

“Just Sayin’...”
Feb. 6, 2011

Text: Matthew 5:13-17

If you “Google” the phrase *Just sayin’*... you will discover that there are over 3 million links to which you can go. *Just sayin’*... has worked its way into evening news show segments...it can be heard in the lyrics of popular music artists...and it can be heard in the halls and playgrounds of schools everywhere.

I’m *just sayin’*... *just sayin’*... has become part of modern vocabulary. *Just sayin’*... is included in online lexicons from Wikipedia to Urban Dictionary.com. One definition of *just sayin’*... defines this phrase as meaning [when] *someone wants to let you know something but in a way that isn't super offensive.*

Just sayin’...

I’d like to suggest that Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount here in Matthew is a *just sayin’*... sermon the gospel writer wants us to remember about Jesus.

These words of Jesus in Matthew chapters 5 through 7, and particularly the verses out of chapter 5 we’ve heard this morning, are intended not to be offensive...rather, they’re intended to give us cause to pause...they’re intended to get us thinking more intentionally about how

we can live out a faith that reflects more of God's gracious and loving nature. I'm *just sayin'*...

I'm looking forward in a few weeks to experience the words of the *Sermon on the Mount* as our group from Calvary visits the holy land and will see what Jerusalem looks like today as it is a city built on a hill. The Sermon on the Mount probably had Jerusalem in mind when it was organized by the gospel writer.

It was the summer of 2004 when Tara and I made our first trip to Colorado. Ana was just six and a half months old. We had come with high school students from our region of Pennsylvania and Delaware to participate in the National Gathering of American Baptist Youth which was held at the YMCA in Estes Park.

There are several things I remember about that trip. One...I remember thinking (remember this was 2004) "...wouldn't it be something else to actually live in Colorado...this part of the country is amazingly beautiful!"

I also remember our first evening at the YMCA. During the day the beauty of the surrounding mountains captivated my attention. Never before had I stood in the Rocky Mountains. And then evening came...and almost like magic...up in the mountains which had caught my attention earlier...I could see twinkling in the dark the lights of homes which were hidden by day.

The mountains came alive with a twinkling beauty that could only be witnessed in the night's shadows and

darkness. As we admired the twinkling beauty up in the mountains I heard again in my mind...

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Without reducing these words too simplistically from Matthew's gospel, I wonder how in our world with its shadows and darkness...we're allowing the light of Christ to shine through us...as a congregation and as individuals...how are we allowing God's way of love and justice and peace to shine through the ways we live and work and play and think and communicate?

Just sayin' ...

This other saying attributed to Jesus gives us cause to pause for a couple reasons...

You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

I'm not an expert on salt...but I believe it is accurate to say that technically, salt never loses its flavor...it doesn't ever lose its saltiness. Also...as those of you who cook know...it doesn't take a lot of salt to add flavor even to a big pot of soup.

So...in other words...I believe these words from Matthew's Sermon on the Mount remind all of us, like salt, we have something to give...something to share...all of us have the ability to make a difference in this world...in our communities...in our families...in our circles of friendships...in our places of work and play and travel...wherever we are...with whomever we are...however we may be...we can make a difference.

If you feel today that you've failed...that you can't make a difference...that you've done something to keep yourself from changing...remember...salt doesn't lose its flavor...God doesn't give up on us or you...you can begin again...

And the difference we can make...does not need to be big as "big" is often perceived to be. In fact, **WHATEVER** we do to make a difference in this world is big. As we prepare to move into another week...I wonder what we might do...I wonder what you might do. How can and will we reflect God's love to others?

How might we help someone waiting on line at the grocery store? Instead of thinking just about what we need to accomplish at work...how might be willing to give someone a listening ear so that they can share the heavy load of reality they've been carrying? What can you do to support, encourage and care for someone within our church family...or a neighbor...or maybe even a stranger?

You are the salt of the earth. So as to not let Calvary off the hook...I believe it is important for us all to remember that the smallest thing done on behalf of someone else is really a big thing accomplished.

As I think about our Calvary community...and the number of people who travel around our country to various states and places...and who travel literally to places all around the globe...I believe it can be said about us...quite literally...we are the salt of the earth. We have...we are...and we will make a difference in this world. Each of us must decide what we will do.

There is a lot of talk these days about what carbon footprints we're leaving behind...I wonder what footprints of God's grace and mercy we're leaving behind as we live...as we love...as we learn...as we go to all the places of this city...of this country...of this world?

Finally, this saying of Jesus *unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven* gives us cause to pause.

I'm not certain that these words suggest we must one-up the scribes and Pharisees as if to say we must have more righteousness than they...

The scribes and Pharisees were not bad people. On the contrary, they were quite good. However, their commitment to the law often outweighed a commitment to love...to God's love. I think these words from Matthew invite us to consider how we might reflect through our lives a greater sense of love toward others and this world.

Don't get me wrong...there are legalities to life as we know it that must be abided...however as a people of faith in Christ...we're challenged to find ways of letting the light of Christ shine...we're challenged daily to find ways of making a difference...we're challenged to reflect a sense of love and care that often is not shared.

As we turn now to the table...as we prepare to receive again from the bread and the cup...let us remember that we are the body of Christ...we are the hands and feet of God that can and will impact the world...that will leave handprints and footprints behind. May the prints we leave...be filled with love. I'm *just sayin'*... Amen.