

The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt 10

Back in November I got COVID. It was like a bad cold. The worst part was that I lost my sense of taste. I would add salt to my food, but it was as if the salt had lost its' saltiness and I had to add more. Now that I have my sense of taste back, if I use the amount of salt that I used back then it would ruin the taste. Just the right amount and it brings out the flavor of the meal.

Prayer

1. Being Salt

Matt 5:13-16

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

Jesus is addressing the Jewish people. God set them apart as His people to make them a model, an example for all the nations of the world. Along the way they forgot this and thought of themselves as an exclusive club and as a result they cut themselves off and separated themselves from the rest of the world.

Jesus is reminding them of their role in the Kingdom of God.

As His adopted people, this teaching also applies to us.

We are to be what the rest of the world looks up to and aspires to. We have a relationship with the living God and as such our interaction with the world should add flavor to the hopeless and meaningless lives of non-believers.

In Puerto Rico, on the southwestern coast there is a lighthouse in Cabo Rojo. To get to it you have to drive past a series of salt-making lagoons. This operation to harvest salt from the sea water is the oldest in all of the new world having been officially approved by Spain in July of 1511. Even before that, the Tainos or the natives of Boriquén, used this bay to harvest salt from the ocean.

Currently, this operation is overseen by the Federal Fish and Wildlife Commission.

To make salt, they let seawater into shallow holding tanks or lagoons, where the sun begins to evaporate the water leaving behind higher concentrations of salt. After two or three months, that water is pumped into progressively shallower tanks until the water is completely evaporated and all that is left is salt. Before the water completely evaporates the tanks take on a pink color, due to a high concentration of tiny shrimp in the water.

Then the salt is bulldozed into mounds and then it is sifted to take out any impurities. At this point it is ready for use.

If you google uses for salt you will find over 60 possible uses for salt.

Among the most common ones are:

- As an additive to food for cattle
- For tanning leather
- Use in water softeners and pool Chlorine generators

- Curing and preserving meats
- Melting ice
- Making of soaps

Of course, for us, the one of most interest is the flavoring of food.

To be used for flavoring, it has to be of the highest quality and can't contain any impurities.

Even then, if you go online, you will find endless varieties of table and cooking salts.

Flavoring food is the highest use for salt. Any salt that does not make the cut ends up being used for the other uses that I listed before. It's still useful, but it is not being used for its' highest purpose.

As a people of the Kingdom, Jesus is asking us to allow ourselves to be used to our highest potential as witnesses to His Kingdom.

2. Being Light

14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Following along the same lines Jesus talks about being light.

Cities that are in valleys or plains are easily obscured from view by trees or surrounding hills. However, a city that is built on high ground can emit light that can be seen from miles and miles away. If you are lost, all you have to do is follow the light and you can find refuge.

Earlier I talked about the lighthouse in Cabo Rojo. There are dangerous currents, shallow waters, and rock formations that are a danger to boats and shipping vessels. That lighthouse can be seen for miles in the Caribbean Sea and serves as a warning to keep vessels safe. The lighthouse itself is on top of a cliff and even then, it soars high above the coastline.

Growing up in Puerto Rico we always had lights in the middle of the ceiling. Although the light was harsh, you could easily see everything in the room. I was always fascinated when I would visit my American friends and they would have lamps on tables which were much more subdued and created a different mood. However, if you wanted to really find something, you had to turn on the overhead light.

Of course, not even my friends would put their lamps on tables. They wouldn't turn on a light and put it under a table or under a bucket. There would be no point.

I like to look at the stars at night, but around here there is too much moisture in the atmosphere and too much light pollution. But even with that you can still make out the major stars in the night sky.

However, a few years ago, I drove back from California and happened to be in Arizona in the middle of the desert at night and I was amazed how many stars you could see. I had

never seen so many stars in my life. I was in awe thinking that the light from these stars had traveled millions of miles and were still visible. In fact, by the time their light got here, the stars they emitted might not even be in existence anymore.

In this world, which is getting darker every day, even a dim light is visible and can help show the way to someone who is lost. We are supposed to be that light.

However, we are told that our religious views are private and should be kept to ourselves.

In polite society we are told that there are two things that are off limits to talk about: politics and religion.

Rom 10:14

14 But how are they to call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?

There is a quote that is attributed to St. Francis of Assisi. It says, "Preach the Gospel at all times. If necessary, use words."

While well intentioned, not only did St. Francis never say these words, but it gives the impression that it is of more value to live the Word than to preach it.

The closest thing he said comes from his Rule of 1221, Chapter XII on how the Franciscans should practice their preaching:

"No brother should preach contrary to the form and regulations of the holy Church nor unless he has been permitted by his minister ... All the Friars ... should preach by their deeds."

Essentially, make sure your deeds match your words. While there's a nice and good sentiment in the statement—be sure you live out the grace and truth of the Gospel, the Gospel is still to be proclaimed orally.

3. Being a Witness

It is our job as His children to be salt and light and make a difference in this world.

The Billy Graham school of Evangelism teaches a simple method on how to share our faith:

- a) **Share your story.** Start out by sharing what God has done for you and what He means to you.
- b) **Share His story.** Use your knowledge of the Bible to share the teachings of the Gospel, the Good News for humanity.
- c) **Invite them into the story.** Sometimes we manage to do the first two, but most of the time we fail to do the third.
 - Ask them if they would like to have a relationship with God.
 - Ask them if their lives were to end tonight, if they know where they would spend eternity.
 - Ask them if they're ready to ask Jesus to be Lord and Savior of their lives.

Remember that it is your job as His ambassador to ask. If they say no, that's ok, maybe they're not ready. Maybe they need to think about it. Maybe God has more work to do.

But, if they say “yes”, then you have expanded the Kingdom of God and gained a new brother or sister.