Springfield Presbyterian Church

February 5th, 2023

The Light of Covenant Community

1. Introduction

This past week, I was reading an article in the Christian

Century magazine that made me smile. It was about a playwright who taught preaching classes and took a different approach from many seminary classes. His first advice to his students was this, “Be yourself, be underprepared, be weird.” The article was great, but the point that I want to drive home is his belief that preachers and leaders, and I would say, disciples in general, need to be interesting people.

Now, that doesn’t mean you need to perform or be someone you are not, in fact, quite the opposite. Let’s say you go to a concert, a lecture, a movie, and so on – you wouldn’t go to a place with a monotone speaker that is going to have you asleep on the seat in five minutes flat…unless insomnia is a struggle in your life. No, you are going to want to go and listen and engage with interesting people – people who are a little weird, who amplify their gifts and find creative ways to use them, and expose you to something new and fun. I’ve preached on the need for folks to embrace weirdness – and here it is again, embrace the weirdness.

1. You are salt

Now, you may ask, where’s the Scriptural foundation for

weirdness? Jesus tells us that we need to be the salt of the earth. When you think of salt – what does salt do? Salt preserves food, but it also flavors it – it gives it a little edge and makes it more delicious. Without salt, the food can be bland.

In culture, sometimes we say that someone is a little “salty” which, depending on who you are, is a great compliment for some. Salty, in American slang, is when someone is edgy – when someone is annoyed or an agitator. Now, I can’t pull this off in a sentence without one of our youth laughing, and rightfully so, at me – but we are called to be salty. We are called to be disciples who enhance and preserve the Word, but we are also called to be a bit edgy too – to mix it up and question the status quo. We can do that in love, but without some edginess and weirdness and saltiness, the world would become boring and our discipleship would be much less effective.

# If you are fearful of being weird, of being salty – I give you the words of Brene Brown that often lift me up on days where I question myself. Hear her words, “Stop walking through the world looking for confirmation that you don't belong. You will always find it because you've made that your mission. Stop scouring people's faces for evidence that you're not enough. You will always find it because you've made that your goal. True belonging and self-worth are not goods; we don't negotiate their value with the world. The truth about who we are lives in our hearts. Our call to courage is to protect our wild heart against constant evaluation, especially our own. No one belongs here more than you.”

# In summation: be weird, even if your voice trembles – that is discipleship at its best.

1. Light

Now, we’re also called in this passage to be the light of the

world. We spoke last week about the knowledge that light will always overcome the darkness and what a joy and relief that is, especially as we do the good work of discipleship.

So yes, we are called to continue to be light bearers in our world. Light is an amazing thing. It lets you see things you wouldn’t ordinarily see in the dark. It gives color and changes the hues of colors depending on the light. It helps our fruits and veggies to grow through the power of sunlight. It provides energy through solar power and electricity. Light, in and of itself, is power.

I admit that even as an adult, I’m afraid of the dark. I’ve gotten past the boogie monster underneath my bed or a scary ghost hanging out in my closet. I’m afraid of the dark simply because it’s harder to see, and as someone with balance issues, that’s even more of a tightrope. The darkness is uncomfortable, and unsettling. And yes, we need the discomfort of darkness sometimes, but light can let us feel safe.

I think about this as well when something “comes to light.” Usually, we say something “comes to light” around a piece of news, a personal revelation, or something negative is exposed as a means of justice. When something “comes to light” it can initially be scary, but light provides freedom for change to happen, for things to shift, and when the light is shined, we can see things for what they are in this world.

You are the light of the world, my friends. You provide safety, warmth, growth, and more as a disciple. So take the light that you embody, through your relationship with Christ and this community, and shine boldly. It is good work that you are called to and by shining forth your light in the many ways it can be shared, let it be to the glory of God. You see, God as Creator first brought light into the world, and while we are bearers of it, we point always to the one, to God, the one who grants us this autonomy and freedom to shine forth that light that has been gifted to us.

1. Law

The third part of this Gospel story takes a bit of a turn. It’s easy

to talk about salt and light, but what is Jesus trying to tell us about law? How does this play into salt and light and our hopes as disciples? It’s a little complicated, as most good things are, but here’s my take, which is one among many.

So, the law isn’t changing – Jesus is not changing the commandments or the fundamental aspects of law. In fact, Jesus would have been very familiar with the law and he amplifies the power of tradition and wants to keep the covenant promises of God alive. Jesus is here to be a little salty, offer some light, but he isn’t looking to bring forth a new law – he wants to keep the law, but make it even better.

So we can keep our traditions, we keep those covenant promises that we see in our Old Testament to be as true as ever and a comfort that God, working through Jesus and the Spirit, is a constant. Here’s the tricky part though, and something not spoken about in this passage in particular and a much bigger sermon for another time – but the law that has been put forth has been corrupted in front of Jesus. We see it in the pharisees, and if you remember Sunday school, they weren’t fair you see. We see the law morphed and changed and nuanced so that the richer get richer and the poorer get poorer and it can all be blamed on ‘the law.’ It doesn’t feel too different from today in some ways.

Yet Jesus is saying, “Hey, I am the fulfillment of the law.” In other words, watch what I’m doing and saying and you’ll see how the law is suppose to actually play out in this world. Part of fulfilling that law is being the salt of the earth and the light of the world and those elements of faithful discipleship will move us closer to following the law that God intended.

1. Conclusion

Ah, my friends, there’s so much goodness in just one text and

too much to digest on one Sunday morning. Yet hear this, take this home, live it out – be the salt of the earth, be the light of the world, and seek to live out the laws that Jesus lived out in his own life. If we could do those three things alone, we would grow so much closer to our greater call of discipleship. And know that as you do all of these things, you are held in the light of a covenant community, this community of Springfield, where we will keep heaping salt on you and offering you candles to light to keep God’s story going in this world and in our lives. Amen.