



***Fifth Sunday Ordinary Time 2005***

***Isaiah 58:7-10 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 Matthew 5: 15-16***

Directors who make films are very aware of the power of images in their storytelling. They know that so much more can be conveyed by the careful selection of colour, music and symbol. Jesus as a master storyteller also used images particularly familiar ones as a focus of his message. Today he uses salt and light.

Take salt, for example, some of you may remember the crocks of beans where layer of salt kept the vegetables edible into the winter, or the rubbing of salt and spices into pork or fish as a preservative. A little salt, sugar and water has saved the lives of many suffering from dehydration. Some foods need salt to enhance the flavour although a little too much and the dish is unpalatable.

When Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth," he is calling on his followers to be the positive side of the image and to resist the negative; to be saviours not destroyers. We are called to enhance the lives of others by encouraging their unique flavour, and by preserving and protecting through our presence.

Every person can experience the power of the image, can reflect on what they understand and discover their particular gift for the community.

How does salt lose its taste? By pollution. If salt is contaminated it may as well be thrown out.

To be a disciple means to stay focussed on gospel life and ministry and not become distracted by things that have no real value.

The second great image is of light. Isaiah speaks of inner light as goodness which comes from living in a Godly manner. Personal devotions, like fasting are good but they do not compare with a change in our attitudes. "Free those who are trapped in harmful situations. Break every habit which keeps people in slavery. Bring nourishment to the hungry. Shelter the homeless, those who feel lost or isolated. Your godliness will shine out like a new day and will bring you healing."

Jesus adds his own flavour to the imagery of light which is used so often in the Scriptures. "You are the light of the world." This is powerful language. We call Jesus the Light of the World- here Jesus say it is we who are the light of the world!

When we are travelling long distances at night it is most comforting to see the lights of a town. The lights say comfort, food, home, safety and companionship- all things that reassure us. We are to be such signs in a dark world. We are to be Christ in our place and in our time.

No wonder Jesus follows this by a reminder about not dodging our commitment. He says, "You don't light a lamp and then put it under a basket." To do this is to dim the light. Jesus is calling for us to be on full power.

The purpose of our *Christlight* is to draw others to walk in God's light. All are called to live life according to their potential.

Paul emphasises the need for humility. Our light is powered by the Spirit of Christ. Therefore whatever good we do, is not from our own cleverness; is not for our own glory, but is the result of being open to the glory of God.

Patricia Stevenson rsj.