

The grace of our Saviour Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all now and forever.
Amen

Text: Matthew 5:1-16: (v.11a: Blessed are you...)

Theme: We are blessed...

Goal: To share God's blessings through us to the world.

Dear Friends in Christ,

How did you come to the Christian faith? Who were the key people used by God to bring you into a relationship with Him?

- If you were born into a Christian family, your parents and godparents were the key people when they brought you to the Holy Baptism, offering your life to Jesus, and helping you to grow according God's will.
- If you were converted in a further stage of your life as an adult, someone presented you Jesus the Savior, so that the Holy Spirit could work the faith in your heart. The key person was a friend, a relative, a pastor or evangelist...

As God used key people to share His blessings with us, in the same way He uses us to share His blessings with people around us. Let us see how God works in us and through us to accomplish His good will to save humankind. We are blessed as God's tools and His coworkers to expand His kingdom. This is part of the good stewardship of our life and of our faith. The several lessons for today will help us to understand better how God works and what our role is in His salvation's plan.

The lesson from 1 John 3:1 says: “How great is the love the Father has lavished us, that we should be called children of God!” - We know and believe that God is our Father through Jesus Christ. By His death and resurrection He reconciled God with humankind and offers us forgiveness of sin and the new life. Through Jesus, God adopted us as His beloved children when we were baptized and believe in Him; and He wrote our names in His Book of Life. Jesus taught us to call God as “Our Father in heaven...” We are God’s children indeed!

The Muslims don’t accept that God has children. To have children, God must be married – they say. Neither Jesus is God’s Son, nor are we His children. We are only His servants, His slaves, to obey Him.

But we **are** His beloved children according to His promises so that we “may declare the praises of Him who called us out of darkness to His wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9). This great blessing God gives us is to be shared with others, as our parents and other people shared it with us. We were saved from the devil and from the eternal death to live a new life as a testimony to others about God’s love to all!

When Jesus preached the Beatitudes as we read in Matthew 5, He showed us how blessed we are in different situations of our lives, in good and in bad times. When He says: “Blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the peacemakers...” these are the attitudes of God’s children toward their neighbors! The beatitudes are not just blessings to be enjoyed by ourselves as we could be proud about them... NO! but they are blessings to be shared with the others!

And while we are so blessed by our Heavenly Father, Jesus says:

“You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.”

We cannot talk about “to be salt and to be light” disassociated from the Beatitudes. Every Beatitude is a living testimony how a child of God lives and is blessed by our Father. To be salt and to be light is not a command to obey; it’s a fact! God made us salt and light as He called us to be His children. This is His gift to us so that we are enabled by God Himself to work for Him. Our witness of life and words, and God’s blessings upon His children are the salt and the light before men, so that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven.

Salt has a double function: 1) to give flavor to the food; 2) to preserve the food. A food without salt is not tasteful. Have you ever tried it? What is our flavor to season the world? Love, patience, mercy, peace... – And through the Christians as the salt God is preserving this world until the number of His elected is complete. - Do you remember the story of Abraham interceding on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah? If there had been only ten righteous people in the cities, God wouldn’t have destroyed them. In spite of all sin and corruption in the world, the Christians are preserving the world by God’s grace like a good salt.

But the salt cannot be still in the saltshaker as the light cannot be hidden under a bowl. Salt and light are there to be use. “Let your light shine before men.” - Jesus is the true light of the world. People cannot see Jesus, but they can see the Christians. Jesus shines through us, because He is in us. We don’t have light by ourselves. The Holy Spirit lit the light of faith in our heart. As we are led by the Spirit, we are shinning the way for others.

The main goal of God’s work through us is to save everybody and to take us all to His heaven. The lesson of Revelation 7 shows us a

vision of the sealed ones before the throne and “the great multitude from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne”. All Saints Day was observed on 1st November, the day that the Christian Church remembers all the faithful departed, who were sanctified by the blood of Jesus and passed away holding the hand of Jesus. Revelation 7 is a good vision of our future, where the beatitudes will be completed and we will shine like the stars in the firmament. As we are walking through this world as blessed children of God, being salt and light to the world, let us lift up our eyes from the sufferings and difficulties of this life to the hope our God gives us in Jesus. He promised: “I’m going to my Father’s house to prepare a place for you...that you may be where I am.” (John 14:3).

There is a nice paraphrase of Matthew 5:13-16 (The Message) that I want to share with you:

Jesus said: "Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven."

The Gospel was given to the church to be well managed, so that more people will know about Jesus and, believing in Him, will be saved. As blessed children of God, let God guide us and use us as

salt and light, to be a blessing for many, until we reach the throne
with all the eternally blessed. Amen

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle

Cape Town, 06 November 2011