

St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Perth
Sunday, September 26th, 2021
Rev. Gerry Gallant

Seasoned With Salt

Welcome

Announcements

Call to Worship (Responsive)

*God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with laughter and songs of joy.
God calls us to worship, and we come,
some from a sense of obligation or habit.
God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with hearts heavy with grief.
God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with distraction or exhaustion.
God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with eagerness and enthusiasm.
God calls us to worship, and we come,
some with stress, loneliness, or depression.
As God's dearly loved children,
we bring all our joy and pain, hurt and hope
into this place of Spirit-given grace, love, and hope.*

Prayer of Invocation

O gracious and holy God,
give us diligence to seek you,
wisdom to perceive you,
and patience to wait for you.
Grant us, O God,
a mind to meditate on you,
eyes to behold you,
ears to listen for your Word,
a heart to love you,
and a life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit
of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Opening Hymn:

Call to Confession

*Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven,
whose sin is covered.
Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity,
and in whose spirit there is no deceit.
While I kept silence, my body wasted away
through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy upon me;
my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.
Then I acknowledged my sin to you,
and I did not hide my iniquity;
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,"
and you forgave the guilt of my sin.
Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you.*

Prayer of Confession (Responsive)

*Father, we are sorry for the many times we have left you
and chosen to satisfy our own selfish desires.
For the times we have hurt the members of our families
by refusing to do our share of the family tasks.
Father, we have sinned. Forgive us.
*For the times we were unkind and impatient with those who needed our time and concern.
Father, we have sinned. Forgive us.
*For the times we were too weak to stand up for what was right
and allowed others to suffer because of our cowardice.
Father, we have sinned. Forgive us.
*For the times we refused to forgive others.
Father, we have sinned. Forgive us.****

Assurance of Pardon

*Take comfort in the assurance
that even those things that are hidden from memory,
or are too deep for our words,
are not beyond God's forgiving love.
God, who knows us completely,
bestows pardon and peace.
Thanks be to God.*

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.
Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.**

**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the Evil One.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory,
Forever and ever. Amen.**

Children's Lesson

Normally, we would have the children gather together at the front of the sanctuary. However, we would ask that they stay with their parents for now and listen to the children's sermon.

Who can tell me what salt is like? Why do we find salt in our kitchens and restaurants, what is it used for? Would we ever eat salt all by itself for a meal?

In the Gospel that we are looking at today Jesus uses some very strange examples of how we are supposed to live our life. He is using exaggerations so that people understand how important the things he is saying actually are. Jesus is really trying to make people understand what it means to be his follower and what his followers are supposed to do in their lives.

One of thing things that Jesus says is that we will all be 'salted with fire'! That sounds pretty scary to me, what about you? I know when I add salt to my food I sprinkle a little bit of salt onto it, I am not sure if I want to have little bits of fire sprinkled on me.

But Jesus is speaking about salt a little bit differently here, he is talking about how salt was used to keep food from going bad. I am sure some of the families here still use salt for that purpose, when we pickle foods, we are using salts to prevent them from going bad. Even meats were salted to prevent molds from growing on them.

When Jesus speaks of salt, he is teaching is that being salty is an important part of being a Christian. You see salt is a necessary component of many aspects of the foods we eat. We use salt to add flavour, we use it when we bake things like bread or cookies! So maybe when Jesus says that we will be salted with fire, he is teaching us that we may have times in our lives when things are difficult. However, we will gain when we come through those problems. We are flavored by the fire, we learn to be better people, we learn more about our relationship with God and we become better Christians by those things.

However, remember salt was also used to keep food from going bad. Maybe he is teaching us that we need to be salty so that we can endure the things that we will face in this life. We should be salty so that we can preserve the Goodness of the Gospel in our lives and share it with others in this world.

Being Salty is an important aspect of being Christian, it means we have God at work in our life both inside and outside. We learn more about God and we share more about God by studying our Bibles. So, this week when you are at home, find somewhere else in the Bible where Jesus talks about salt and ask a parent, a sibling or even another adult in the congregation about it, so that we can all keep one another salty.

Loving God, preserve us and keeps us so that we can be your “salty” people. Make us ready to share your good news and love with the world around us.

Responsive Reading

Psalm 19:7–14 ESV

7 The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb. 11 Moreover, by them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward. 12 Who can discern his errors? Declare me innocent from hidden faults. 13 Keep back your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then I shall be blameless, and innocent of great transgression. 14 Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

Music Ministry

Scripture

Mark 9:38–50 ESV

38 John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” 39 But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us. 41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. 42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea. 43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 ‘where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.’ 49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.”

Hymn Before Sermon

Prayer for illumination

*God of Jesus Christ,
give us a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Christ,
so that the eyes of our hearts might be enlightened.
Help us to know the hope to which you have called us,
the riches of the glorious inheritance in the saints,
and the immeasurable greatness of your power at work in us.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

Sermon

This week's scripture is a continuation of last weeks. We have Jesus sitting in a room with a child upon his lap. The disciples are gathered in close with him and they have just been told that greatness in the Kingdom of God comes from being a servant and not from having the most in this world.

On top of this the disciples are trying to understand that Jesus, the Messiah, is not going to sit upon a worldly throne and save them from all of the troubles they are facing in the world, but instead he is going to be humiliated, tortured, suffer, and be executed upon the cross before he rises from the dead on the third day.

The reeling from the fact that everything they thought they had right been actually wrong. That everything they thought was of value, is actually worthless. The things they have been taught in the synagogue by the rabbi's is incorrect.

Perhaps they are feeling a little embarrassed because they have not been able to answer any question that Jesus has asked of them correctly without getting rebuked for some error they have made. On top of that, in Mark 9:17-18

Mark 9:17–18 ESV

17 And someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes him mute. 18 And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able."

the disciples were unable to cast out a demon that was in a child who was brought to them. Maybe this is why John decides at this moment to try to prove their loyalty to Jesus by explaining that they had found a man, who was casting out demons in his name, and they had stopped him, because he was not following them.

Were they doing it for Jesus, to protect his name? Or were they doing it because that man was able to cast out demons and they had failed? Or were they doing it because that man, was not one of the twelve, the chosen by Jesus?

The reasoning is not clear. However, we can look at Jesus's response and get an understanding of what we are called to do as his followers.

Mark 9:39–40 ESV

39 But Jesus said, "Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. 40 For the one who is not against us is for us.

Jesus teaches the disciples yet again that they have made a mistake in understanding him and his mission. They are not to stop people that are doing things in his name, but instead to understand that people that do such things are unable to speak evilly of Jesus.

Here in Mark, he phrases it as 'For the one who is not against us is for us.'

Meaning someone who is doing the works of God in the name of God is unable to reject Jesus. The parallel verse in Matthew it is presented a little differently

Matthew 12:30 ESV

30 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

and in Luke

Luke 11:23 ESV

23 Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

These two verses are identical and seem at first to be a contradiction of what is being said in the book of Mark.

They seem to say if you are not with Jesus and a follower of his you are excluded.

However, there is a variation in the verses that is important to understand. In Luke and Mark, we see Jesus speaking in the singular. He is speaking about him alone. If you are not a follower of Jesus you are not part of his kingdom, and we know this is true because he says in John 14:6

John 14:6 ESV

6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

In the books of Luke and Matthew he is speaking of personal faith.

In Mark he is using the plural, he is speaking of disciples and of the church. He is not speaking of personal faith, but instead of the actions of man.

This is why he is able to differentiate. In doing so he is giving a strong message to both the disciples and to the modern church. Be understanding of those who differ from you but are still followers of Jesus.

Jesus is telling us to have a good relationship with those who may differ from us on the non-essentials of Christianity.

I had an example of this just a few weeks ago. A young man from the high school popped into my office after school and asked me to explain a bit about the difference between the Presbyterian Denomination and the Roman Catholics and United Church with which he had some familiarity.

I gave a quick breakdown of the history of Christianity and how the reformed church broke away from the Roman Catholic Church and How the United Church came about roughly one hundred years ago.

I also told him that there are many denominations within Christianity, roughly 212 last time I checked, who differ in practice and tradition. What matters is that we believe in Christ as our Lord and that we follow his teaching and doctrine that are delivered in scripture. What does not matter are the little things, like whether we sprinkle or dunk someone during a baptism, which is just an act of man symbolizing the action of the Holy Spirit.

This is what Jesus is trying to teach the disciples, whether someone is part of their group or not, if they are a believer and doing things in his name, they are allies.

Paul understood this, when he was imprisoned, there were many teachers in the region who were his rivals, those who were envious or jealous of him. In the book of Philippians, he speaks of them.

Philippians 1:15–18 ESV

15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

True believers, whether they are part of our church community or not are with us and not against us.

He then speaks of the rewards that will come to those who are supportive of true believers in Christ.

Mark 9:41 ESV

41 For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward.

Those who show support, even so much as a cup of water will not lose their rewards in heaven because of supporting someone who differs in the non-essential areas of faith.

The importance of the cup of water comes from the practice of serving a meal to those who visited your home as a teacher. Those who had the ability to provide would often provide their guests with a large meal and wine, those who did not have the means would provide a cup of water. This cup of water was worth as much as a fine meal because it came with good intentions and was truly all the family could freely give.

So, when Jesus is teaching his disciples this, He is telling us that we can be supportive of those who are doing the work of God, even if they are not members of our church, or even if their practices align with ours. When we share believe in the essential doctrines, we are united in Christ, we are not against one another but for one another.

This is important because it leads into the next lesson.

Mark 9:42 ESV

42 “Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.

The reality of denominational differences is usually related to the teaching and understandings of the scripture. While a church must agree on all the critical doctrines, they can disagree on minor points, dunk, or sprinkle in baptism, pre-during or post tribulation rapture in the end of times, traditional or contemporary forms of worship. These things are not worth fighting about with one another, they do not impact one’s faith in Christ.

This is yet another warning about our pride. This time it is not about the pride we have in self, but the pride we have in our faith. If we have so much pride in our faith and we cause another person to doubt their faith, or even fall away from faith, because we cause them to stumble in their faith it would be better to have a millstone tied around our neck and be thrown into the sea.

This also ties into what we talked about over the last few weeks, if we do not take sin seriously and lead our fellow Christians astray it would be better to have a millstone tied around our neck and to be thrown into the sea.

We are called to raise one another up in our understanding and relationship with God. We should not be out there telling other Christians ‘Hey, you’re doing it wrong!’, instead we should be leading by example and showing them the right way. It is our call to be disciples of one another.

To teach people the scripture as we are taught in the book of second Timothy

2 Timothy 3:16–17 ESV

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

And to live a life by which we are an example to our brothers and sisters in Christ. This means we need to be knowledgeable in God’s word and be willing to dies to self, pick up our cross and follow Christ in all things. I hope that sounds familiar to many of you.

This also means that we need to be willing to give up things which may lead our brothers and sisters into to, even if those actions are not sinful themselves.

1 Corinthians 8:13 ESV

13 Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Eating meat was not prohibited, yet Paul would give up meat if it caused a brother to stumble. We need to think seriously about our lives and the examples of Christianity that we are presenting to those around us, both Christian and non-Christian.

This is where the dire warning of having a millstone hung around ones neck and being thrown into the sea. I am sure many of you know what a millstone is, here Jesus is speaking of the large millstone, one that needed to be drawn by a donkey to move. If this millstone were placed around one's neck and they were tossed into the sea, they would be lost forever.

For a Jew at the time this would be one of the worst possible deaths. Many had a fear of Sea travel because the loss of the body, which was a gift from God, in their mind meant a possibility of never entering heaven.

Jesus is delivering a very stern message to his disciples. Think about what you say and do when you are around fellow believers and those who are still coming to Christ.

He does not stop there however, in fact he decides to make it very clear how vital it is for Christians to not only understand sin, but to understand the need to be aware of their own sinful life and seek God's help in overcoming those things which are sinful in His eyes.

Mark 9:43–48 ESV

43 And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. 45 And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. 47 And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, 48 'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.'

This is a pretty graphic section of scripture. Jesus is speaking in hyperbole through these verses. Just like no one would have a millstone tied around their neck and be tossed into the sea, no one is expected to start chopping off limbs or tearing out eyes literally.

Instead, he is giving an example of the seriousness of sin and the repercussions of living a sinful life away from the salvation of Christ.

If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; What Jesus is speaking of here is the things that we do. If the things we do in our lives cause us to sin, we should seek to remove them from our lives. Seems simple enough, if we sin when we drink alcohol, we should stop drinking. This is in fact one of the realizations of the Alcoholic Anonymous 12 step program and many of the other addiction programs, from gambling and gaming to shopping and gossiping; if it causes us to sin, remove it from our lives.

If your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; If somewhere you go causes you to give into the temptations of sin, stop going there. Again, it seems simple, but not going places where we may give into temptation may require us to change hobbies, change the way we live or even give up

friends and relationships which we value. But Jesus is clear we should seek to remove them from our life.

If your eye causes you to sin; tear it out; Yet again it seems simple, but we know this goes beyond simply the things we look at, but also the things we think about. This is the most difficult of the three in my mind. Jesus is reminding us I believe that we are all sinners, and we are all caught by sin at times in what we say and do, the places we go and in our thoughts.

Jesus is calling for us all to live a life with integrity, in our words, our thoughts and our actions. If we fail to do this, we are destined for hell.

Jesus uses the word Gehenna, the place where the fires never stop burning and the worms never stop squirming. The description of Gehenna was based on the places where the child sacrifices to Moloch use to take place. A place where the bodies of children were tossed into pits and burned so that the smell of rotting flesh would not overtake the area. Where the worms were constantly feeding upon the flesh of the sacrifices.

When Jesus speaks of hell, he is speaking to a place that the people of the time would have understood. There were still animal sacrifice and garbage pits where the remains were tossed and burned. Those of us who are old enough may remember a trip to the dump and the smells that wafted from the garbage.

Jesus's warning here is an echoing of final words of the book of Isaiah.

Isaiah 66:24 ESV

24 "And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh."

This damnation to hell is the fate of those who do not come to the lord and Jesus does not hesitate to speak about it, even if many people hesitate to speak about it or even think about it in the modern world.

This is Jesus making it clear when he spoke earlier about the choice, we make between the eternal life we can have with him and the hell we are destined to if we do not follow him.

Yet he does not leave us or his disciples without hope.

Mark 9:49–50 ESV

49 For everyone will be salted with fire. 50 Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

For those of you who have not spent a lot of time in the Old Testament this may be unfamiliar. Jesus does in fact refer to the Old Testament quite often, it was the foundation of his teaching, and it is something which we should always be learning.

When he tells us that everyone will be salted with fire, he is speaking of the salt that was used to season the grain offerings in the Old Testament.

Leviticus 2:13 ESV

13 You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.

This salt is meant to purify us. Remember there was no refrigeration at the time, meats were preserved and purified by using salt. This salt is what would allow us to endure the troubles and persecutions of being Christian. The salt in the fire. The salt that would enact upon us with the Holy Spirit in our sanctification throughout our lives.

Salt held a high value in the culture of the time. Salt from the dead sea however was different from the salt rocks that we are all familiar with today.

It is not a pure salt like we have today, instead it is a mixture of other minerals and salt. So, when it is used for its salt properties they are limited. The saltiness eventually is removed from the minerals and the dead sea salt then no longer had value in the communities of the time.

Jesus is warning us that we should be cautious about losing those things which make us valuable, those things which set us apart from this world.

We are called to be the salt and light of the world. This means that we need to maintain our uniqueness so that we can impact and influence the world in which we live. We are to be in the world but not of the world, an example of what it means to follow Christ.

Jesus is telling us to be salt. Live our life as Christians at all times. Change people around us, by bringing God into their lives wherever we go, bringing purification to ourselves and the world around us.

We do all of this by maintaining our Christianity beyond the walls of the church, beyond our church groups and fellowship, beyond our circle of friends, and out into the secular world in which we live.

Colossians 4:6 ESV

6 Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.

This is what we are called to do.

Let us pray,

Lead Us to Grow in Faith

*Almighty and eternal God,
by your Holy Spirit
you have revealed to us the gospel of your Son,
Christ Jesus.
Awaken our hearts
that we may sincerely receive your Word
and not make light of it,*

*or hear it without fruit
as did your people long ago.
Instead lead us to fear you
and daily grow in faith in your mercy
and finally through your Son Christ Jesus,
obtain eternal salvation;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,
who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
one true God, now and forever. **Amen***

Source: Veit Dietrich, d. 1549, Trinity 10

Hymn:

Offering

Presenting our tithes and offerings is an act of worship. I want to encourage you to write a cheque and drop it in the mail to the church using your envelope, if you have one. (St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, PO Box 161, 1 Drummond St W, Perth, ON K7H 3E3) We also have another option for you for giving and that is you can make an e-Transfer. This note from our treasurer.

E-transfers are now accepted. Please note the new email address for this purpose only. standrewspertthoffering@gmail.com Please include your Offering Envelope # in the message section of the INTERAC transfer page you fill in. If you wish any part of your donation to go to a specific fund (eg Presbyterian Sharing) please mention this in your message.

Invitation to Offering

*Let us be faithful stewards
of our time, our talents, and our money.
so that our treasure is in heaven
and our giving pleases God.*

Offertory Prayer

*Almighty and most merciful God,
from you comes every good and perfect gift.
We give you praise and thanks for all your mercies.
Your goodness has created us, your bounty has sustained us,
your discipline has chastened us, your patience has borne with us,
your love has redeemed us.
Give us a heart to love and serve you,
and enable us to show our thankfulness for all your goodness and mercy
by giving up ourselves to your service
and cheerfully submitting in all things to your blessed will,*

through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.

Pastoral Prayer

*As we listen to the world's concerns,
hear the cry of the oppressed,
and learn of new discoveries,
give us knowledge,
teach us to respond with maturity,
and give us courage to act with integrity.
As citizens, we acknowledge the Spirit's work in human government
for the welfare of the people,
for justice among the poor,
for mercy toward the prisoner,
against inhuman oppression of humanity.
Help us to obey you above all rulers;
fill us with the patience of Christ
as we wait upon the Spirit.
We pray for the fruit of the Spirit of Christ
who works for peace on earth,
commands us to love our enemies,
and calls for patience among the nations.
We give thanks for your work among governments,
seeking to resolve disputes by means other than war,
placing human kindness above national pride,
replacing the curse of war with international self-control.
We hear the Spirit's call to love one another,
opposing discrimination of race or sex,
inviting us to accept one another,
and to share at every level
in work and play, in church and state,
in marriage and family, and so to fulfill the love of Christ.
Enable us to accept that call and be agents of renewal in our work
through our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Benediction

*As you leave this place this day,
may God's love sustain you,
and may you love those who surround you.
May God's Spirit empower you,
and may you empower all those you meet.
May God's joy fill your hearts,
and may this joy overflow
to the ends of the earth for God's glory,
now and forever. Amen.*