

Today we begin reading the Sermon on the Mount

What many have called Christ's mission statement

Here he lays out what it means to be a Christian

Something modern society needs more than ever

Something our Church today needs more than ever

Often we think our faith is about us

We come to Mass to receive something

If we don't get what we want, we look elsewhere

But the Sermon on the Mount teaches us something different

It teaches us that we are filled by emptying ourself

We find our salvation through leading others to God

So where did the Sermon on the Mount come from?

It did not come out of the blue

It has roots as deep as the history of mankind

The prophet wrote of many elements Christ speaks of

In our reading today, he describes how unconditional love

---For everyone, but especially the needy

Will make God's people a light to the world

The people of Isaiah's time were guilty of many things

Among them was selfishness in their faith lives

**Thinking their relationship with God as his chosen people was
for themselves**

They were harsh with the weak and the lost

They were being unfaithful to their covenant

Isaiah urges them to return to their God

Not only in word, but in action

Love your neighbor

Give bread to the hungry

Shelter the homeless

Do not turn your back on your own

Let your light break forth

And the gloom for you shall be like midday

Christ takes this foundation and puts it into new words

He calls us salt and light for the world

What are salt and light for?

Are they for themselves, or for others?

Salt doesn't add salt to itself

It is to add flavor or preserve

But it can also be used to destroy

When a nation would conquer another

If they wanted to make a statement

If they wanted to see nothing would grow in that land again

To prevent those remaining from rebuilding

They would add salt to the land

Making it infertile

It would be years before anything could grow on that land

Then we are called to be light

There for others

A city on a hill

Before GPS, a navigation point for travelers

If you are old enough to recall

There was a reason people covered windows during WWII

Without light that could be seen

Enemy warplanes would get lost in the skies

As Christians, we are called to be salt and light for the world

Not for ourselves, but for others

Without Christian lives showing the way

The world loses its way

We are called to enhance what is good

We are called to destroy what is dysfunctional

In the past century

What is it that allowed Communism to grow throughout the world?

What is it that allowed Hitler to do what he did?

Today, what is it that allows abortion to be so prevalent in our world?

What is it that allows the violence continue unchecked in our larger cities?

Vast majorities of the population supported Hitler, Stalin and Lenin

Vast majorities today support politicians and political parties that give unwavering support to current policies

We take these things for granted

But this is not what we are called to be

It is not who we are called to be

As Edmund Burke once stated

The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil

Is for good men to do nothing

We are called to be light and salt

To shed the light of Christ into the world

So all can see the beautiful

And so we will see the dysfunctional and ugly

To preserve and flavor the good

To rub salt into the wounds so they will heal

We are not called to a life of moral relativism

Going along to get along

To shrug off evil as 'their thing'

As a current country song says to '*follow your arrow*'

As long as it doesn't interfere with me

This is the gateway to isolation

Our calling is that of St Paul in our second reading

We are called to step out in faith and serve

To live lives of discipleship

Even when we feel inadequate or not up to the task

We are called to do this for the salvation of the world

And for our salvation

We won't arrive at the second

If we ignore the first

So we ask

Is my faith lukewarm or alive?

Is my prayer life, including Mass, simply an obligation, a chore to do on the weekend?

Do I ever find myself too busy to be involved with my faith?

Simply put, if it were a crime to be a Christian

Would I ever be convicted?