

**Salt and Light**  
**Sermon by Jane McBride**



**Be These.**

**Matthew 5:13-16**

And all of us on our Christian journey will have good and bad days in this respect, bright and salty days, dull and tasteless ones.

Although we are always wanting to look at our Bible in context (and here, the context is one where salt and light were much valued and essential to preserve and to illuminate), we don't want to leave our passage back there in its biblical context, because we are called upon to live up to what we are, here and now, in the present, on a daily basis.

Jesus tells us - 'you *are* the salt of the earth...you *are* the light of the world' - that means you, and you, and me, and you...we don't have a choice apparently about *being* salt or light, but we do have a choice about how that manifests itself in our lives.

Violent things happen if our salt loses its saltiness. Given that we *are* salt - a part of us, if we fail to be salty, 'is thrown out and trampled underfoot'. It's very harsh.

And if Jesus, who calls himself 'the light of the world', is encouraging us to believe that we share this quality with him, that, incredibly, we have a part to play in also being the light of the world with the ultimate aim of lighting the way for others to come to know God, why on earth would we try and cover up the light that we are?

Except that we do, I do.

We have a choice about what bushels we allow to be placed over our light, and very often we actively place those bushels over our light ourselves. What happens if we ask ourselves what is stopping us from being salt, and what is dimming our light?

Well here's what's dimming mine at the moment:

laziness perhaps, leading to general procrastination or inertia, lack of confidence that anything I might set out to do for God might be effective, a lack of confidence that comes from comparing myself with others, or from believing the nay-sayers, and which leads to fear, which is like inviting people to come and put a basket over my light. And those are just a few of the bushels I could mention. And of course when I list those things for you this morning I'm embarrassed because it's nonsense to believe the whispers of the world when the light of the world tells me - I am light, I am salt...

Many of you know that I am researching the lives, and telling the stories of a group of missionary nuns, now retired and living in Leuven. They frequently inspire me with their spiritual insights. I have permission this morning from Sister Jeanne, who started up from absolutely nothing what became a national trade union movement in India for women and children working in dreadful and abusive conditions in domestic households, to share a Gospel verse which was one of the verses that encouraged her in her work. It was this verse from John.

John 20:1

Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb.

In the language of today's Gospel this means: we can't wait for what we feel might be an opportune moment to bring our salt, nor can we wait for the sun to come up before we dare to shine our own light. We need to start in the darkness, start in the present, start even though we can't see the road ahead, start with no idea what will happen next, if indeed anything will be accomplished, start early in the morning when it might be cold and dark and scary.

And in the spirit of practising what I preach I make a promise to you, people of IPC. I make a promise not to wait for whatever comes next. Once your new pastor arrives and Phil and I move on, I promise that I will set out for the next thing early, while it is still dark. I promise to sprinkle salt and to take off the bushels I have allowed to cover my light. I even promise to try and head off those bushels that might be waiting around the corner. And if you should meet me in a few months time, feel free to challenge me about my salt content, or about how brightly my light is or isn't shining.

When we forget that we are salt and light, as a family, as a community, we need to encourage one another to remember. When I look out at you this morning I see radiance, I see God at work.

The bushels of an inferiority complex, or self-pity, or of feeling victimised or unjustly treated can only block the light if we allow them to. What would happen if we could discard them? Jesus has the answer - we would shine and we would point people beyond our light to the light of the whole world. We are not our bushels, we are salt, we are light.

And also, we are enough. Who and what we are is shiny and salty already. We can make excuses all day long about why we aren't but Jesus says we are...we already are.

The world around us will always encourage us to make excuses for why we are unable to shine or give flavour to our surroundings. Jesus doesn't have time for this - the clock is ticking on his ministry and he has a lot to do - you are salt, you are light he says. Let's not wait until we feel ready - it may be dark, it may be early, but it's time to get going because the world needs our salt and light.