

Hospitality: Bearing Witness

Around the 4th century AD. The Roman Empire, which ruled the known world at the time, had begun to show cracks and crumble. Because of this, the Roman legions that were throughout the known world retracted and pulled back towards the center of the empire. This left many areas vulnerable, one of which was Britain. In this small town of Bannavem Taburniae, in the north of Britain, Irish pirates begin to attack just before dawn, raiding the small beach town and taking many captives as slaves back to Ireland.

St. Patrick, who was 16 years old, was one of those captives. While most of his family escaped, Patrick did not have that fortune, and so he was taken captive as a slave. For six bleak years, he served as a herdsman, often enduring isolation, hunger, and constant exposure to the elements. But throughout all of that, Patrick's faith continued to deepen. By the age of 22, he made a daring escape from slavery, having had a dream that his ship was ready some 200 miles away on the Irish coast.

In his journey to the sea, he nearly starved to death and endured a second brief captivity, but arrived at the shores of Ireland to find, in fact, a ship ready for him. He jumped on and escaped with this crew. He landed back in Britain, where a joyous family welcomes him home. As he settled back into life in Britain, he began to study to become a priest or a bishop. Then, one night, he had a dream that a man was carrying a letter with words from the Irish. In his memoir called *Confessions*, he recalls that the words of the letter said, "Holy broth of a boy. We beg you. Come back and walk among us once again."

Naturally, his family and church leaders alike were fiercely opposed to his return to Ireland. It was natural given that he had this impulse to return to the Irish people who had enslaved him for years. With all of this, he delayed deciding if he will go back to figure out what is going on. He wanted to finish his education and for obvious reasons, he was working up the courage to return. He battled doubt about his calling and ability.

He journeyed back to Ireland to share Christ with the Irish people until March 17th, 461 AD, when he died as a missionary to the Irish. Patrick is this testimony of what it looks like to bear witness to the gospel. He returned to the Irish people and ministered to the very slave owner who ruled over him for those six years. People wondered how Patrick could return, often facing continued attempts on his life. He wrote in his memoir,

As every day arrives, I expect either sudden death or deception or being taken back as a slave or some such other misfortune. But I fear none of these since I look to the promise of heaven and have flung myself into the hands of the all-powerful God. Who rules as Lord everywhere. St. Patrick, *Confessions*

I'm reminded me of the words of Paul in 2 Corinthians 5:14, "*For the love of Christ compels us.*" It's Patrick, fueled by this love of Christ and the life transformed, who said that he must respond to the call of God and go back to the very place in which his "enemies" lived and witness the gospel. A beautiful life transformed by the gospel that rerouted the trajectory of an entire country. In Ireland, this is much more than a holiday in the middle of March, but rather it is the impact of a man caught up in this witness to the gospel.

So often, in our world, we sense this tension as well. One of the beautiful things about our tradition is we have hundreds and hundreds of examples of martyrs who've gone before us to bear witness to the gospel stories that can inspire and fulfill us. Stories that push us outward from these walls to bear witness to that same gospel. The question is, how do we preach the gospel in a context that doesn't seem to understand it?

This question is not new to us. It's been answered time and time again in which every generation must do this work of translating the gospel into their day and age. We are currently in week three of a four-week series on the habit of bearing witness to the gospel. For the first two weeks we've been talking around that question of what do we bear witness to.

For the past two weeks, we've talked about the word, "gospel." What does the gospel mean? This morning we're going to take it a step further and get more into the practical realm. In a lot of ways, we've been hovering at 30,000 feet and we're going to bring the plane a little bit lower to the ground.

We're going to read a letter from the Apostle Peter, who was writing to a church that was in a similar situation to Patrick. One in which there was lots of opposition to the gospel, a church spread throughout the Roman Empire trying to find its footing and understand what it means to be the people of God. Peter is writing to encourage that church.

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. 1 Peter 2:9-10

Peter opens this scripture passage, quoting from a place in Exodus, with affirming the people and reminding them of what their identity is. Some of this language should sound familiar. Peter lays out a fourfold understanding of their identity. He says, at first, you were a chosen people. God has a purpose for his people. Peter reminds them that they were selected to be distinct servants of God and not just chosen at random. Rather, they were chosen and given a privileged position with God in

which he would work through the people of Israel. They would be a blessing to all the nations.

This goes all the way back to Genesis 12, in which God said to Abraham, "I will bless you, and through you, I will bless all the nations of the world." They were a chosen people, but it's not just a position of privilege. It was a summons to service, which is where you get this second indicator of their identity.

Peter says, "You are a royal priesthood." Now that phrase can mean all sorts of different things, but in short, it's a people constituting a group of priests who would work under a king. Which this theme of the kingship of Jesus, it's really important. You see it all the way at the very beginning of the story in which God was king over the people and over all of creation.

So here, when Peter says you're a royal priesthood, he's linking this young church into the grand story all the way back to the Book of Genesis. It's where we get the phrase, the priesthood of all believers, which is the doctrine of the New Testament that says we have direct access to God. If you are in Christ, if you profess Christ's name, you are in a priesthood of the collection of believers. It means we have direct access to God. We don't have to go through a mediator.

A priest not only has full access to God, but it also mediates on the behalf of others. So as the priesthood of all believers, every one of us who follow Jesus, we have this role in which we mediate God to the people around us, welcoming them, inviting them into this same people.

He says that we were a chosen people of royal priesthood, a holy nation, a group that was pulled out amongst all the others, brought together, and formed into this holy people. Holy just means set-apartness, distinct, and different from all the others. Then, if that wasn't enough, Peter ends with, "You are God's special possession, something which the heart of God cherishes, precious to him, the object of his special care and affection."

After all of that, after establishing their identity, he says, "so that you may declare the praises of him who called you." I love that because it's not just that they've been given a special privilege, but rather they've been summoned to service. So Peter says that you are all of these things for the purpose of declaring the praises of God.

The word "declare" is an important one. In Greek, it's *exaggello*, which means to proclaim or to declare. It's a good translation, but what you might miss is that there's a very public nature to this word declare. It's a combination of a couple of words, and the preface, "ex," means that you are to declare, not within these walls, but out of the walls, out into the public around you. It's a public declaration. You are called to declare in a public forum to take out the message of who this God is. You are God's special people.

He goes on to define specifically what we are to declare. It says we are to declare the praises. Now, the word here could be translated as the excellencies of God. We tend to think of praises as a song, which apparently means I'm just supposed to go out on the street corner and sing, but that's not what Peter has in mind. The word excellencies is to declare

the beauty of God, the excellencies of his character. It speaks more to the essence of God.

It is really speaking to as Peter has drawn on this story of God, these fourfold understandings of their identity. He's essentially saying, be those things and then declare that story to the world. You declare the goodness of God out into the world. One Lexicon would say it's often associated with the qualities that reflect the nature of God and the transformative work of the Holy Spirit in a believer's life. This means to declare his praises is to exist within the world and tell of the goodness of God and the work he has done in your life.

He goes on to talk a little bit about the context. "*Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul*" (1 Peter 2:11). This phrase, "foreigners and exiles," is a really important motif that runs all throughout the scriptures. It goes all the way back to Genesis and the Garden of Eden. When Adam and Eve seized autonomy, they tried to usurp God's power and authority in the garden, and it says that they were exiled out of the garden.

They were sent away. It's from that sent outness that they begin to encounter God. Abraham finds this God who meets him and sets him on this course to form a people who don't reside in any one location. This theme of foreigners and exiles is an important metaphor that speaks to our primary citizenship is in the kingdom of God, not in any other nation-state.

We must not forget this especially in times where the name of Jesus can be co-opted by those in power, for other authorities to say that this is who you are. Peter reminds us that we were foreigners and exiles. It's the very same identity that we have now. All other groupings and communities gather and rally around nation, state or otherwise, and they form around a different identity than the name of Jesus.

So for us, we must maintain this concept, this holding to what it means to be the people of God in exile. He said that our primary family is in the family of God, not our family of origin, not our ethnicity, or our political affiliation. It doesn't dismiss or erase any of those things as important particularities about who we are, but it does not hold the place of our identity.

We live in an age that's trying to co-opt that. Whether you want to be a Republican Christian or Democratic Christian, or independent Christian or American Christian or whatever it is. For us, as the people of God, to declare the gospel is to say Jesus is Lord and is to submit all other identities beneath that. This is one of the things that turned the ancient world upside down. For the first time, a people that claimed to be connected not through any other of those associations, but rather through something distinctly external to the people as the people of God.

Around AD 100, so about a hundred years after Jesus' death, there was a letter called *The Epistle to Diognetus*, which was spread out to the ancient world. That was a non-biblical text. It's just a pagan writing in which they're looking at this church that was birthed out of the move of Jesus, and they're defining how strange these people are. It's looking at this

movement of followers of Jesus and wondering who these people are. Look at a small section written by an outsider looking in.

Christians are not distinguished from the rest of humanity by country, language, or custom. For nowhere do they live in cities of their own, nor do they speak some unusual dialect, nor do they practice an eccentric way of life. This teaching of theirs has not been discovered by the thought and reflection of ingenious people, nor do they promote any human doctrine as some do. But while they live in both Greek and barbarian cities, as each one's lot was cast, and follow the local customs in dress and food and other aspects of life [Meaning they can blend in.], at the same time, they demonstrate the remarkable and admittedly unusual character of their own citizenship. They dwell in their own countries but only as nonresidents; they participate in everything as citizens and endure everything as foreigners. Every foreign country is their fatherland, and every fatherland is foreign. The Epistle to Diognetus

You see the reflection on this people is that they were this strange nomadic group that they could find across the ancient world, living in different lands. Every fatherland they would call their home, but yet it wasn't theirs. They were foreign. Yet in every land they would claim as theirs. It was this strange amalgam of people that understand their identity as foreigners and exiles and found themselves distinct.

Around the year AD 300 or 400, Emperor Constantine, ruler over Rome, as the Christian movement was growing in power, legalized the Christian religion. It's possible that it was a little more politically expedient because there was just a growing number, and he was trying to maintain control over his empire.

What happened when he legalized Christianity, and made it the official religion of Rome, the faith of the individual transmitted into the state apparatus. What fell from there was this constant pull of the church to use the means of the state to do the work of witnessing to the kingdom of God.

So what's been known as the Constantinian temptation, and you've seen this in our history and all over the world if you look from AD 300, the way in which the church has often tried to align itself with the power structures of the time and use that as the means of promoting the gospel. I can't help but be reminded of Peter's words. "You were foreigners and exiles. A distinct people, God's special possession."

The problem is we begin to think that if we mingle with different kingdoms of the world, this is the way to move the kingdom of God forward. But over and over, whenever the church nestles up with power, it always goes wrong because our kingdom is marked by a cross. It's marked through self-sacrificial love, the laying down of one's life for the other. It's marked by people like Patrick, going back to the very enemies who enslaved him and living self-sacrificially, offering his life for those people.

I bring this up because it's important for us to remember the posture in which the task is not to be outsourced to anyone; rather, as we have been transformed by the Holy Spirit, we go out as every generation of

Christians has before us, bearing witness with our primary allegiance and identity in the kingdom of God.

Notice the way Paul goes on in verse 11, because here's where you start to see that contrast. He says, "*Dear friends, I urge you as foreigners and exiles. To abstain from your sinful desires, which wage war against your soul*" (v. 11). This was a little bit of what we talked about last week, where there's this present age and the age to come, and they overlap. He says, your life, before you come to Christ, was marked by the things of this present age, and so you have been shaped and formed into that way. But that age is passing away. So, you must learn to abstain from those sinful desires that are inside every one of us.

They don't go away when you claim Jesus as Lord. Rather, those desires are bodily appetites that have been shaped by that present age. As they're passing away, we learn to submit those to Jesus, to deny them, to lay them down for the sake of Jesus. Greed, lust, and our sexual impulses without boundaries are unchecked, consumption, bigotry, racism, tribalism, or violence; Peter says they wage war against your soul. They're trying to destroy you.

This brings us back to that identity to remember who we are and say those things no longer mark the life that we're trying to work out. This is the work of discipleship. How do we submit ourselves to King Jesus and allow him to shape our lives into the age to come? Peter, in verse 12, says, "Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us." The word "pagan" for us feels pejorative. It feels like a jab at those who are non-believers. But the ancient world would've self-identified as pagan. It was not a mean name. Peter is saying that we are to live good lives among the pagans.

This is not a call to retreat. That can be the other impulse, whether it's accommodation in which we just take on the way of the world around us or we separate and live distant from them. Peter's call is that we live right among them. Just like those early churches, we're espousing that people looking out are seeing that we are living in all these different countries, and yet we are distinct.

Then he says, "live such good lives." This word "good" is the word *kalos* in Greek. It could mean good, beautiful, knowable, or excellent. I love this because Peter says that as we live such beautiful lives, that although the pagans will look on and accuse us of much, they will see our beautiful life, and it will beg the question of why. Why would you live in this way?

To live a beautiful life is to quietly defy the brokenness of our age. It's not to descend into the same means and uses of the kingdoms of this world, but rather we reject that and live a different way. It is Jesus, of this beautiful life as he's lying on the cross and as the forces of this world are pushing in on him, crucifying him, nailing him to a cross, says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

What a beautiful life to respond to violence, with not more violence, but with a willful laying down of his life with forgiveness. Is your life beautiful? Do you offer a way in which you exist in the world that feels

compelling, that's different in which you've waged war against those sins that are trying to pull you down?

Because here is Peter in the early church, and they're facing death and persecution far more than what we can understand. Notice that Peter isn't angry. He's not raging against anyone. He's not demanding things. He's just asserting that you should live such a beautiful life among the pagans that though they accuse you of all sorts of things, they will ultimately see your good deeds and glorify God.

To live the way of Jesus is to live a beautiful life, and it will inevitably bring down accusations. To live the way of Jesus will put us in contrast to the world around us, and you'll be accused of everything that's wrong in society. You'll be accused of being on the wrong side of history, of being archaic, of holding to something like a sexual ethic that seems so outdated. You and I can hold views around nonviolence that seem not expedient, that doesn't seem to work, to hold views about what it means to be a human created in the image of God. You'll hold these positions, and it will garner accusations.

Do you live such a beautiful life in which you respond not with the same vitriol that marks the present age but with love and forgiveness that marks the age to come? Live such beautiful lives among the pagans that although they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God. There's a connection in the way that we live out our faith that seems to be a direct connection to how we witness to the glory of God. Those two things go hand in hand.

This can be tricky because, at times, as Christians, we can hold these postures, and when we descend into the means and the ways of this present age, we will receive accusations. And sometimes they're warranted. Sometimes we're just jerks. You know what I mean? But if it's marked by the way of Jesus, and we're living in that vein, it will be a different type of thing, and so you have to do the work. That's part of what living in a community is, and living with such intimacy with others in which they can help us differentiate if we are in the wrong. Think of Jesus' teachings when he states that if you're going to pick the speck out of your brother's eye but ignore that giant plank sticking out of yours.

Jesus understands and anticipates that we will be filled with hypocrisy. Of course, we won't do this perfectly. That was never the invitation of Peter. Live such good lives, not perfect lives; we can't do that. But I wonder if living such beautiful lives also is something in which we're quick to seek forgiveness in the ways that we've wronged others, that we're quick to admit and confess the failures that we have in the world?

Peter is inviting us to see that it isn't just declaring the praises, although it is that, but it's always married with a way of life that embodies the same thing. We're progressing. The invitation is not just to preach the good news; it's to embody the good news. It's to become a good news people in which we have been shaped and internalized the message of the gospel that it flows right out of us. Two tasks come forth out of this small text. Peter says that we are to bear witness in word and in deed.

Bear Witness In Word

So, the first is that we bear witness in word. You see that right at the beginning where he says to declare the praises of God. I want to spend a moment talking about what that would look like. For Peter the praises is the excellencies of God, the stories of God, the virtuous acts of God. It's to declare the very goodness of what God is doing from Genesis to Revelation in which our life finds its footing within that grand story.

We, as the chosen people, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, are to espouse that. We are to take that story and give witness to it. To bear witness to the gospel in Word is to tell God's story in Jesus. We tell the story. I love the word witness that Jesus calls us to in Acts 1 of what we will be because a witness isn't generating anything new; it's just pointing out what they have experienced. A witness reveals what they saw and what they encountered, so as those people, we are telling that particular story.

This is where we have to be careful because at times our efforts to bear witness or evangelize can center on us and not Jesus. We have to remember that as we're bearing witness to what God has done in our lives, to not make ourselves the hero of the story. Jesus is always the hero of the story. So we bear witness to Jesus. We bear witness to what God has been doing from Genesis to Revelation.

How do we then tell that story? I want to give you a fourfold framework to understand the story of God that is easy. When you begin to marinate your mind in the scriptures, you begin to declare the praises of God, and you'll see it's fundamentally a story about God, but often, we interweave our own story within this broader framework.

Creation

To begin to tell the praises of God, it begins with creation. "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The very beginning of this four-part story is that God created, but within that, he created us as the image bearers and gave us the task and responsibility to co-rule with God. But in this creation moment, what happens is that even though God alone is king, we usurp that role. We want to be king.

Disruption

That leads to the second part of the story, which is disruption. Creation begins in union with God, but then not far into the story, we want to seize that control, rebel against God. Sin enters the picture and disruption to God's good world unfolds.

What began in creation is quickly interrupted by disruption, which is both the individual rebellion that every one of us has, as well as the systemic cosmic brokenness in which the sins from that moment ripple out into all of the created order. However God doesn't leave us in our brokenness.

Redemption

This brings us to the third part of the story, which is redemption. And this is the biggest chunk of the story. This is God moving from Genesis 3 all the way to when we get through the story of Jesus, in which he's seeking to redeem that relationship we had with God. So redemption

is God going all the way back, forming the people and the royal priesthood that Peter was talking about.

You see this when God is working with the people of Israel, and they're trying to establish themselves, and they wonder who will rule over them. So they create this order of judges that delineate the life of the people, but they are a mess. Then you get this litany of kings where they wanted to be like all the other nations. This was a huge failure.

Then, as king, after king failed, you're left, at the end of the Old Testament, longing for redemption. They are asking, "Will anyone come who can rule?" Could God return to his people? They are longing for redemption. And this spoke of what the prophets would call the Messiah, this king, this Christ who would come to usher in the kingdom of God.

Jesus

So redemption gives way to the story of Jesus, who comes on the scene and that's what he talked about in the gospel. He says that the time has come. The culmination of that whole story, this is the move of redemption in which Jesus says that the time has come, the kingdom of God is here. Repent and believe the good news.

Renewal

That eventually gives way to the fourth part of the story, which is renewal. It's through that disruption, rebellion, sin, and fall from our communion with God that we now have the opportunity in Christ to be renewed. Every one of us who claims to be followers of Jesus is a testament to that renewal in which God has done that work within us, which is part of a much larger work.

We are being renewed and called into action to restore that relationship from Genesis 1, to rule with God, creating a world. There's coming a day in which that renewal that happens within every one of us will be writ large across the whole cosmos, and everything will be put back to rights. That's what you see at the end of the story.

But how do we speak of the praise? How do we declare the excellencies of God? We tell this story of creation, disruption, redemption, and renewal because this is one way of speaking of the whole story of history. Of God's movement in all of history. But it's also a way of telling our story. It's a way of telling my story.

When you begin to understand this story, you begin to see the nuances in the ways God has created you, and yet my own sin, just like Adam and Eve's, disrupts the world around me. I am longing for someone to make that right. So you look to Jesus for redemption, and what flows from there is a beautiful life in which God is redeeming and renewing, and never again fully until the end of time will that be consummated.

Yet, here we are, working out the renewal that Jesus offers over and over. How do we declare the praises? We tell this story: creation, disruption, redemption, renewal. Over and over, you begin to tell that story. Tell it to your neighbors. Tell it to those at work. Tell it to your family. Tell it to whoever you encounter. It's how you bear witness in Word. But what I've often found is that it's rare that someone just comes up to you and says, "Hey, what's the gospel?" It usually doesn't happen that way.

Bearing Witness In Deed

This is why Peter links this idea of bearing witness in Word with this bearing witness in deed. Because those always go hand in hand, like two sides of the same coin. We bear witness in deed. We live such beautiful lives amongst the pagans that it begs the question, how could you live this way?

I'm reminded of John 9, where there's this story of Jesus encountering all these religious leaders. He just healed somebody, and of course, the religious leaders get all frustrated with Jesus as they typically do. They're talking about why this guy is blind. Was it his parents who sinned, or was it him who sinned? And Jesus heals the guy. So they finally are like, why don't you just go talk to the guy that Jesus healed? And in John 9, the religious leader asks him. The healed guy says, "I don't know if this guy was a sinner or not. But the one thing I do know is I was blind, and now I see." This blind man who is healed goes and lives this life in which people recognize his old identity but see who he is now.

I'm guessing that that wasn't the first time he was asked a similar question where he was able to say, "I don't know. I was blind, but now I see." We are to live such beautiful lives. So it begs the question of what's going on in there. When we begin to live out that renewal that Jesus is doing within us, we give witness to this new life that's birthed in us through Jesus. It was never to just preach the good news, although that's needed, it is to become good news people. Those two things always go hand in hand.

There's a book by a historian named Michael Green called *Evangelism in the Early Church*, and he writes that at one point that 80 percent of evangelism in the early church was basically done by ordinary Christians as they just explained their life to their friends and family. They were called out as that special people, that priesthood distinct from all the others. As they began to live out their lives in such contrast to the world around them, they just tried to explain how and why they were living in this particular way. They explained why they loved their spouse and held them up with dignity. Why they didn't dehumanize their enemies, why they responded with generosity and open handedness to all those around them.

To bear witness to the gospel is to embody God's story in Jesus. If we're to do this, there are a few things we have to commit to. First, if we are to bear witness in deed, we must own our identity as Christians, which is hard in this day and age, in this area of the country. I've shared before that I get uncomfortable when somebody asks me what I do for a living. Not because I'm embarrassed by what I do but because it often sets the conversation and the trajectory that I may or may not be able to follow along with. I get it. It is difficult.

However, we must begin to own our identity as Christians, which means we have to accept the good, the bad, and the ugly. Readily admit that we have failed. We have made a mess of this thing, and we have not been a good witness at times. Yet, this is who I am. This is who we are as a church. We are struggling to figure this out, but we must own our identity as Christians.

Part of the work of bearing witness in word is just beginning to be open to questions like what you did this week. It can be as simple as owning your identity, such as “I went and listened to this guy preach about Jesus.” You don’t have to be pushy about it, but it begins to cultivate a way of owning your identity. It is simply saying that this is who I am. I’m not pushing it on others, but I would guess that it often evokes questions.

The second thing we have to do is to actually follow Jesus. This seems so simple, but if we’re going to live such beautiful lives among the pagans, we have to allow the work of the spirit to renew us. We can’t do this thing on our own. We have to actually follow Jesus. We won’t do it perfectly. The invitation’s never been to perfection, but it’s been to allow the life of Jesus to be birthed within us and let that go into the world.

When I first moved to the Bay Area, the first guy I ever met was Gary. I would intersect with him often in life, and we would see each other regularly. We began to hang out, and he began to know what I do for a living. That posed all sorts of interesting conversations, but often it was just ignored. Our lives would intersect, and over time, I would try to live my faith. I wasn’t doing anything other than just trying to follow Jesus.

It took five years before, out of nowhere, he said, “So, Kevin, tell me about this thing called confession.” This was followed by the question of what Christians believe about sex. “Doesn’t that seem old and archaic?” I was like, “Okay, we’re going to have a conversation now.” So we entered into dialogue after five years of me just befriending him, caring for him, getting to know his family, getting to know his children, and eventually, he began to ask questions.

I’m convinced this friendship has been such a gift to me. Not because of what I’ve done, but what Gary has taught me, and understanding life and recognizing the patient work of Jesus in the world around us. Often it’s living this out, people taking notice, and then asking questions, and I get to then declare the goodness of God.

I got to talk about confession, where we name what is broken in us and in the world around us. I got to share about sin and the good news that sin can be forgiven and that we serve King, Jesus. It was good. I got to declare the excellencies of God, and that conversation led to more and more conversations. It’s this connection between bearing witness in deed and in word and living those such beautiful lives. Is our life beautiful? However, Peter is just riffing off of Jesus. In Matthew 5, Jesus is teaching:

“You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine

before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven. Matthew 5:13-16

Then Jesus goes on for three chapters to preach the greatest sermon ever preached—Sermon on the Mount. He talks about a litany of what it means to let your light shine. Things like being a people of reconciliation against murder and anger. Living sexually pure, not giving into lust and adultery. Being faithful in our relationships. Keep our word in the oaths we make. Practice nonviolence. Love of the enemy. Give to the poor. Pray. Live in authentic, not hypocritical faith. Resist compulsive consumption. Give, don’t worship money. All of these things are in this sermon in which he’s saying, this is how we live out that light and salt into the world.

In a few weeks, we’re going to begin a series on the Sermon on the Mount, which will last through the summer, and we’re going to work through his teachings because of this connection between how important it is for Jesus to renew and redo our lives in him and the world around us.

The call before all of us is to bear witness in word and deed. It’s quite likely that we will not experience the same thing that Patrick experienced. We won’t be called to witness like him, nor will we have the influence that Patrick had. But we are all called to bear witness to live in such a way that begs the question, “Why?” Where we live within our world, within the people in our neighborhoods, in our workplaces, in such a way that contrasts in such a way that they say there must be something to that life. Then is the beautiful work of God, we get to declare the praises of him who called us out of that great darkness and brought us into a new light.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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