

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Our text comes right on the heels of the appointed Gospel for this Sunday, the Beatitudes.

This is important because Jesus ties them together by the pronoun "you."

The Beatitudes start rather generally, "**Blessed are the _____, for theirs is _____.**"

But the last beatitude He changed to "**Blessed are YOU when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.**

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

And then Jesus continued, "**YOU are the salt of the earth... YOU are the light of the world."**

We read as follows in Jesus' name:

[Jesus said,] "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.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. 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."^(ESV)

This is Your Word, heavenly Father; sanctify us in the truth, Your Word is Truth. Amen. (John 17:17)

Did you catch that connection Jesus is making between the beatitudes and the Christian's salt-ness and light-ness in this world.

Jesus does not remove difficulties and trials from His people once they believe and are baptized.

Peacemakers, make peace... between people in conflict.

The merciful... show mercy to those in need and distress.

Those who mourn suffer because of the sin and corruption in themselves and in this world.

You are the salt... and light, in this world even (and I might even say especially)

through your trials and tribulations, as well as when things seem to be going well.

...

But let us consider to what Jesus is comparing us in our text.

He said **you are the salt of the earth.**

Jesus leads us into what He meant when He further stated,

but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

You are to season the earth with God's grace and forgiveness;

in other words, you are to season the earth with Jesus, sharing His love and redemption.

Similarly, Jesus said, **you are the light of the world.**

It is the nature of light to shine, to be seen.

As He pointed out, it is foolish to light a lamp and then cover it.

You might as well have not lit the lamp — it would have the same effect.

So here Jesus adds what light we are to shine, **so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**^(ESV)

But as we consider these two images of us, we should also recognize

what is our doing and what is not.

We confess that, by nature, we are conceived in sin — that is, salt that **has lost its taste**.

Created “good”/perfect at creation, but then plunged headlong in to sin by our first parents, we deserve nothing but to **be thrown out and trampled under** God’s righteous feet.

Like tasteless salt cannot restore its own taste, so we cannot restore our own righteousness.

For that, God had to step into His creation and take on our judgement and condemnation.

He was not only thrown down and trampled under God’s wrath, enduring the torments of hell for us, but His heel was also crushed by the ancient serpent as He suffered mortal death for our sin.

In doing so, He crushed the serpent’s head and took away his victory and the power of death.

On this observance of All Saints Day, we rejoice in our Savior’s redemption and victory.

The paraments are white, the color of perfection and light.

We delight to think of those Christians who have escaped this world of sin and darkness to enter into the Father’s eternal light.

St. Paul once wrote, **for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.** Ephesians 5:8

Similarly, St. Peter also wrote: **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.** 1 Peter 2:9

That transition from darkness to light was not brought about by our own doing.

But we confess in Luther’s Explanation to the 3rd Article: *The Holy Spirit... enlightened me by the Gospel.*

It is God’s doing that you have been transferred from darkness to light.

Therefore, we should not be surprised that to keep us in the light is also the work and miracle of God, which He continues to perform through our constant use of the Means of Grace, His Word and Sacraments (Holy Baptism & Holy Communion).

These are where we receive Jesus Himself, the original source of this world’s light,

as Jesus said, **“I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** John 8:12

It was with the promise that the Lord’s Word is powerful and effective to give faith where and when He pleases that we buried Hans Riedel this past July.

Yet unborn and only 15 weeks along in the pregnancy, he was not able to be baptized.

But still he was brought into the presence of the Word of God through home devotions, and each week in the Divine Service he was present for the Benediction,

as the Lord’s Word was enacted on the congregation, that the Lord bless and keep him.

While the judgement is certainly left to the Lord, we trust His Word when He says that

He desires all people to be saved... 1 Timothy 2:4

& since Jesus was punished for all sins, our actual sins as well as the original sin we’re conceived in, we know that God will not condemn those whom He has given faith through His Word.

This is true, not only at the beginning of life, but also at the end.

Cynthia Douglas is a name that most of you do not know.

She was served by your pastors in the last months of her life.

Though raised in a Christian home, she was not baptized in her youth.

It wasn't until a dear friend asked if we would visit her that she again heard and believed that Jesus had redeemed her, and that she desired the promised blessings of Holy Baptism. After her baptism, she was constantly pointed back to it as a source for her confidence that she was a child of God and heir of His eternal kingdom.

And what a great comfort it is to us, that this work of enlightenment is not our own work, but God's. Because if it began or was sustained by us, we would have no certainty of its completion. If faith were merely an intellectual function, one that we initiated or continued, then what of those in Moses Lai's situation?

Moses is the father of Ga-Wing Obenberger who suffered from Alzheimer's in his final years. In his last months, he made no indication of recognizing even his own dearly loved family, let alone being able to make a coherent statement of faith in Jesus Christ.

Yet, God's promises are sure & certain.

Though he could not remember, His heavenly Father remembered him,

and His Savior's promise is true: **I will be with you always, even to the end of the age.** Matt. 28:20

He who had washed Moses in His blood, would remain in Moses' heart, though his mind was failing.

So it is our Triune God who makes this tasteless salt salty again, and who turns darkness into light.

We have wonderful examples before us in dear Christians who let their light shine on this earth, who reflected Jesus' grace and mercy in the world through their words and actions.

We can think of Jennifer Collins, who regularly volunteered at PLS and in various other groups;

of John Harstad, who served for years on our Board of Directors;

of Eric Rathke, who served as a Trustee at Our Redeemer in Yelm for many years;

of Iris Fagan, who taught Sunday school and was a Christian witness in the public school;

of Irene Hayes, who humbly continued to receive her Lord at her bedside;

of Odell Iverson, who in addition to serving on various boards for our church for years,

also served countless individuals as he eagerly shared Christ's love and comfort

through his personal evangelism, something he just couldn't keep inside of him.

This is not to say that these saints didn't struggle with sin in their lives, they certainly did.

Nor do we list these things to prove that they are now in heaven, as if it were by their good works.

Instead, these are mentioned for the purpose that Jesus gave:

so that [the world] may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

But perhaps the greatest gift of remembering them is the Lord's gift of their steadfastness in the faith.

None of these escaped this life without severe pain and suffering.

Whether they died from cancer, or infection, or heart or lung issues,

most of them suffered for years with chronic and severe health issues.

The Christian is not immune from suffering in this world.

Jesus even promised **reviling and persecution... for His sake.** Matthew 5:11

And many other saints that can be remembered on this day of observance died a martyr's death.

Surely it is not by our strength, by our resolve, or by our stubbornness that we will make it from this vale of tears to eternal paradise.

It's by the Lord's work alone, to redeem, call, enlighten, sanctify, and keep you in the one true faith.

St. Paul urged the Ephesians: **Walk as children of light**

(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true). Ephesians 5:8-9

Not as if this were a work that they were to do to earn their salvation,

but to walk as ones who continued to receive from their Lord what was **good and right and true.**
always receiving and thus reflecting the Light of Christ into this world.

In Jesus' name. **Amen.**

Soli Deo Gloria

Blessed be their memory in the Lord.

Moses Lai - 83

Iris Fagan - 61

John Harstad - 80

Jennifer Collins - 55

Hans Riedel - 15 weeks

Irene Hayes - 72

Eric Rathke - 74

Cynthia Douglas - 56

Odell Iverson - 91