

From the Rector's Study, the Rev. Bryce Sangster
Sunday, February 5th, 2023, Epiphany V
Isaiah 58:1-12 Psalm 112:1-9 1 Corinthians 2:1-16 Matthew 5:13-20

Jesus says in the gospel today; *do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.*

And yet we read in Isaiah; *look you fast only to quarrel and to fight but is not this the fast that I choose to loose the bonds of injustice to undo the thongs of the yolk. Is it not to share your food with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house and so forth then your light shall break from like the dawn.*

Perhaps it's not so much about the letter of the law is the intent, the spirit of the law. I have mentioned in the past the notion of the lack of delayed gratification, but there is also the sense of there is an overwhelming dependency on the external force called the law. Is the world moving in the direction of a lack of personal accountability and depending on rules and regulations to keep people honest?

Is that what Jesus is talking about when he refers to light and salt? In other words, not just doing the bare minimum? And passively letting the authorities handling it all?

When an opposition player was given a penalty for hooking him, Cale Makar of the Colorado Avalanche went to the referee and said he wasn't hooked but fell on his own, the penalty was cancelled. As an aside I heard after that he apologized to his teammates.

You probably have examples in your own life of people are acting in this way or even you yourself.

But what does it mean to act as salt and light? The obvious answer from Isaiah is care for the marginalized, the poor the sick, those in prison among others.

But how do we get to that point?

I attended a workshop in New Richmond Quebec. It was a joint workshop with the Anglican Diocese of Quebec and English community leaders. The workshop coordinator put sheets of long brown paper on three walls of the big room we used for the conference. They were kind of like a timeline but not necessarily rigidly followed.

On the first wall we were to put what was happening in our churches and in towns where our church was located.

On the second wall what was happening in the world around us and obviously what had happened of significance.

On the third wall, our personal lives, and significant events we had experienced.

Not surprising, on the first wall, there was a downward trend in both the town and the church community. On the second wall the world events we're all over the map. Both good news and bad. But the interesting point were all the positive events on the personal side, that third wall. There was an element and hopeful expectation in what was written on that third wall. Marriages, children, college and university degrees and new jobs. There were also bad news items like motorcycle accident but even in that the element of willing to risk. The idea of hope and risk in personal life that wasn't found in the church and church community or in the view of the world at large.

Perhaps this means that we need to look within ourselves to be salt and light. It is there even though it may appear hidden. Let us rejoice in that reality and when we feel down let us realize that we can find salt and light within each other and ourselves to the glory of God.

Amen

The Lord bless you and watch over you,
the Lord make his face shine upon you
and be gracious to you,
the Lord look kindly on you
and give you peace;
and the blessing ...