

Salt + Life

“Salt + Life”

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Saturday and Sunday, September 29 - 30, 2018

All Services

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Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Numbers 11:4-6, 10-16, 24-29; Psalm 19:7-14; James 5:13-20; Mark 9:38-50

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen.

A salesman walked into the sales managers office the first thing in the morning and the manager decided that this would be a good moment as an educational opportunity in effective sales technique. He said to the young man, “The main thing to remember is that repetition, repetition, repetition, is essential!” “And when your selling our product you have to keep that product out in front again and again and again. Repeat yourself over and over again, repeat, repeat, repeat. It’s the only way to get results.” “Yes sir!” said the salesman.

“Now what was it you came in to talk to me about this morning?” The sales manager asked, and the salesman replied . . . “A Raise! A Raise! A Raise! A Raise! A Raise! A Raise!”

Repetition, we’ve done it ever since we were kids, (A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, m, n, o, p, am I the only one who’s singing? Or riding a bike, or sports drills doing the same thing over and over and again. When my son wanted to play lacrosse, he asked one of our members of a previous congregation who was a Division 1 lacrosse player, “What can I do to get better?” and he said, “Well the best thing to do is to take your stick and to take a ball then you find a wall and you throw the ball against the wall and you catch it and you throw it against the wall and you catch it and you throw it against the wall and you catch it, do that a hundred times and then switch hands and do it left handed. Throw the ball against the wall and catch it, throw the ball against the wall and catch it. Do that a hundred times, and when you’re done, put the stick in your other hand. Throw it against the wall and catch it, do that for two hours every day, you will become a better lacrosse player. And so, he did actually, he became pretty good.

Repeating ideas and concepts in different ways, teaching through multi-sensory means, hearing it, seeing it, touching it, doing it! Repetition develops skills and knowledge and it’s so important that even business leader Zig Ziglar said “*Repetition is the mother of learning, the father of action, which makes it the architect of accomplishment.*” And we see it in advertising slogans. Now I am going to give you a little test here. I am going to say the slogan and you see if you can find out what the product is, okay?

“Just do it” – Nike, they’re been using that slogan for 25 years.

“Plop, plop, fizz, fizz Oh what a relief it is” – Alka-Seltzer – 47 years.

“Melts in your mouth, not in your hands” – M&M’s – 64 years.

“The Breakfast of Champions” – Wheaties – 91 years.

“Good to the last drop” – Maxwell House Coffee – they’ve been using that slogan for 101 years.

Now the last few weeks in our readings we have been following Jesus as he travels with his disciples through Galilee and now they have arrived in Capernaum, and while he was traveling with them he was teaching them that the son of man must suffer, die, and then rise again. Upon getting to Capernaum, the disciples, not understanding the sacrificial life that Jesus had been sharing with them begin talking and arguing with one another about which disciples is the greatest.

Jesus admonishes them and teaches them that the first must be last, the last must be first, and that they must come to him like children. They must be open and trusting and vulnerable.

And in today’s reading the disciples respond to all of that teaching of Jesus with “Yeah Jesus, we get it, oh by the way . . . we saw this guy he was healing, and we told him to stop it because he’s not one of us.”

Now this is an ironic moment in Mark’s gospel. This unnamed disciple is successful in healing where the twelve handpicked disciples, who Jesus gave special power and sent out were not able to heal someone only 20 verses before.

In Mark’s gospel Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection, leads to life change, even a changed life in an unnamed disciple who now can heal people of their ills. It leads to a change in one’s outlook, one’s directions, one’s focus. The fact that Jesus will suffer, die and rise changes everything.

And for the community of believers Jesus makes it clear that he wants to see certain things happen in life of his coming sacrifice.

First, he wants to expand the family of believers beyond the twelve. Jesus doesn’t worry about this man being able to heal in his name. He’s glad for it. That means that his mission in ministry is expanding. Jesus is ecumenical in this, he’s okay with this man doing the acts of healing.

Secondly, he wants to see his disciples doing small acts of kindness whether it’s meeting the physical needs of someone so that they can have a cup of cold water, or perhaps maybe taking a meal to someone, or giving somebody a call when you know their down. Opening a door, simple things like smiling, or being nice, or offering compassion, even compassion to your enemies.

Thirdly, Jesus is very clear, do not ever, ever, get in the way of another person getting to know Jesus. Jesus offers a few powerful object lessons to emphasize how serious he is on this instruction. He says it would be as if you put a stumbling block in front of someone, it would be as if a millstone were hung around your neck and you were thrown into the sea. And then he talks about cutting off hands, and feet, or plucking our eyes. Jesus doesn't want us to do these things, but he wants you and I to understand how serious he is about it. And he uses every day illustrations that he sees all around him.

Right outside of the synagogue in Capernaum where Jesus did much of his teaching is a millstone that was unearthed by archaeologists, you can see them scattered all about, so you can imagine Jesus teaching the disciples pointing over to the millstone looking down the lane to where the Sea of Galilee was.

Jesus wants his disciples to reflect on and perhaps even to change their behaviors, their attitudes, their perspectives so that they can better reach people with his gospel.

He says to his disciples – Be Salt. It's serious business that Jesus is talking about, serious gospel business. I don't know about you, but sometimes I get this feeling that the world is going to hell in a handbasket. All the challenges that we face every single day, cyber bullying, hatred, tribalism, additions of every kind, greed, marginalization, violence, political turmoil, war. That was just this week.

And yet sometimes I feel that we are more worried about what people are wearing or where some celebrity is vacationing or how our team is doing, than the important work of sharing the love of God with everyone.

The Salt has lost its flavor, and Jesus warns us against weakening our purpose. Recently there was an article in The New York Times about a mail carrier in Brooklyn who was arrested after police found 17,000 pieces of unopened mail. He had stuck 6,000 of those pieces in his apartment and another 10,000 in his car which was how he was finally arrested, people walking by this car filled with mail bags. What good is a mail carrier that doesn't deliver the mail? And what good is a disciple of Jesus that doesn't love and serve the neighbor?

Be Salt - Jesus said, and what does salt do, well salt enhances flavor, it seasons. Jesus brings out the best in us. It preserves food, literally saves food! Jesus strengthens and saves us. It creates thirst sometimes, a thirst to know Jesus. It binds and holds different kinds of foods together and makes us a community held together by word and sacrament. And salt has value. In the ancient world it was a valuable commodity sometimes people were even paid in bags of salt. You and I have value God.

Christ asks us to live the salt life for the sake of the whole world. To be a church to add flavor to our communities and families and world.

To be a church that preserves the message of Jesus love for all.

To be a church that thirsts for Jesus and sharing his love.

To be a church where we are bound together for the sake of mission and love of neighbor.

And to be a church that understands that every single person has value because Jesus died on the cross for them and for you and for me, so that the world might experience hope and life and love and mercy.

Be that Salt for the world! Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

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