

LEC 2022



Ten Devotions in Preparation for LEC

Pacific Southwest District, School Ministries

*Written by Mrs. Conni Schramm
Crean Lutheran High School, Irvine, CA
To GOD Be the Glory!*

INTRODUCTION (You Are)

¹³ *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

¹⁴ *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* Matthew 5:13-16.

This year's theme for the 2022 LEC convention is *"Salt and Light."* As educators, we know the benefits and necessity of these earthly elements in our daily lives. But Jesus takes this imagery to a deeper level and proclaims that as His followers, *"you are the salt of the earth"* and *"you are the light of the world."* Read that one more time. **You are salt and light.** That is humbling and empowering. It is also our calling and an undeserved gift of the Holy Spirit.

So, in the following devotional thoughts, let's explore this gift and responsibility of being salt and light as we unpack these questions:

What does it mean to be the "salt of the earth" and "the light of the world"?

Who in Scripture struggled with being salt and had a tasteless moment?

Who in Scripture gave us examples of radiating the light of Christ to the world?

In each devotion, let's reflect on our own lives. Let's rejoice in the goodness of God as He reveals our shortcomings and brings us to repentance. During the conference, let's come together and receive His forgiveness in His Body and Blood and be restored to live as His baptized children, whom He has called so that others may see our good works and give glory to our Father in heaven.

PRAYER: Gracious Father, You have called us to be Your witnesses and proclaim the message of salvation, life, and forgiveness through Your Son, our Savior, Jesus Christ. Help us to understand this calling and what it means to be Your salt and light as we grow in Your Word. In the name of Christ, our Savior and LORD. AMEN

You Are the Salt of the Earth

¹³ *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet"* Matthew 5:13.

This section of Scripture is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, where He describes His followers as the *"salt of the earth."* The Bible refers to salt as a reminder that God would preserve His promise (2 Chronicles 13:5) or that the worshiper, with his grain offering and salt, was preserved in an eternal relationship with the LORD (Leviticus 2:13). At the time of Jesus, salt was a prized and valuable resource. A Roman soldier was given an allowance or *"salary"* (from an ancient word meaning *"salt-money"*) for the purchase of salt, showing that he was *"worth his salt."* Salt was also used to enhance the flavor of food and act as a preservative or disinfectant; it was even added to the soil as fertilizer.

So, how do these apply to believers as *"the salt of the earth?"* When we as Christians respond in faith to the work of the Holy Spirit, we preserve God's good according to His Word as we live in the world but not of it. We behave differently than the world because we do not follow the world but rather Christ Jesus, our LORD. But Christians, who go along with the sinful ways of the world and no longer live their faith, reflect the world and are not leading others to bear good fruit. They are like salt that has lost its saltiness. They have lost their effectiveness for the kingdom, their purpose in life, and ultimately their faith. As a result, they are *"no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men"* (Matthew 5:13). However, salt can also sting in an open wound and act as a disinfectant. That is how the Law of God works on our hearts to convict us and turn us away from sin so that the Gospel can turn us back to the cross where we can receive His forgiveness.

We are the salt of the earth. We are prized and valuable because we are children of the King by faith. Because of God's great love and sacrifice for us, He turns our feeble attempts at service into being something *"worth his salt"* as He works through us and makes us useful for His Kingdom. We have God's irrevocable promise through Christ Jesus from the cross that He loves us and will never leave us. As we commit our lives to Him, the fruits of our labors are blessed (1 Corinthians 15:58). He has called, washed, and equipped us with the Word to preserve His good in this world by teaching the Gospel that impacts the lives He places before us. Sometimes that salt will sting when it is shared, which is a good thing because He promises that He will accomplish what His Word was sent to do: bring us to repentance and faith and keep us there.

PRAYER: Gracious LORD, You have proclaimed and empowered us to be Your salt to the earth. Thank You for this gift. We can easily be distracted by the world. Work through us mightily as we minister to our students, parents, community, and each other to bear good fruit in keeping with repentance so that others will see Jesus in us and glorify our Father in heaven. In Your name and for Your sake, we pray. AMEN

You are the Light of the World

¹⁴ *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* Matthew 5:14-16.

Scripture is full of references to light that points us to Jesus. This one does as well. When Jesus says that we are the light, we are a reflection of Jesus, the true Light of the world. As we proclaim Jesus and Him crucified and live our faith among others, the light of Jesus shines *"in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (2 Corinthians 4:6). Apart from Him, we can do nothing except live in the darkness of sin and eternal death (John 15:5; 8:12).

Like salt, this is not something that we aspire to be but something that Jesus says we are. We are the light as the LORD shapes and conforms us into His own image so that when the world sees us in our suffering and our joy, they see Jesus. In a world of darkness, God's people are a beacon of His light, love, forgiveness, and compassion. This life of service is a light that is not hidden or isolated. It cooperates with the Holy Spirit as He moves in our lives to serve others and shine the light of Jesus to expose the darkness of sin and reveal His saving truth through His Word. This calling to be His light makes us different from the world as He works through us, creating good works done in faith to glorify our heavenly Father.

It is humbling that the LORD would choose us, put His name on us in our baptism, and fill us with His Holy Spirit. It is an honor to serve our Savior, reflect His light to the world, and be a representative of the kingdom of God in the midst of the world's decay and darkness.

A story is told of a little boy who told his parents after seeing the light coming through the stained glass windows in the church that a saint is *"a person that the light shines through."* May the LORD shine brightly through us to attract people to the saving Gospel of God's love, forgiveness, and peace in all our vocations.

PRAYER: LORD, our world is hurting and lost. You have called us to be Your light. Shine through us so that those who do not know You may hear the message of Your love, forgiveness, and mercy. AMEN

Tasteless Moment: Moses (“But Moses said to God...”)

*“So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”
But Moses said to God,...” Exodus 3:10-11.*

Being “*salt*” is not easy. Sometimes we are called to do something for the LORD that is not in line with what we think we are capable of doing. Consider Moses and his “*tasteless*” moment.

Exodus 3 tells us that the LORD heard the cries of His people, Israel, in Egypt under the oppression of Pharaoh. The time had come for their release. So, He called Moses to be His “*salt*” to Pharaoh from a burning bush. However, God’s command to “*go*” was met with a series of five “*buts*”: 1) Who am I? 2) Who shall I say sent me? 3) What if they do not believe me? 4) I am slow of speech, and 5) Please send someone else.

We can relate to Moses. There are times when we are afraid, and the “*what if’s*” and the “*buts*” flow freely. We love the LORD, “*but*” we would rather do something else, anything else except what is in front of us.

I encourage you to read Exodus 3-4 and stand on the mountain with Moses. The entire event is rich with life lessons! But the takeaway for us in our devotion is that even though Moses felt **he** could not do the task, God knew differently because God would do it through him and graciously provide all he needed. He will do the same for us. Just as God gave Moses the name, “*I AM,*” to speak before the people, that powerful name is given to us in Jesus Christ, the great I AM. God also gave Moses visible signs to convince the people that he was following God’s call. We, too, have visible signs from God to share, such as His love, His forgiveness, His Word, His Baptism, and His Body and Blood. Just as God promised to be with Moses and Aaron as His spokespersons, He promises to give us His Holy Spirit and what to say at that moment it is needed (Luke 12:12).

So, when we find ourselves having a “*Moses Moment,*” we should confess our lack of trust, receive His forgiveness and remember that the LORD our God is with us wherever we go. Our baptism has given us the power of the Holy Spirit and works in our lives each day. By faith, we are set apart from the world to go where He calls and equips us, because it is not we who are doing the work but the Holy Spirit in us. Rejoice and be glad! Jesus said that His disciples are the “*salt of the earth,*” and He will give us all we need for His work.

PRAYER: Precious LORD. I am weak like Moses at times when You call. I let fear and distractions keep me from being the salt You have called me to be. Please forgive me and help me in those moments to remember that it is not about me but about Your saving message that You want me to speak. Thank You for Your love and mercy each day and for giving me all that I need when I need it to be Your salt to the earth. AMEN

Tasteless Moment: Elijah (What are you doing here?)

"There he went into a cave and spent the night. And the word of the LORD came to him: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" 1 Kings 19.

Scripture does not hide the faults of the saints. We saw it in Moses, and now we see another example of a saint struggling to continue to be the *"salt of the earth"* in Elijah. Although he had just witnessed the power of God on Mount Carmel in front of Israel and the prophets of Baal, it did not bring the lasting "reformation" that he had expected. Queen Jezebel was now out to kill him for the death of her prophets, and Elijah was afraid. He felt alone, dejected, and wanted to quit, permanently. *"I have had enough, Lord,"* he said. *"Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors"* (1 Kings 19:3-5).

Maybe you can identify with Elijah. You have put so much time and effort into the work of the LORD, and the result fell short of your expectations. You feel alone, deeply sad, and wonder if continuing on this path will bring any change. Take heart. The LORD knows our struggles as He knew Elijah's.

After running from Queen Jezebel, the LORD came to him and provided food for his physical strength. Then, Elijah went into a cave where the LORD came to him and asked, *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"* Elijah's heart poured out all the reasons: *"I have been zealous for the LORD, they rejected You and put Your prophets to death. I am the only one left and they want to kill me too."* After reading 1 Kings 18-19, we can understand Elijah's feelings, but something is missing from his heartfelt words. There is no mention of God's work in Elijah or God's provision and care but plenty of what Elijah feels he has done. This is what happens when we see with the eyes of our face and not with the eyes of faith. We are turned inward and not upward.

The LORD knew that Elijah needed spiritual strength for the rest of his journey. He called Elijah from the cave to be in God's presence, where He would instruct Elijah with acts of nature as symbols of the Law, from a wild wind that tore up the mountain to an earthquake and then fire! But, the Law does not change the heart. The Gospel does. When calm was restored, the presence of the LORD was in a gentle whisper to Elijah, *"What are you doing here?"* It was then that Elijah covered his face with his cloak and stood at the mouth of the cave. The patient, loving whisper of the LORD gave spiritual strength to Elijah and softened his heart to hear the calling of the LORD and to wait for the LORD's work to have its effect on Israel.

"What are you doing here?" If you are feeling like Elijah, the LORD is calling you back to Him to repent from self-pity and fear and to take hold of His forgiving love and strength. You are His salt of the earth. The LORD determines your work for the kingdom and will console you through the *"still small voice"* of His Word and Sacrament. May His peace be yours as you serve and as you wait for the LORD to do His work in His time.

PRAYER: Gracious LORD, forgive me for wanting to give up when I don't see the salt working. Help me to remember that changing the heart is Your work. My job is to see that others hear the message so that hearts can be changed by the Holy Spirit. AMEN

Tasteless Moment: King David (On the Roof too Long)

“In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war, David sent Joab out with the king’s men and the whole Israelite army. They destroyed the Ammonites and besieged Rabbah. But David remained in Jerusalem. One evening David got up from his bed and walked around on the roof of the palace” 2 Samuel 11:1-2.

Spring was war weather. Chapter 8 summarizes years of war under David and includes this statement, *“The LORD gave David victory wherever he went.”* Israel’s borders had been expanded, and David was enjoying the victory lap of prosperity this particular spring when his men were at war and stayed home. One night when he was unable to sleep, David walked around in the cool of the evening on his roof. Although it seems harmless, David’s palace rooftop gave him visual access to the rooftops of his people, where many activities would take place as they enjoyed the cool of the evening. Some of those activities were not for his eyes. Bathsheba was an example. His lust for a beautiful woman led to adultery, hypocrisy, murder, loss of integrity as King, and a broken fellowship with the LORD.

Like David, sometimes the most dangerous time in our spiritual lives is when things are going well. Complacency can creep in, causing a loss of daily prayer and regular meditation on the Word. We forget our calling and devotion to God. We can become distracted by the things in this world to the point of following after them. It is then that we are conforming to the world (Romans 12:2) and are not salt. God’s warning to us is that friendship with the world means hostility toward God (James 4:4) and that loving the world means that the love of the Father is not in us (1 John 2:15).

But God loved David just as He loves you and me. In His mercy, through Nathan, He called David back to be His salt to Israel and the world. It was a hard “resalting” and the consequences severe, but David’s spiritual health was at stake. God’s loving discipline was the wake-up call that David needed to turn back to the LORD and His righteousness.

Are you fighting God and His discipline to call you back from the world? Remember that the LORD disciplines those He loves, and He loves you. His cross has made that loving discipline possible so His Word can “resalt” you. The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), and it brings about a life that honors God and blesses others.

May the LORD protect you from being on the “roof too long,” pulled into worldly temptations, and complacent in your relationship with Him. May you receive His loving discipline with a thankful and repentant heart and continue to be His salt everywhere you serve.

PRAYER: LORD Jesus, keep me close to You in faith that I do not succumb to temptation and look like the rest of the world instead of Your child. “Resalt” me with Your forgiveness, Word, and Sacrament to bring glory to Your name. AMEN

Light in Darkness: Ruth (Faithful Light)

“Ruth replied, “Don’t urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the Lord deal with me, be it ever so severely, if even death separates you and me” Ruth 1:16-17.

It was a dark time in the history of Israel. Israel was caught in a cycle of idolatry. In His mercy, God would raise a judge to take down the enemy. Israel would return to the LORD for a time, and then the cycle would repeat. A few judges were faithful to the LORD, but most were not. During the time of Ruth, Sampson was the judge. Although each judge was given the Spirit of the LORD, it did not mean they used Him. (Note to self!) As a result of Israel’s unfaithfulness, God was disciplining His people with a famine. A man named Elimelech, his wife Naomi, and their two sons left their hometown of Bethlehem, which ironically means *“the house of bread,”* and moved to Moab’s idolatrous and immoral nation. Their two sons married local Moabite women. One was named Ruth. After a time, Elimelech and the two sons died, leaving all three women without husbands and means. Naomi heard there was food in Bethlehem and decided to return to her homeland but encouraged her two daughters-in-law to stay in Moab and marry again.

Ruth, however, had come to faith through this believing family and would not stay in Moab, saying, *“Your people will be my people and your God my God.”* What a faithful light amid such spiritual darkness among God’s people, and it would be evident to others. Boaz, a wealthy landowner, a God-fearing man, and her future husband had been told all that Ruth had done for her mother-in-law since the death of her husband and how she left her homeland to come and live with a people she did not know before. His response to this faithful Light of Christ in Ruth was to pray a blessing over her with the words, *“May the Lord repay you for what you have done. May you be richly rewarded by the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings you have come to take refuge.”* And that is what the Light of Christ does. It breaks through the darkness of sin, confusion, and sorrow and brings great blessings. Ruth and Boaz would become the great-grandparents of King David and live long enough to nurture him in the faith and see him become God’s regent on earth as well as descendants in the family line of Jesus.

The Light of Christ is the message of salvation and is evidenced in our lives as we live out our faith. By God’s grace, it is passed from generation to generation. Maybe you have been in the ministry long enough to see the offspring of your students and how faith has continued to grow in their hearts and lives. What a joy and sweet comfort it is to see the faithfulness of God and to know that *“the LORD is good; His mercy is everlasting; His truth endures to all generations”* (Psalm 100:4)!

May the Light of Christ shine through you in your vocations, and may those who hear of this Good News of forgiveness, life, and salvation be a comfort to those in distress and bring faith to those in spiritual darkness.

PRAYER: Gracious LORD, fill me with your Holy Spirit that I would be Your faithful Light for this generation. AMEN

Light in Darkness: Peter (Proclaiming the Light)

“Jesus said to them, ‘But who do you say that I am?’ Simon Peter replied, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” Matthew 16: 15-16.

The Pharisees and Sadducees were spiritually lost. They were not looking for the Suffering Servant who would free them from their bondage to sin, as described in Isaiah 53. Instead, they were looking for another King David, a warrior king who would free them from their bondage to the Romans. Jesus told them that they could *“interpret the sky but not the signs of the times”* (Matthew 16:3). Even the disciples of Jesus were caught up in this mindset. They asked the LORD when He would restore the kingdom of Israel. Jesus warned them to *“Watch and beware of the leaven (the teaching) of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”*

Later, Jesus asked His disciples, *“who do the people say that the Son of Man is?”* They responded, *“John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.”* But His next question is personal, just for them. *“Who do you say that I am?”* Did they understand who was in their presence? Would their answer show that the time Jesus spent with them and the prayers He prayed over and for them would shine His Light through them? Peter boldly speaks first. *“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”* God be praised.

Peter is someone that resonates with all of us. We see his moments of Light like this and his tasteless moments where the Light is dimmed. Like all of God’s saints, Peter is a sinner, and the Holy Spirit is an honest and truthful biographer. He does not cover up the sins of great men and women of God but recounts them for us so that we might be warned and instructed by them. The Holy Spirit also recounts faithful moments in the saints, and this moment in Peter’s life was life-changing for him and for the church. Jesus made it clear that Peter knew this only by the revelation of God the Father to him. This confession of faith would be the rock on which Jesus would build the church. We are the Light of Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, and *“there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved”* (Acts 4:12). Jesus promises Peter and all believers that *“the gates of hell will not prevail against it”* (Matthew 16:18). Because of Christ’s work on the cross, death cannot keep us from the LORD nor can Satan and all his evil angels. This confession of faith stops Satan and death in their tracks and holds us to the LORD. This is the Light of Christ that dispels the darkness and brings us true and lasting peace in a world that is spiritually lost.

Proclaiming this message as His Light is accomplished through the work of the Holy Spirit. As His baptized child, we, like Peter, boldly share that there is only one way to God; that one way is through His Son, whose work has given us forgiveness, life here and for all eternity, and deliverance from our sinful nature. We can walk as children of the Light, confident in all the LORD has promised and done for us.

PRAYER: Gracious LORD, make me bold like Peter to share this confession of faith, and may it shine through my life to bring glory to Your name! AMEN

Light in Darkness: Zacchaeus (Seeing the Light)

“But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, ‘Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount’” Luke 19:8.

Being a Lutheran educator, you have probably heard and told this event in Luke many times. You might even recall the song, *“Zacchaeus was a wee little man...”* That was true. He was short, but that is not all he was. He was also quite wealthy. However, that wealth did not come through honest gain. Zacchaeus was a tax collector, a chief tax collector. The Romans told him what to charge for taxes, and he upped the ante significantly. This true son of Abraham was robbing his own people for personal gain. He was not living up to his faith or his name, which meant *“clean or innocent.”* Luke’s Gospel is full of stories of how the rich struggle with discipleship and even turn away from the LORD altogether. Zacchaeus was in spiritual danger. The LORD came to seek and save the lost; today, it would be Zacchaeus and all those around him.

Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to his town. Being vertically challenged, he climbed a tree because he wanted to see Jesus. As Jesus passed by, He looked up in the tree to see this *“wee little man”* perched on a limb and told him to come down immediately. There was an urgency to seek and save the lost. Jesus told him that He must stay in his house today. How excited Zacchaeus must have been to have this well-known Rabbi come and stay in his home. With all the wealth that Zacchaeus had, he could provide a great party for everyone in the town! Maybe that is what God had in mind all along.

The usual nay-sayers complained that Jesus was eating with sinners and tax collectors. I am reminded that Jesus said that *“there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance”* (Luke 15:7). That day, there was rejoicing in heaven because Zacchaeus was convicted in his heart of his spiritual bankruptcy in the face of the ill-gained wealth that had controlled his life. He announced that he would give half of his possessions to the poor, and if he had cheated anyone out of anything, he would pay back four times the amount (Luke 19:8)! Zacchaeus saw the Light, changing him from being sin-filled to Christ-filled. Jesus proclaimed that salvation had come to *“this house”* (Luke 19:9).

We, too, feel joy when the Light of Christ leads us to repent and turn from the distractions and temptations of this world to the one who dispels all darkness, sin, and guilt. May the Light of Christ that changed the heart of Zacchaeus draw you to the cross where your sin and guilt were removed. May you embrace the joy of forgiveness and new life as a baptized child of God every day.

PRAYER: LORD Jesus, thank You for Your Light that saves us from our sin and changes us into a new creation where the old has passed away, and the new has come. Keep us in faith and repentance so that Your Light can shine through us to others. In Your Name! AMEN

Light in Darkness: Paul (Power of the LIGHT)

“But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things” Philippians 3:7-8.

He had it all! He was a Pharisee among Pharisees, “*educated at the feet of Gamaliel according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers*” (Acts 22:3), and diligently kept and upheld all the Pharisees’ laws and regulations. He was a descendant from the tribe of Benjamin and confident in his own flesh. He was zealous for the Jewish nation and the preservation of the beliefs that held to the strictest following of the Law of the Jewish faith. He even consented to the death of Stephen and stood by as the death penalty was carried out with stones. His zeal drove him to persecute the church by requesting permission to gather up those of “*The Way*” that had fled Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen and bring them to religious justice by imprisonment. This was Saul who persecuted Christians because of their belief and proclamation that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God teaching a way of salvation contrary to that which the Pharisees taught. According to the standards of righteousness held by the Judaizers, Saul was practically faultless. If heaven were attained by any of these outward things, Saul would have been able to walk right in.

But, the journey to Damascus would change his life forever. On the way to persecute Christians, Saul was blinded by the Light in order to see the Light. Christ Jesus took hold of him, transforming his spiritual darkness into the Light of Christ. Over the next several days, Saul was filled with the Holy Spirit, baptized, spent time with the disciples that were in the city, and “*began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God.*” (Acts 9:20). His spiritually blind eyes had once been to “his profit,” advantages to gain eternal life. But now Paul sees these outward things in their true Light and that they have no value for salvation. For Paul, knowing Christ Jesus as his LORD was of more importance than the man-made standards of righteousness. For him, it was a good loss and one that brought great gain, God’s righteousness earned for him through Christ’s work on the cross.

What about us? Do we regard certain things in our lives as an advantage or gain over the work of Christ? Although such things as being raised in a Christian home, attending a Christian school, and being faithful in worship are all great blessings, they are not assurances of eternal life. What about other blessings from the LORD, such as money, intelligence, higher education, status, or personal moral victories? Like anything that detracts us from total confidence in Christ alone, they can hinder our salvation by turning us inward instead of upward. Isaac Watts penned these words; “*When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of Glory died. My richest gain, I count but loss. And pour contempt on all my pride*” (LSB 425 “*When I Survey the Wondrous Cross*”).

May the Light that caused Paul to see His Savior radiate from you as you share the Gospel message with others. And may your heart and mind be filled with confidence and trust in Christ Jesus alone.

PRAYER: Precious Savior, forgive me for breaking the first commandment and turn me back to Your Word alone so that others may know You as their richest gain. AMEN

Jesus is the Salt and the Light

“And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” Matthew 29:17-21.

Over the course of these devotions, we learned that we have been called and equipped to be the Salt and Light of the LORD to the world. We have seen examples of tasteless moments when God’s people questioned their ability and God’s calling to be the Salt, as well as moments when the Light of God was bright. We learned that our identity in Christ is not based on how well we live this out but on the Word of God that points us back to our need for repentance and faith. In each of these devotions, we saw that only Jesus Himself can do what this world needs, and He has entrusted us to proclaim that message and live it out in our vocations. He has equipped us with His Word, washed us and made us His children, given us the gift of the Holy Spirit, fed us with His Body and Blood, and placed us where He wants us to be. We can be like Moses and confidently go where we have been called because He is doing the work in us. We can be like Elijah and take the strength of God to continue our journey of faith, fixed on His purpose and not our fear, even when we are beaten down by the evil in the world. We can be mindful of distractions like King David and be thankful for the “*Nathans*” in our life to bring the Salt and Light of repentance. We can be like Ruth and boldly leave behind the things in this world that would keep us from the love of God and be in the company of believers and His Word so that the Light of Christ shines through us. We can be like Peter in our pluralistic society and boldly claim that there is only one way to God, and that is through Christ, the Son of the living God. We can be like Zacchaeus and recognize our sin and by God’s Grace repent so that the world does not create spiritual darkness in our hearts and minds keeping us from seeing the Light. We can be like Paul and “*blind*” to our self-righteousness so that we can see the true righteousness of Christ and trust in Him alone as our only Way to be saved. And by the work of the Holy Spirit, we can be a new creation in Christ Jesus, the true Salt and Light to the world, through His cross and resurrection.

We have been entrusted with this wonderful message to share. The kingdom of God lives in us through Christ so that our good works are done in faith and glorify our Father, who is in heaven. Go, therefore, and may the Spirit of God increase in your heart a renewed desire to live your faith as a baptized and redeemed child of the King. May the knowledge that He has empowered you to be His Salt and Light to a world in darkness bring a zeal to live out that calling in your vocations. The Kingdom of God is in you. You are the Salt and the Light of the world.

Prayer: Gracious Father, thank You for showing us what Salt and Light look like through Your Word. We have seen our shortcomings and failures and ask for Your forgiveness. We want to savor the object of our faith, Jesus Christ. Continue to strengthen our faith in Your Word and Sacrament to preserve us from corruption and decay. Our hope is in You alone. Use our lives to bring about the good works that bring glory to You for the sake of our Savior, Jesus. We love You. You are our Rock, our Strength, our Fortress, and our Redeemer. AMEN

