. When so much of our theological upbringing has told many is that they are sinful at birth, this statement is extraordinary. We are at our core salt of the earth and light of the world. Can you imagine what would happen if all people understood themselves in that light? The value they would innately understand they carry as human beings?

As followers of Christ, we get to live into that! We get to live as salt of the earth. I love to cook and to bake and for those who also do that, and even if all you do is add a little salt to what is on your plate, you know the difference that even a little salt can make in making things taste good. All the ingredients are needed but that pinch of salt adds and enhances what is there. We are salt. We are salt in our families and in our communities.

When the church is moving and being as it is called to be, we are the salt in the world. We often think of ourselves as so small and insignificant, especially in this point in history, that we have little to offer to impact the world. But we are light...that pinch of salt. What we bring can flavour an entire conversation, outreach, or life in a way that changes the course of things, brings about abundance of life. This is life where all are valued and loved. Where compassion is the norm and justice for those who cannot speak for themselves, who have little to no power, can be given a voice.

We get to live as light in the world. Imagine yourself walking around radiating light. Have you met people who light up a room? Met anyone with a spark in them that draws you into their light? We want to be around people like that, we want to be that person. And Jesus says you already are. We need to live into that.

Now if the light of one person can make such a difference, what about the light of an entire congregation! The light that is the church is like a city on a hill or a lamp on a lampstand that gives light to all in the house. Light has a way of bringing hope and beauty. Imagine the night sky. Without the night you cannot see the stars that beam brightly. We are shining stars that light up the darkness.

The Christian church in Canada is struggling to find meaning and purpose. Our congregations are looking for how to share who we are and who God is with others. What if we started with being the salt and light that is already at the core of who we are.

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<sup>2</sup> **Melanie A. Howard.** [Commentary on Matthew 5:13-20 - Working Preacher from Luther Seminary](#)  
Accessed February 2, 2023.

What if we let the light of our love rise to the top of all that we do, how we worship, how we give generously, how we interact with others, and what we do in community?

In the writing from the Book of Isaiah we hear what people think they should be doing and are doing, and little of it has to do with how they help others. So, the words are written of God, "Is not this the fast that I choose; to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?"

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn and your healing shall spring up quickly... If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil, if you offer your food to the hungry and satisfy the needs of the afflicted, then your light shall rise in the darkness.

We are called to do this as people of God, from our home and from our churches. We are salt and light. May we live into that identity so that we enrich and enhance the flavour of our communities, the lives of so many who are downtrodden and hurting. May our light shine in the dark places of our homes and communities so that those who are lost or feel forgotten can find their light too.

As I close, and so that you can also see how the work of being salt and light is done through the work of PWS&D, watch and listen as that work is highlighted in what is called Practical Compassion.

*Practical Compassion Video Link* [Practical Compassion - YouTube](#)