



**First Federated Church
Rev. Zachary Lysdahl
February 5, 2016
Sermon on Matthew 5:13-20**

There is a darkness in my life that I have tried to hide for years. My first grade teacher, Mrs. Price, had a personal investment in the learning of each of her students. She quickly noticed reading was difficult for me. By Thanksgiving things had gotten to the point where she and my parents had to come up with a plan. During Christmas break my parents sat me down on the tan and brown couch, speckled with orange and gold flowers, since the couch in my office is about the same color orange it's probably the reason I like it so much, and told me that when I want back to school after Christmas I would be going to a new classroom with a new teacher and new students. I instantly knew I was being held back and I was terrified of the teasing, shame, and embarrassment being held back caused.

A few years later, hours and hours spent in the resource room, special summer reading classes, and many tests I was informed I had dyslexia. The apostle Paul wrote in his letter to the Corinthians that he had a thorn in his side. Something that bother him every day. Well, reading always bothers me, especially when I have to read out loud and in public.

Despite my secret, despite my thorn, I still had responsibilities. In the kitchen of my childhood home was a muted yellow refrigerator. It had faux wooden door handles and centered on the door was a calendar my mother had written by hand. Each day there was a list of chores and the chores were assigned either to me or to my siblings. My wife has now dubbed that calendar the "Calendar of Choredom." For me Monday was sweeping, Tuesday was dusting, Wednesday was dishes, Thursday was laundry, Friday was dishes, Saturday was mowing, and Sunday was cleaning the bedroom. Children, young people, and adults too try to get out of doing chores. I was no exception. I would tell my mom and dad "I can't do that I have to practice reading. I can't get that done I have to work on my spelling." I thought I was clever turning my thorn into an excuse, but every time I would use as a reason not to do my chores my dad would look me in the eyes and say "You are part of this family so you have responsibilities."

[Retelling the biblical Text]

Similarly, the disciples have responsibilities amidst their personal darkness and the thorns which caused them embarrassment and terrible grief. Jesus had to retreat to a mountain side. The disciples had followed him and had gathered around him. Jesus said to them "You are the salt of the earth." The disciples would have understood salt to mean three things: purity, preservation, and seasoning. By this responsibility Jesus told the disciples "You are part of this family so you have responsibilities."

[Trouble in the World]

Despite our darkness and thorns we too have been called to be the salt of the earth. Despite my dyslexia, I try and live into the call God has placed on my life to be a pastor and bring some salty flavoring to this church and community. No matter the darkness that covers you, you have also been called to be "the salt of the earth."

[Retelling the biblical Text]

Jesus went on to tell the disciples they are “the light of the world.” Upon hearing this second responsibility the disciples would have understood light to mean two things. Light is a guide. Like those little reflector strips that line the middle and sides of the road, guiding drivers traveling in darkness safely to their destination. They would have understood light to be a warming. Like a lighthouse on the edge of a sea cliff telling sailor and sea goers, “Hey the ocean is shallow over there and over here is a rocky outcropping.” The disciples now have two responsibilities.

[Trouble in the World]

No matter our own painful thorns we too have been called to be lights of the world. We may be reluctant having thorns we try to hid, but as Christ’s disciples our “Calendar of Choredom” informs us we too have the responsibility of being salt and light of the earth.

[Good News in the Text]

There is a magnificent word of grace in the gospel text this morning. When Jesus told the disciples of their responsibility he was physically present with them. He stayed with them for a while after he told them. As we know Jesus was not always physically with the disciples. Several chapters later in the Gospel of Matthew Jesus was crucified. Even though he was crucified he remained present with the disciples by the Holy Spirit, sent from God, uniting everyone who believes in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior to him both now and forevermore.

[Good news in our World]

We are assured of Jesus presence with us each and every time we come to the Lord’s table. At the table we see the visible signs of the invisible grace we have been given through Jesus. When we come to the Lord’s table we are reminded that Jesus was sent from God into this world of darkness as the true light which shines with absolute radiance. When we come to the Lord’s table we are assured that Jesus is with us through the power of the Holy Spirit, giving us peace and hope, and empowering us to fulfill our responsibilities.

[Conclusion]

Although darkness is sometimes blinding and the thorns can be excruciatingly painful, we are part of Jesus’ family so we have responsibilities, but we aren’t going at life alone. Jesus is with us always! In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.