

HYMNS: 500 823 344 263

INTROIT: Psalm 112:1-9

Praise the LORD! Blessed is the man who fears the LORD, who takes great delight in His Commandments!

His descendants will be mighty in the land. The generation of upright people will be blessed.

There will be wealth and riches in his home, and his righteousness continues for ever.

Light will shine in the darkness for upright people. He is merciful, compassionate and just.

All will go well for the man who is generous and lends and conducts his affairs justly.

He will surely never be shaken. A righteous man will be remembered for ever.

He will not be afraid of bad news. His heart is steadfast, full of confidence in the LORD.

His heart is firm. He will have no fear, until he looks in triumph on his adversaries.

He has distributed freely. He has given to the poor. His righteousness endures for ever. His horn will be lifted high in honour.

COLLECT: O Lord, keep Your family, the Church, continually in the true faith, that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Isaiah 58:3-9a Your light will be like the dawn.

1 Corinthians 2:1-16 To know only Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Matthew 5:13-20 You are the light of the world.

Welcome to all worshipping with us today!

Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.

Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaalc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Isaiah 58:3-9a

³ They are asking, ‘Why have we been fasting when You have not seen it? We have been humiliating ourselves and do You not know about it?’ In fact, on the day when you fast, you find delight in it and exploit all your labourers. ⁴ Look! When you fast, you quarrel, brawl and hit with wicked fists. You will not make your voices heard on high by the fasting that you are doing today. ⁵ Is this the fast that I choose like this, that a person should humiliate himself for only a day? Is it to bow down his head like a reed and to spread out sackcloth and ashes for a bed? Do you call this ‘a fast,’ and ‘a day that pleases the LORD’? ⁶ Is not this the fast that I choose: that you should untie the **chains of injustice**, undo the straps of the yoke, **let oppressed people go free** and break every yoke? ⁷ Is it not to share your food with the hungry person, that you should take homeless, poor people into your house, that, when you see a naked person, you should cover him and not hide yourself from your own relatives?”

⁸ Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and you will quickly be healed. Your righteousness will go ahead of you, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. ⁹ Then you will call, and the LORD will answer.

1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (13-16)

¹ When I came to you, fellow-Christians, to proclaim the testimony of God to you, I did not come as a person who was superior in speech or wisdom. ² For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness, in fear and with much trembling. ⁴ I did not speak and preach with persuasive words of wisdom but with the demonstration of the Spirit and power, ⁵ that your faith might not rest on human wisdom but on the power of God.

⁶ However, we speak wisdom to those who are mature but not the wisdom of this age, or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we tell about the wisdom of God in a mystery, a wisdom that has been hidden but that God ordained before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of those who rule this world has known it. For, if they had known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ Rather, as Scripture has said, “**No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has comprehended what God has prepared for those who love Him.**” ¹⁰ Nevertheless, God has revealed it to us through His Spirit. The Spirit searches out all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For what human being knows the things that belong to the human being except the human being’s spirit

in him? In the same way, no one knows the things that belong to God except the Spirit of God. ¹² We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who comes from God, that we may know the things that God has freely given to us. ¹³ We speak about these things in words not taught by human wisdom but in Words taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual things to those who have the Spirit. ¹⁴ However, an unspiritual person does not receive the things of the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them because they are discerned spiritually. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things but he himself is not judged by anyone. ¹⁶ For **“who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him?”** However, we have the mind of Christ.

Matthew 5:13-20

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. However, if salt loses its saltiness, with what will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by people. ¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city that has been set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ People also do not light a lamp and put it under a container but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before other people, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven!

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets! I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. ¹⁸ For truly, I tell you, until the heaven and the earth pass away, one jot or one serif will certainly not pass away from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, anyone who breaks one of the least of these Commandments and teaches other people in this way will be called the least in the kingdom of heaven. However, anyone who practises and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness is much better than that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

SALT AND LIGHT OF THE EARTH

Sermon for the Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, 2023

Matthew 5:13-16

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is the first part our Gospel read before Matthew 5:13-16, where Jesus calls us the salt and light of the world: ¹³ **“You are the salt of the earth. However, if salt loses its saltiness, with what will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by people.** ¹⁴ **You are the light of the world. A city that has been set on a hill cannot be hidden.** ¹⁵ **People also do not light a lamp and put it under a container but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.** ¹⁶ **Let your light so shine before other people, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven!**

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth, Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

Salt and light. This is what Jesus tells His disciples they are, and this is what Jesus is telling us that we are. He says, **“You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.”** That’s who we are. Today, let’s find out how, why, and what difference this makes in our lives and the world around us.

Before we begin, however, we need to remember the context for these sayings.

Our text today follows immediately after our text from last week, the beatitudes, at the start of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Remember that it is Jesus saying these things, and He is telling them to His disciples. That makes all the difference. Who Jesus is and who we are by being His disciples is critical to understanding what Jesus is saying. Why? Because these teachings here are Jesus-specific. They are based on who Christ is, what He has done for us, and, as a result, *who we are*. It’s not just some generic advice about how to live a nice life. Instead, it is rooted in Christ and our identity - our new identity - in Him.

It all starts with Jesus. Who He is and what He has come to do is at the base of everything. Jesus is *Immanuel*, God with us¹, born to save us from our sins. Jesus is the beloved Son of God, anointed with the Holy Spirit - the Messiah, who has come to fulfil God’s righteous plan of redeeming sinful mankind. He will do this by identifying with us sinners and taking our sins to the cross, bearing our shame, guilt, and punishment in our place, and suffering death under God’s judgment *so we don’t have to*.

¹ Matthew 1:23

We were dwelling in darkness and the shadow of death.² We didn't know what we were doing with respect to God or ourselves or what life was all about. Our heads weren't screwed on straight. But on us, a light has dawned. Jesus has come among us, calling: "*Repent! For the kingdom of heaven has come near*" (Matt. 4:17). We acknowledge our sins and turn from them. We look to Jesus for this kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, to be manifested. Then we hear His authoritative, inviting voice, calling to each one of us and saying, "*Follow Me*."³ We leave our nets and our fishing boats, and we follow Him. Something is compelling about this Man.

This is what it means to be a disciple of Jesus. It means following Him in faith, learning from Him, hearing His voice, and heeding it. Only in this light can we understand His teaching. If you don't have Jesus, then none of this applies. But with Christ - joined to Him in baptism and following Him in faith - our life takes on new meaning.

Last week Jesus gave us the beatitudes, those statements and promises of blessedness for His followers. As His disciples, our lives take on the character of being poor in spirit and pure in heart, of being humble toward God and meek and merciful toward others, and of being peacemakers. Jesus assures us that even when such a life puts us at a disadvantage in the world, we realise that God truly blesses us. Ours is the kingdom of heaven, even now. And in the age to come, we shall be fully comforted and satisfied. Therefore, we rejoice and are glad.

In that perspective, then, with that encouragement to enliven us and with that hope to encourage us, we can now hear about being salt and light. "**You are the salt of the earth,**" Jesus says. "**You are the salt of the earth. However, if salt loses its saltiness, with what will it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled on by people.**"

What is it about salt that Jesus is comparing us to here?

Apparently, it has something to do with salt having a distinctive taste. If it loses that distinctive taste, it is no longer good or useful as salt.

What is it about us Christians that makes us distinctive in the world, that gives us our particular "taste"? *It is that we are followers of Jesus*. Faith in Christ sets

² See Matthew 4:12-16

³ Matthew 4:19

us apart and makes us who we are. Lose that, and we are no longer special. But live in that distinctiveness, and you and I have something to offer the world and the people around us. They should be able to “taste” how we are different.

When people rub up against you and interact with you, can they tell if something is different about you? In a good way? That would be your saltiness as a Christian. The Christian faith flavours and accents your life.

In the parallel passage in Mark 9:50, we gain a bit more insight into this saltiness. There Jesus says: “*Salt is good. However, if salt loses its saltiness, how will you make it taste salty again? Have salt in yourselves and be at peace with one another!*” Being at peace with one another is part of our saltiness. The world is full of conflict and strife. People bear grudges against one another and won’t let go. But Christians are all about forgiveness and peace; after all, God has forgiven us for Christ’s sake. So we forgive one another. God has made peace with us by the cross of Christ. So we seek peace with others. “*Blessed are those who make peace!*” Jesus says, “*For they will be called ‘the children of God’*” (Matt. 4:9). We reflect the character of our heavenly Father when we seek and make peace with one another. That is in our DNA as salty Christians.

Another aspect I think we find is in Colossians 4:6, where St. Paul writes: “*Let your speaking always be gracious, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you should answer each individual!*” Here our saltiness has to do with *how we speak*. We let wisdom season our speech so that graciousness marks how we talk to others. Harsh words, angry unwise words - these we guard against. Instead, our Christian faith informs our speech, and the fruit of the Spirit tempers our tongue. We speak differently. Our manner of speech has a Jesus accent. Again, this is what gives us our salty distinctiveness as disciples of Jesus.

“**You are the light of the world.**” This is the other thing that Jesus is saying to us today.

Now, it is true that Jesus is the Light of the world – He says so Himself⁴ - so how can Jesus say then that we are the light of the world? Well, it’s both. Of course, Jesus is the Light of the world. He is the Light who shines in the darkness and gives life to men. We cannot generate any light on our own or give life to anyone, ourselves included. But having received the light of Christ, we now reflect and radiate that light to others.

⁴ John 8:12

And that is our calling. Let's not shy away from it. We have light that we have received that is powerful and life-giving. It is the light of the Gospel. God intends for us to shine it out to the world. **“You are the light of the world. A city that has been set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ People also do not light a lamp and put it under a container but on the lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before other people, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven!”**

Don't hide your Christian life. Let it shine. Let the world know what gives you life. The saving Gospel, the good news of Christ, isn't just good for us - *it's good for everybody.* All people in the world need what we have. Through individual one-on-one conversations - we talk with people we know - friends and family members - we can spread the light, like a lamp shining in a room. And through the church's gospel ministry - through this congregation's preaching and teaching ministry, and through the church at large and around the world - we are helping to spread the light of Christ in a sin-darkened world.

“Let your light so shine before other people, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father who is in heaven!”

“Good deeds.” Whenever we hear such words, some people may want to squirm. Why? Is it because, as Lutherans, *we are against good works?* Absolutely not! We are not against good works - we are all in favour of them. What we're against is *looking to our works as somehow contributing toward our salvation before God.* No way! *“We conclude that a person is justified by faith, apart from the works of the Law”* (Romans 3:28). Jesus has done all the good works we need for that. But when it comes to our new life in Christ, our new life in the Spirit, we are all in favour of good deeds or works. God has designed and equipped us and created us in Christ to live a life of good deeds. These are works of love for our neighbour, proceeding from a genuine living faith in Christ. This is what we are created to do. And through our receiving of Word and Sacrament on a constant basis, we are being strengthened and renewed in our life of love and good deeds. So go for it! We don't need our good deeds, but our neighbour sure does. He's been put in our path for us to love him or her with practical help and encouragement.

And when we love others in this way, the goal is not to get people to praise us. No, the goal is for people to see the distinctive difference in our lives that Christ

makes. People will see Jesus in and through us. And as a result, people will give praise, thanks, and glory to our Father in heaven.

Dear friends, we are **“the salt of the earth.”** We **“are the light of the world.”** That is who we are. Jesus makes it so. Embrace your identity as His disciples. God has created us to be salt and light. So go ahead and be who you are. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

PRAYER FOR THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

Father in heaven, we who are Your children by grace pray that Your kingdom may come. We thank and praise You that You have revealed Jesus as Lord and Christ, and as King for evermore. We pray that His rule may be established from sea to sea and from the rising to the setting of the sun, that every nation, people, and tribe may confess that He is Lord, to Your glory. We thank You that, though He is King of kings, He humbled Himself and became our servant, so that He might be our Saviour, able to save all who come to You through Him.

Gracious Father, You do not enjoy seeing sinners die, but would rather see them turn from their sinning and live. Therefore spread the Gospel, and extend Your kingdom among all nations on earth. Cause the mighty to bow before Jesus their Lord, and teach all people to know that there is healing and saving power only in Him.

Although we rejoice that Your kingdom is already with us, make it come with fresh power and new blessing into our lives. Make the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts, and move us to thankfulness and praise. Give us increased trust in Your Word and obedience to Your commandments. Give us grace to be humble, merciful, kind, and forgiving. Make Christ’s message in all its richness live in our hearts and direct all we do and say. Grant that we, redeemed in body and spirit, may be dead to sin and alive to righteousness. Lead us to rejoice in Your grace, and to give thanks for Your mercy day by day.

We pray for Your Church on earth. Keep it from weakness and error, from unfaithful shepherds and false teachers. Protect us from heresy and division. Defend us from the lies of Satan and from the schemes of godless men. Make Your Church secure against the powers of hell. Teach Your people to be patient in hope, firm in trust, and faithful in prayer, until that day comes when You send Your angels to gather Your own into Your everlasting kingdom.

Comfort those who are cast down. Give patience to the sick, peace to the anxious, strength to the weak, help to the needy, and forgiveness to the repentant.

Pour out Your mercy on us all, and teach us to set our hearts on things above, where Christ our Lord lives and reigns. In His holy and precious name we pray. Amen.

Weekly sermons and bulletins are available at www.aelc.org.au.

Weekly Sunday School lessons are also now available in the Members section.

If there are any late changes to be made to divine services, these will be listed immediately on the website, and a text sent out to members.

If you are unsure, please contact pastor.

The Lord's Table before the Gates of Hell

The Lord Jesus builds His Church on the confession given to St. Peter: "*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16). Against this Church, the "*gates of Hades will not overpower it*" (Matthew 16:18). Our experience in a hostile world can often make us doubt this. Radical Islam is still a real threat to the West, and wars are still being fought. Often you hear the prospect of a future war between the West and China, and how Australia would be dragged into any conflict. Scary stuff. And then, in our country, people are abandoning Christianity in droves, with a new generation arising that doesn't even know the basic Christian message. Churches are closing or teach a watered-down version of God's Word that won't offend anybody.

Our culture has rapidly embraced homosexual marriage, discarding millennia of tradition and rejecting natural law. The concrete, scientific reality of the human body as male or female is discarded for a new age that rejects what every previous age understood, inventing the idea that gender can change - and even be fluid - based upon feelings. It seems as though the gates of hell are indeed prevailing.

When we are prone to despair, whether about our own lives or the state of the culture or the church, it is imperative to remember Jesus' promise: "*On this rock I shall build My church, and the gates of Hades will not overpower it*" (Matthew 16:18).

What Jesus promises to Peter in Matthew 16, He reaffirms to the twelve disciples in John 20, where the whole Church is given the keys first announced to Peter upon the good confession of Jesus as the Christ. So we need not fear. Jesus is still with His Church. Strength is not found in numbers or worldly success, but our strength is entirely in the weakness of Jesus crucified. For when we are weak, then the strength and power of Jesus is made manifest.

And to constantly remind us of this, the LORD gives us a table. The table He has now given in Jesus is fully set. There is a rich meal of life-giving, conscience-cleansing food: the body and blood of Jesus. And preached through that meal is the Word, the remembrance of God's creation of our first parents and how He provided for them; how He rescued our spiritual fathers from bondage, bloodying their doors to protect them from death as they ate safely inside; how He gave them safe passage through the waters, turned their bitter waters sweet, and fed them with bread from heaven; how He established His Divine Service whereby they could know peace and joy in His presence, and how He promised them a meal of everlasting life when death was swallowed up forever.

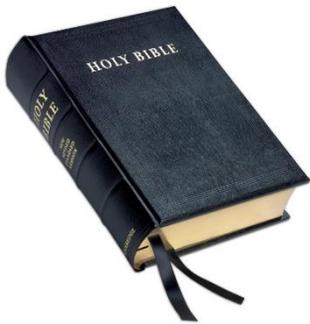
The Lord Jesus now brings us to this beautiful table. To the world, it appears to be nothing, and sadly, to some Christians, too, who do not believe that Jesus can or does mean what He says, "*This is My body; this is My blood.*" Yet, surrounded by enemies - arguments in the church, hatred from the world, cancer and disease creeping in our bodies, experiences of sadness breaking our hearts - the Lord sets a table where our cup runs over with goodness, Jesus is saying to us, "*I Myself am with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. I know you feel guilty, but I have taken your guilt upon Myself. Your conscience is clean. I know you feel weak. But My body is true food. By it, you will live. I will raise up your body. Inside you is anger and sadness, betrayal and pride, frustration and feelings of worthlessness. Come to Me, come to My Table; here you will find rest. Here you will find that I have done everything for you already.*"

This is far better protection than any wall, moat, or army team could provide. The Lord God who commands angelic armies, who creates and brings to nothing by His Word, has invited us to His Table. What other comfort do we need? Truly the gates of hell shall not prevail where the Lord sets His Table.

Children's Message:

Let's play a game. It's called Guess What I'm Thinking. Are you ready? Okay, guess what I'm thinking! Obviously, this game is impossible. Do you like this game? Is it too hard? Of course it is! You can't guess what I'm thinking if I don't give any clues. Let's play again. Guess what I'm thinking: I'm thinking about an animal. It's an animal that some people keep as a pet. They're soft, and they say, "Meow." What am I thinking of? A cat of course! You could figure it out because I gave good clues. Let's try one more time, and this time I'm going to make it even easier! Guess what I'm thinking: I'm thinking about elephants. What am I thinking about? Elephants. It's super easy when I tell you what I'm thinking.

The Bible says, *"What human being knows the things that belong to the human being except the human being's spirit in him? In the same way, no one knows the things that belong to God except the Spirit of God"* (1 Cor. 2:11). That means as you can't know a person's thoughts unless they tell you their thoughts, so also, you can't know God's thoughts unless God tells you.



So, here's a really important question: Does God tell us His thoughts? Is there a book we can read where He has written down His thoughts? That's right! The Bible! Isn't that amazing? If you own a Bible, you own a copy of God's own thoughts in His own words. It makes it really easy. On our own, it would be impossible to guess God's thoughts. But He tells us exactly what He's thinking.

Let's try it. Let's see if we can guess God's thoughts.

"God, do you love us?" Let's see, John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son."* Wow, He must really love us because He gave us Jesus! Again, "God, what happens to Christians on the Last Day?" John 6:40: *"For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him should have eternal life, and that I should raise him on the last day."* And "God, what should I do when I know I've sinned?" 1 John 1:9: *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."* I would never have figured out any of those things if the Bible didn't teach me. I would never have guessed what God was thinking. But the Holy Spirit has given us this book, so we know the mind of Christ. *Dear God, thank You for telling us your thoughts in the Bible. Thank You for Jesus and for forgiveness by His death on the cross. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

WEEKLY ANNOUNCEMENTS

12 February 6 Epiphany	19 February The Transfiguration	ASH WEDNESDAY
8.30am OAK HC 9.00am TMBA LR 9.30am AUB LR 10.15am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	Wed. Feb 22. 7.30pm Vespers at Aubigny. Thurs. Feb 23. 7.00pm HC at Lowood.
12 February		
READINGS: Deuteronomy 30:15-20; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9;		Matthew 5:21-37
HYMNS: 119 47 324 (839 65) 515		
19 February		
READINGS: Exodus 24:8-18;		2 Peter 1:16-21; Matthew 17:1-9
HYMNS: 747 37 528 (71 292) 272		

Please take home with you today the latest copy of the AELC Newsletter.

Saturday, 11 February, 1.00pm. Fellowship afternoon at Bethlehem Toowoomba. All are invited to attend. Bring a shared afternoon tea.

Thursday, 16 February, 10.00am. Bible Study at Lowood. Bible Studies on the Downs will recommence after Easter.

Saturday, 25 February, 10.00am. The Bookclub will be meeting at the manse. Please read pages 73-167 of *I Don't Have Enough Faith to be an Atheist*. Also, bring along something for a shared morning tea.

AGM Dates: Aubigny – Tonight, 7.30pm.

Toowoomba - Sunday, 12 Feb, 2.00pm.

Greenwood – Sunday, 12 Feb, 7.30pm.

Oakey – Sunday, 19 Feb, 1.30pm.

Lowood – Sunday, 19 March, after service.

Marburg -

Parish - Sunday, 30 April, after the AELC Service to be held at Oakey.