

2026-10-04 God's Shalom – Being Salt and Light

This past Friday night two of my grandchildren, Rosie and Neil, ages 8 and 4, came to spend the night. Now, they've spent the night lots of times before – this was just the most recent overnight. And the bedtime patterns change a bit as they continue to get older. When Rosie was the only one (before Neil was born), she wanted to be held and rocked and sung to for bedtime. Then, when she became the big sister her bedtime routine needed to adjust a bit to accommodate Neil. Her holding and rocking time needed to be shortened because Neil needed to be fed as well as held and rocked. Now the bedtime routine is quite detailed with tooth-brushing, hand and face washing (if not a bath), reading, multiple drinks of water – and trips to the bathroom, ensuring that the correct stuffy is in the bed, having a discussion about socks on or socks off, etc. But there's one bedtime essential that has not changed over the 8 years that I've been a Grandma – and that is the absolute requirement that there is a light on. And not just a little nightlight but somewhere in the vicinity of the room in which they're going to sleep there needs to be a bright light shining. Fear of the dark is a real thing. And ironically, it's the light shining in the darkness that finally brings enough security for sleep to come.

Darkness can take a lot of shapes. It can look like financial insecurity. It can look like a medical diagnosis. Darkness can take the shape of laws and policies that are made specifically to get rid of certain people or to create chaos and uncertainty. It feels dark when corporations and big money seem to be so much stronger than organized efforts to show kindness and to do justice. It can feel like staring into the dark abyss when we consider the lack of concerted care for the earth and we see her struggle and groan trying to maintain her equilibrium and survive.

But Jesus' call to his followers - to us - is to remember and cling tightly to our hope in the Creators' love and steadfastness to the creation; the earth and everything that lives on it! In *that* hope we find our courage and motivation to walk with those who Jesus called blessed. We can stand in solidarity and support for the poor, we can weep with the grieving, we can lift up the meek and feed the hungry. When our hope is in God's love we can be fearlessly merciful and compassionate, we can be pure in heart, we can be unapologetic peacemakers and create strong circles of protection around the persecuted. We are not the light, but we can reflect God's light in us and be the brightness that shines in the darkness and helps to dispel the fear.

Along with light, Jesus used the analogy of salt to describe our role in the world. In the midst of darkness and fear we can become "tamed" into bland quietness and inaction, without purpose or spice! But we who follow Jesus are called to bring God's hope in the ways that salt brings out the flavor and the richness of food. Salt can make otherwise "calm" food become bold and noticeable! Salt also preserves and maintains the value of the food it's applied to, drawing out its strengths and true flavors. This is another way Jesus is calling us to behave in the world. And if we don't, we're like salt that's lost its effectiveness – not good for much of anything and certainly not fulfilling what it was created to do and to be! It may as well be thrown out!

In these times that can feel dark and difficult, when it seems easier to keep our heads down, our lights hidden and our saltiness bland, let's help each other to remember our Creator's love and care for us and all of creation. Let's take our courage and our joy from the presence of the Holy Spirit in one another and from the opportunities we have to sing and praise and weep and

struggle together. Let's support and encourage each other to be bold salt and bright light in this world. Amen.

Prayer of Thanksgiving –

Gracious God, we thank you for the opportunity to come to this table together, to remember and to celebrate your love for us, shown most clearly in the person of Jesus. Thank you for his life, his teachings, his sacrificial love for this world and for each of us. We pray in his name. Amen.

Benediction –

Creation is bursting with life and sounds that have inspired our songs this morning.

As we go from here, may we extend the celebration, knowing that our worship, like God's shalom, is not bound by space or time.

May God's mercy take root in our lives, so that we might be transformed and become the salt of the earth and the light of the world – witnesses to God's steadfast love. Amen.