

I come to you in the name of one God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I really like to watch cooking shows on TV. I watch everything from Chopped, imagining what I might do with a basket full of mystery ingredients, to Cutthroat Kitchen, confident that I could walk away without spending a single dollar on any of the sabotages (assuming, of course, that I was good enough to cook whatever they threw at me), to Top Chef, marvelling at the skill and expertise that goes into what is likely the highest level of cooking done in a competitive setting. There is something about these shows, the thrill of competition, the developing of favorite competitors, the feeling (the rather lofty and misguided feeling) that I could do that, at least if I had a little bit of training, and the universality that is food, that speaks to me, and clearly speaks to many a TV watcher, as there are a lot of these shows on the air (my favorites of course being any version that includes kid chefs, because they're awesome).

One of the biggest sins on these TV reality competition cooking shows, is failing to properly season the dish. You can have cooked everything to perfection, but if the dish is "one note" as they say, as in there's nothing that distinguishes that dish as an elevated piece of fine dining from what any regular home cook may haphazardly throw together with whatever they could find in the fridge, then you pack your knives and go home. And the one seasoning, above all else that must be perfect, is salt.

Salt has a long history in this world. It was used to cure meats long before refrigeration came into being. It was even used as payment for labor, as it was such a vital piece of being able to sustain one's self. Today, salt is widely present in our homes. So much so, that different varieties and flavors of salt have been developed. We have fancy sea salts,

salt that tastes like bacon, salt that contains iodine so that we can make sure that is in our diets. Salt is still a vital part of our food-based culture. Salt brings flavor. Salt balances extremes to create a harmonious whole. Salt makes sweet taste sweeter. Salt adds to everything that it is in. Salt, the right amount of salt, creates a balance that enables food to shine brighter than it ever could without it.

Thus, when Christ says to the disciples you are the salt of the earth, there is a lot packed into this label. And for us, as followers of Christ, there is still a lot to know and understand from this passage. Our faith, our choice to follow Christ is about addition. Having faith, following Christ, is about taking on something greater than ourselves and committing ourselves to doing and being more in this world. When we come to this table, we are adding Christ into ourselves, inviting Christ to fill us through the eucharist, inviting to Christ to empower us and strengthen us as we head back out into the world to face the challenges that lie before us. Just like how salt is added to a dish to fully unlock the flavors, how such a simple and ancient flavor is worked into the dish to bring forth layers, experience, memories, satisfaction, we too must be like salt and add to this world. We too, as followers of Christ, as tasked with bringing that something extra into this world to create balance, to create a richer experience of life, to create the perfect dish that does not leave the judges wanting more.

And, as the salt of the earth, we must maintain our saltiness.

Our world, the man-made world of power structures, government, community, expectations, hierarchy, are all ultimately about one thing: subtraction. When we look to label ourselves or label others: terrorist, patriot, feminist, misogynist, black, white, liberal,

conservative; we do one thing: we reduce ourselves and our very beings. None of us here are the labels that society would like to put on us or those labels we want to claim for ourselves. These labels do not, or at the very least should not, define who we are, what we think, how we interact with one another. And yet, it is in our society of subtraction, that these labels come to stand in for the other, for the unknown, to the point where we are no longer willing to engage with the labels who are opposite of us, to the point where we are no longer willing to engage with the labels who attack, demean, belittle, and criticize us. And this subtraction only further serves to alienate ourselves from each other. We lose our saltiness as we become “one note” dishes. We lose our ability to balance ourselves and each other. We lose our ability to add to the world, as the world is continually stripped away from us.

And yet, salt is not the only way we can add to this world. Salt is not the only way we can impact this world. Our world may be too far gone for salt to make much of a difference on a national or global scale, but, in addition to being salt, we are also the light of the world. And light is also addition.

Light shines forth from the darkness. Light shines forth as a beacon. Light shines into the darkness and guides us out. Light adds the ability for us to see who we truly are, how we want to hide from each other, how the labels that we have developed for our society do not define the individual but rather shroud us in the shadows. And again, as followers of Christ, we are called to be that light in the world. As followers of Christ we are called to shine forth with the light of Christ for all, a city built on a hill that cannot be hid, a light on the lampstand that gives light to all in the house.

If we are to be the light of the world, if we are to begin to draw people back together, enable them to see the joy that is their saltiness, enable them to see how our combined salt can create a dish greater than imagined, then we must be adding to this world. On Friday February 17th this Cathedral will once again try to add something to the world. We will host a refugee benefit concert, benefitting the work of World Relief Spokane. But unlike other benefit concerts where a bunch of white people get together to listen to a white artist and largely ignore the reality of the issue, we will have an opportunity to share this space with the very refugees that have been welcomed and assisted by World Relief and other organizations in this town. This is light bringing for it begins to remove those labels that our society says we must put on everyone. Rather, we have an opportunity to come together as a wider community and simply hear from each other. We have an opportunity to share our gifts with one another. We have an opportunity to be the presence of Christ that we must be as Episcopalians, let alone as Christians. And, we have an opportunity to let those whom we otherwise might not ever encounter, be a presence in our lives, touch our lives, add salt to our lives.

This is how our righteousness will exceed that of the scribes and pharisees. The scribes and pharisees understanding of righteousness was centered on the order, the liturgical precision, the letter of the law, the correct placement of all in their various labels. Our righteousness subverts these norms. Our righteousness is not about subtraction, it is not about clearly defining all into neat and tidy boxes, our righteousness is about the addition of fulfilling the call that Christ lays before us each and every day. We begin to experience righteousness when our salt, our light, is put forth for the whole world. Our

righteousness is about following Christ and adding to this world by tearing down everything that stands between us.

We have a unique opportunity in my lifetime, and a familiar if not altered opportunity for many sitting here today, to change the understanding of our society, to change the understanding of the world, as we experience a true flashpoint in our country's history. We must approach this moment, this opportunity, with the intention to add to the world. To bring flavor. To bring balance. To bring harmony by opening the tongue to experiencing a bite that explodes with beauty, power, grace. If we can do this, shining our light into the dark corners of the world, shining our light into our own selves as much as others so that we may all see each other for who we truly are, stripped of all of the labels and division that society encourages us to maintain and celebrate, then we will be the disciples of Christ in this world. If we do this, then we will inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Amen.