

Pentecost 13 9/8/19  
Luke 14:25-35 18C

“SALT IS GOOD, BUT IF SALT HAS LOST ITS TASTE, HOW SHALL ITS SALTINESS BE RESTORED? IT IS OF NO USE EITHER FOR THE SOIL OR FOR THE MANURE PILE. IT IS THROWN AWAY. HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR.”

Zacchaeus was a wee little man and a wee little man was he. But, that is that what made him an enemy of God. Zacchaeus was a tax collector, and the Evangelist tells us a “chief” tax collector at that, and that made him rich. Being a chief tax collector and rich meant he was a cheat, a thief, a liar, a coveter; he feared, loved, and trusted in his money above all things. That’s why the wrath of God rested upon him and he was an heir of hell.

That was until the day Jesus entered Jericho and Zacchaeus climbed a sycamore tree, his Lord he wanted to see. Jesus goes to the chief tax collector’s house, and in the course of the evening, Jesus says to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham.” “Son of Abraham” means the chief tax collector believed in Jesus Christ and it was counted to him as righteousness. This is Jesus salting Zacchaeus; preserving him from sin, death, and hell.

Here’s how it worked – salt was a precious, priceless thing. This was before the REC came into being, so there was no refrigeration. Salt preserved good; it kept it from spoiling. Jesus calls His disciples the “salt of the earth” (Mt 5:13). In other words, you are good for the world; you’re good for the people who live in it because you preserve them in Jesus Christ from sin, death, and hell.

But Jesus also warns us, “If salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored. It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure

pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear (vv. 34-35).” You have been salted, seasoned, by God the Holy Spirit in Jesus Christ. And yet, you can lose your saltiness; that is, you can lose your faith.

You are a sinner in a sinful world and that means the devil, the world, and the weakness and doubt of your own sinful nature daily tempt you to into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice (cf. Luther’s Small Catechism, 6<sup>th</sup> Petition).

The devil whispers his lies into your ears and you doubt the promises of God’s Word. Your neighbor ticks you off, and you do not give him/her the forgiveness, the kindness, the gentleness God has given you; no, you remain angry at him/her and wish harm and ruin upon them. You lurk at the filth on the internet and now you are hooked on pornography. Your co-workers bad mouth your supervisor at work or the other students bad mouth a teacher at school, so you do the same thing and do not guard the words that come from your mouth, so you end up speaking unkind, untrue words and slander your neighbor’s name and reputation. You are not content with what God had given you, so you trusted in “lady luck” and bought a lottery ticket so all your dreams really can come true. Idolatry, self-centeredness, doubt and deception, lying, stealing, adultery, greed, hoarding, these are the ways of the world, and that’s to name just a few.

We have been seasoned by Christ Jesus; yet, we are de-sensitized by the lies of the devil and influenced by a world dead in sin, until you began to think that you can be a Christian and live any way you want, and believe anything you want. There is danger in that for us, my Fellow Redeemed in Christ. “If salt has lost its taste,” Jesus says. Salt can lose its taste; that means we can lose our faith in Jesus Christ. And Jesus says, salt that has lost its saltiness “is of no use either for the soil or for the

manure pile. It is thrown away. He who ears to hear, let him hear” (v. 35).

That, Dear Child of God, is your Lord Jesus getting salty with you. He is holding before you the mirror of the Law to expose your sin. He is exposing your self-righteousness. He is calling you to repentance.

When you see your sin, you see your need for need for a Savior. The Good News of the Gospel is that Jesus, the very Son of God, humbled Himself to be born of a Virgin to be your Savior. Upon His human frame, He bore all your sins of thought, word, and deed; all the times you allowed the devil, the world, and your own sinful flesh to take your saltiness in Christ away from you. He carried all your sin to the cross, there He purified you of all your sins because He suffered the punishment and death of all your sins. And that means for you, that you are forgiven.

The Good News for you this day is that your Lord Jesus comes to you risen from the dead to salt you with the love and forgiveness He won for you by His innocent suffering, death, and resurrection.

Today is Education Rally Day. Sunday School begins today; Catechism begins Wednesday. Why? Why do we do what we do? Why do we have Sunday School and Catechism? I suppose we could say, “We’re Lutheran. That’s the way we’ve always done it.” But, that’s not really a good enough answer. Why? Why do we do what we do?

The answer to that question of “Why?” is found in Jesus’ own words, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear (v. v. 35). “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing through the Word of Christ,” St. Paul teaches us (Ro 10:17). If we want our children to have faith in Jesus; if you want to have faith, Dear Child, especially to bear up under the cross, not to become frightened in darkness of the valley of the shadow of death; the only way you will gain that faith is through the hearing and learning of God’s Word. That’s why we

not only hold it sacred and gladly hear it and learn it, we teach it to our children.

Jesus comes to you and abides with you as He salts you in the waters of Holy Baptism. He salts and preserves you as He speaks His Word into your ears. He salts you as He feeds you with His Body and Blood given and shed for you for forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is through His Word, -- and remembering that includes the visible Word of the Sacraments, -- Jesus purifies you, makes you new, and preserves you against the sin and its wages of death.

Our Epistle lesson this Sunday comes from the book of Philemon. Philemon was a leader of the church at Colosse and a friend of Paul's. In fact, he was brought to saving faith in Christ because he heard Paul preached the Gospel to him. Philemon had a slave named Onesimus and Onesimus stole money from his master and ran away to Rome. There, destitute and broke, with no hope, knowing only death awaited him because of his crimes, he found Paul. Through Paul's ministry, he was brought to faith in Christ. Paul writes this most marvelous letter to his friend Philemon telling him that he must welcome Onesimus back, just as our Father in heaven welcomes us poor, miserable sinners back.

Dr. Luther comments that there is a little Onesimus in us all. We all daily sin against our Master and run away. Good News of the Gospel Jesus continues to come to us through His Word. When we are crushed by our sin and in fear of the world and death and hell, Jesus comes to salt and preserve us, so that we do not lose our saltiness.

Jesus went to Zacchaeus' house to salt him, and He daily comes to you to salt you, Dear Child. Yes, we daily confess our sins to God, receive the full forgiveness that is ours in Christ, and bring forth the fruits of our

repentance – good works that serve our neighbor and are pleasing to our Father in Heaven. And, we take comfort in the words of Paul, “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil 1:6).