

**Devotions – February 5-11, 2017**

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**Sunday, February 5, 2017**

Text: Matthew 5:13a

**"You are the salt of the earth..."**

**Happy Super Bowl Sunday!**

It is so much fun being a Packer fan—when they win. My hope is that the Green and Gold will be playing in the game this afternoon although as I write this I realize it's a long shot. But maybe your team made it the Super Bowl this year—Yay!! As a child growing up just south of San Francisco there were a few years when the 49ers were the best year after year and they were in every Super Bowl and won every Super Bowl...Back in the days of Joe Montana and Steve Young... our entire town would shut down so that everybody could watch the game. Now, if I'm honest I'm not really into football but I am into the snacks. Super Bowl parties have the best appetizers! Buffalo Wings (*with blue cheese*), Quesadillas, Chips and Dip, Cheese (*of course*) ... It is a day full of salty-goodness!

In Matthew 5:13a, Jesus tells us that we are salt. I don't cook much but I sure like to eat and I know when my food is bland and with just a little bit of salt the flavor is improved. A little bit of salt has a lot of impact! (*I'm sure the losing team in the Super Bowl is wishing for greater impact on their Defense*). Jesus doesn't tell us that we become salt or that one day we may be salty... Instead he just declares, **"You are the salt of the earth..."**

People call us all kinds of things (*strong, weak, smart, dumb, fun, boring...*) and give us all kinds of identities (*teacher, parent, waiter, barista, doctor...*) but Jesus tells us we are salt. God gives us everything we need to have impact for the Kingdom of God. In baptism we are made new. *Not "like new" but completely new.* We are made new for the purpose of having impact on our family, our community and the world. We are created to be bold. Our community, our congregation, our family all need us to show up in the mix of life with our full-

flavor-boldness not our blandness. All that God has made you to be with all the gifts you have been given is what the Kingdom needs from you. **"You are the salt of the earth."**

Let's pray: *God, we give you thanks for all the ways in which you make us salty, bold and unique. Lord, help us to live into the fullness of who you created us to be. In the name of Jesus, Amen.*



**Monday, February 6, 2017**

Text: Matthew 5:14

**"You are the light of the world..."**

**Happy Monday!**—*that feels weird to say because "Monday" and "Happy" don't usually go together.* I saw a T-shirt the other day that said "I wish every day was Friday." I thought that was obnoxious because if every day was Friday we would never have a Saturday or Sunday and those are the days that make Friday great. I hope you had a Sabbath this past weekend and some time to slow down and relax.

Monday is my day off so it's possible I'm still in my pajamas (*although I do drive my kids to school and usually I put on clothes—but no make-up. Make-up is for work only*) but if I was heading back to work on Monday I think what would loom ahead of me is all of the tasks, problems to solve, paperwork, difficult people, early mornings, school schedules, and it's an entire week ahead that I'd have to get through. Ever feel that way?

I have a friend who is a barista at a coffee shop that I frequent. I see her a couple times a week for maybe 15 minutes and it makes my whole day better. She is a light in my week. I see her in worship and other places outside of the coffee shop, too, and she does the same thing. She is a light on some of the darkest of my days. I'm sure she doesn't even know that (although I think she knows I appreciate her). Jesus says, **"You are the light of the world..."** I'm sure that sounds like a lot of expectations but what I think Jesus is getting at is that you

matter. You matter to those around you and you matter for the Kingdom of God. Even on Monday. Especially on Monday.

In baptism we give the baptized a candle and we say, (vs. 16) ***“Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*** There is no question that the Holy Spirit shines through you. Jesus says, ***“You are the light of the world...”*** May you surround yourself with people who shine the light of Christ for you and may you let your light shine in the world.

Let’s pray: *God, help me to let you shine through me today and remind me to see Christ’s light shining through the lives of those around me. Amen.*



**Tuesday, February 7, 2017**

Text: Matthew 5:15

***“No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.”***

I recently showed up to pick my daughter up from school and she wasn’t there. I called my husband and he didn’t have her. I checked around the building and I didn’t see her. I was terrified. I called the office and they paged her and she walked out of the door happy and just fine. She had been knitting in a classroom because it was 0 degrees outside and she had planned to come out in about 5 minutes but I was early. It took me the rest of the day to get over all of the feelings I had in those 3 minutes that she was “missing.”

I can think of no greater treasure than my children. I love to see them achieve and I even appreciate when they fail or fall but learn from that experience. I take delight in their ideas and their questions. It makes perfect sense to me that we use parent language when we talk about God because I know that God also considers us his greatest treasure and finds delight in us.

I know my children are capable of amazing things. They're musical, they're smart, they're kind & unique.... I see strengths in them that I know they don't see yet but I sure hope they see them soon! I know that God can see in us that we, too, are unique and gifted in incredible ways because he is the one who gifted us, made us, formed us and is shaping us still. And I believe that he shows us in multiple ways how capable we are to be witnesses to the gospel and by that all I mean is that we are empowered to share with others the impact Jesus has on our life. We can share that with our words as well as using the fullness of our gifts. "No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all the house." We are a light in a world filled with darkness. You are a light in the lives of others around you.

Let's pray: *Jesus, shine through me today and help me to see that in my uniqueness I am wonderfully made and gifted for service in your Kingdom. Amen.*



**Wednesday, February 8, 2017**

Text: Matthew 5:16

**"...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."**

As a child I remember my pastor telling me that no matter how dark it is when you light a match, the darkness always gets over powered by the light. That in a battle between dark and light the light will always win. I went home and went into my bathroom with a match and I was so excited to see that she was right. The darkness disappeared in the face of my tiny match. That experience in my bathroom has stuck with me ever since.

A family (*a husband and wife and four children*) came to church Wednesday night looking for dinner. We have food: veggies and dip, sausage and cheese, pizza, sandwiches... appetizers and finger food mostly, but we don't have "dinner". So I invited them to eat what they wanted and they did. The youngest was 2. She found my 7 year old daughter and another friend and they were playing in about two seconds. It was great. It was so easy for them to just play and enjoy each other. Seeing the children play broke a lot of the awkwardness of the situation and from the tiny spark of these quick-to-friend children, the room was full of light.

When somebody is baptized and they are presented with a candle given a charge to go out and to "Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." It's a charge to be light in a world that is starving for Good News. In a world of bad news and fake news we all hunger for GOOD NEWS. That candle reminds us that a tiny match in the midst of a pitch black room will cancel out the darkness around it. We may feel like a tiny match in a big dark world but because of Jesus, the light that burns in us, the light of Christ, will always cancel out the darkness around us. And when we shine, others will see hope and love.

Let's pray: *Lord, help me to be more me today. And help me to see the light of Christ in others. May we glorify you today. Amen.*



**Thursday, February 9, 2017**

Text: Ephesians 2:10

**"For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."**

As a reluctant Packer fan (*the longer I live in WI the more I love them and by the time you read this they will have either won the Super Bowl or not but right now I*

*still have hope that they'll at least be in the game), I can't help but think about what a great team we have. I mean, Aaron Rodgers can throw a ball and read the field and he plays a really smart game. But in the last game that I watched it was between the Packers and the Cowboys and they were tied with 3 seconds left on the clock. To win the game nobody was looking to Aaron Rodgers. It was all on Mason Crosby. He needed to kick a field goal to win the game. As it turns out, he needed to kick the field goal twice to win the game. AND HE DID!!! (and the crowd went wild!)*

In the early years of ordained ministry I constantly tried to be like other pastors I had known or was working with. I felt like they did it "right" and I couldn't figure it all out and...

Eventually, I had to realize that the only way I could be authentic in ministry was to be me, with all my quirks, and my randomness... I could only be me. And that's true for all of us: You can only be You and that's what God wants. **God created You to be You.** It may sound kind of obvious but in a world that is always telling us that we are not enough: not thin enough, not strong enough, not successful enough..... In a world that sends the message to us that we need to be more like other people we need to keep God's Word written on our hearts and in our ears.

"For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works..." You were created to be you! The Packers need a quarterback and a kicker... not to mention all the other guys on the field who are important, too. In relationship with Jesus we get to become more fully who God created us to be. We get to shed all the identities that are put on us by the world and embrace the one identity that gives us LIFE: Our identity in Christ as a Child of God.

Let's pray: *God, thank you for creating me and calling me "good." Help me to be the me I was created to be. Amen.*

**Friday, February 10, 2017**

Text: John 1:32



**"And John (*the Baptist*) testified, 'I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained on him.'"**

When I was in Indiana for my brother's wedding I met a woman who had buried her son too soon. He was in his twenties and he died of cancer a few years before I met her. She told the story of his life. How he lived for Jesus and how he shared the love of Christ to the end of his life. It was a powerful story but what stood out the most to me is that she said that he never asked, "Why me?" She asked that question because she was in horrible grief over losing her son. But he didn't. He said, "Why not me? If somebody is going to die of this horrible disease it might as well be me. Because I have hope. Because I know Jesus. Why not me?" The wedding was over 10 years ago but that witness of this dying man has stayed with me. Even after his death there was a testimony to share with others about his life and his hope and his love for Jesus.

John the Baptist spoke to what he saw. He used this witness to point people to the true and risen Lord. I think that's all we are asked to do. We are asked to share what we have seen and what we know with people around us. Our spouse, our children, our friends, people in need...

I wasn't there when Mary and the other Mary showed up at the tomb and saw that it was empty but because of their witness and their willingness to share what they say, I have gotten to hear the good news of the Resurrection of Jesus. And because Jesus is alive, we too, witness his presence in our lives: when he sits beside us as we bury our loved ones; when he gives us words to say in times of need; when he offers us patience when our children are bouncing off the walls...

May you see Jesus active in your life and in the world and may you speak to what you know and what you see so that your life may point others to the risen Savior of the world.

Let's pray: *God, open my eyes to see you active in my life and in the world and give me courage to share that hope with others. Amen.*

**Saturday, February 11, 2017**



Text: 1 John 4:19

**"We love because he first loved us."**

I was in Hong Kong years ago visiting the Lutheran Seminary there and up on the hill there is a giant white cross. As we stood there looking out at the homes across the river from the seminary, the windows were sparkling back at us. One of my classmates asked our professor why their windows were so sparkly. He answered, "What you are seeing are homes of non-Christians who have to look out their window every day to see this large cross. They believe the cross to be so powerful that they have put mirrors in their window to reflect the power of the cross away from their homes." Then he paused and looked at us and said, "If only Christians believed in the power of the cross."

In First John we read that the power of the cross is love. There is power in the cross and that power is love. I hope that as Christians we wouldn't reflect that power away but let that power into our lives and to let that love show us that we are loved. And because of that love we can see Christ in others and love them, too. It's time to claim the power of the cross and to let that power shine through us to all people of all faiths and all ethnicities and all political parties and all.... We love because he first loved us.

Let's pray: *Thank you Jesus for showing me through the cross that I am loved. Help me see that because I am loved by you, I too, can have love for all of your beloved creation and call all people my brothers and sisters. Amen.*

