

**Sermon on the Mount 2: Salt of the Earth, Light of the World
(5th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A)**

Isaiah 58:7-10—The Light of Good Works

1. Three acts of charity: feed the hungry; shelter the homeless; clothe the naked
2. The Results of Charity: Your “light shall break forth like the dawn...”

Psalm 112—The Righteous Person

1. Generous: lends money (v. 5); “lavishly he gives to the poor” (NAB) (v. 9)
2. Just: does business fairly (v. 6); steadfast: not afraid; trusts in God (v. 7)

Matthew 5:13-16—Salt of the Earth, Light of the World

1. Salt of the Earth:

- a. Salt added to sacrifices (Exod 30:35; Lev 2:13; Num 18:19; Ezek 43:24)
- b. Salt mixed with food to give it taste (Job 6:6; Col 4:6; Ignatius, *Magn.* 10)
- c. Primary meaning: “If salt has lost its *taste*...” (Matt 5:13)
- d. Salt becomes “tasteless/foolish” (*mōrainō*) (cf. Engl. “moron”)
- e. Twist: Real salt *doesn't* lose its flavor; if it did, it would be worthless!
- f. Metaphor: for being ‘cast out’ at final judgment (cf. Matt 8:12; 22:13; 25:30)

2. Light of the World

- a. Israel: called to be a “light to the nations” (*Isa* 42:6; 49:6)
- b. City on a Hill: New Jerusalem (*Isa* 2:2-24; 60:1-22; *Mic* 4:1-3)
- c. Light on a Lampstand: small wicker oil lamp
- d. Twist: Gives light to the whole house, but not the whole world!
- e. But isn't Jesus “the light of the world”? (*John* 8:12)

3. The Light of “good works” (*kala erga*): that they may glorify God the Father

Mercy and Evangelization in Scripture and Tradition

1. Corporal Works of Mercy (cf. CCC 2447)

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| 1. Feed the hungry | 5. Visit the sick |
| 2. Give drink to the thirsty | 6. Visit the imprisoned |
| 3. Clothe the naked | 7. Bury the dead |
| 4. Shelter the homeless | |

2. ‘You Did It To Me’: neglecting Jesus puts one salvation in danger (cf. James 2)

Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was *hungry* and you gave me no food, I was *thirsty* and you gave me no drink, I was *a stranger* and you did not welcome me, *naked* and you did not clothe me, *sick* and *in prison* and you did not visit me.’ Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee? Then he will answer them, ‘*Truly, I say to*

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you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me.’ And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:41-46)

3. Evangelization: “to lead others to faith is the task of every preacher and each believer” (CCC 904, citing Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 3.72.4 ad 3.)

Questions for Discussion and Reflection (5th Sunday Ordinary Time, Year A)

1. In ancient Judaism, salt was added to food to give it flavor and to the sacrifices in the Temple. What exactly then is Jesus calling for his disciples to be when he calls them to be the “salt” of the earth (see Col 4:6)?

2. In ancient Judaism, the “city on a hill” was the city of Jerusalem, which the prophets had said would shine like a “light to the nations” (see Isaiah 2, 42, 60)? What are some ways in which the Church has been that “shining light” to the world, especially with regard to the corporal works of mercy?

3. When most people of think of the corporal works of mercy, they think of works performed outside the home (e.g., visiting homeless shelters, prisons, hospitals, etc.). But what are some ways that you might engage in corporal works of mercy inside your own home and family? For example: feeding hungry children, clothing little children, caring for sick family members selflessly, etc.

For Further Study

Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 94ff.. An excellent mid-level commentary on the Beatitudes with lots of background and insights.

Saint Augustine, *The New Testament I and II* (Hyde Park: New City Press, 2014), 31-33.