The Rev. Kimberly Reinholz
February 8, 2026
Church of the Holy Spirit
Isaiah / Matthew

You are the light of the world!
You are the light of the world!
But if that light is under a bushel,
It's lost something kind of crucial
You've got to stay bright
to be the light of the world

You are the salt of the earth
You are the salt of the earth
But if that salt has lost its flavor
It ain't got much in its favor
You ,cannot have that fault,
and be the salt of the earth!

So let your light so shine before men
Let your light so shine
So that they might know some kindness again
We all need help to feel fine
(let's have some wine!)

You are the city of God.
You are the city of God
But if that city's on a hill
It's kinda hard to hide it well
You've got to stay pretty in the city of God

You are the light of the world
You are the light of the world
But the tallest candlestick
Ain't much good without a wick
You've got to live right to be the light of the world

So let your light so shine before men
Let your light so shine
So that they might know some kindness again
We all need help to feel fine
(let's have some wine!)

_____

This song comes from “Godspell”, and while the music was written by Stephen Schwartz of “Wicked” fame, the script for the award winning musical was written when John-Michael Tebelak, the playright, was judged for his physical appearance being patted down for presumed drugs, when attending Easter Vigil in 1970 in his

overalls and t-shirt. He specifically wrote the play with the intention of showing the church how it fails to live into it's own teachings.

(https://artandtheology.org/tag/john-michael-tebelak/)

Music and art have long been a tool used by the Holy Spirit to opening our eyes to the things we have done to trespass against one another, and to pave a path towards reconciliation in that tradition. We can come to repentance, reparation and restoration through lots of different avenues.

The Church professes Christ crucified, dead, and risen, but Jesus, when he was fully human before he was resurrected and ascended into heaven, was a practitioner of Judaism; he was versed in the wordss and warnings of the prophets, and the schools of thought descending from Isaiah and his disciples strongly influences Jesus's worldview. We should therefore meditate upon Isaiah's lessons to better understand Jesus.

What does Jesus want his followers to remember? What has God promised that people keep forgetting?

We have forgotten the same things that Jesus' peers and the Israelites before them were guilty of forgetting - that, by the belief in a single loving/merciful/and affirming God, human kind can and does, in fact, bear light and hope to the world.

By fulfilling this role in creation, God's people are more precious than gold, more valuable than silver, more important than oil, and even more necessary than preservatives.

What is it that makes us essential for God's plan to unfold in creation? We are God's intended and perfect catalysts. (I did double check this because Mr Smith's Chemistry Class way back in the last century). According to science, in order for any organic change to take place, a catalyst must be added to the equation.

Two kinds of common catalysts often found in nature are associated changes in temperature (also often associated with a light as in a flame in

Jesus time) or a change in the acidity or alkalinity of the substance (which can be done by introducing a chemical compound those often called salts).

While the term catalysts was probably not familiar to the disciples, but they would have witnessed the impact of things like changes in temperature and exposure to salt in changing the objects encountered in their daily lives- baking clay makes bricks, adding salt to food preserves it, putting old wine in new wine skins would cause explosions.

By calling the disciples salt and light Jesus illuminates that they are able to enact change in their circumstances. Even (and perhaps especially) in times of violence, oppression, war, exile, and despair. Jesus reminds them and us that we can, should, and ought to respond to the shattered world in a way that makes restoring creation to it's ideal diverse, brillian and beloved nature, through the restoration of right relationships between us and all that God has made, is possible, through our actions, thoughts, words, and deeds.

Isaiah says people are meant to be reparers of the breach: no matter what separates us from each other or from God, we can, with God's help, mend what is broken, reconcile what seems irreconcilable, and actively participate in repairing God's beloved creation.

Being a catalyst for change in Isaiah's time meant returning to a city that had been destroyed in order to rebuild and restore what had been lost. Leaving a comfortable, if not ideal, environment to return to Jerusalem was not a high priority for them at that moment.

Being a catalyst for change in Jesus time meant recognizing that Roman had exploited and occupied Palestine, and this was unacceptable something needed to give. Change was no longer optional but necessary. Ideas about how, when, and what to do to expell Rome: including outright revolution, or uprising by the Jewish people became the hope of some folks at the time. There were multiple political revolutionaries who came before and after Jesus promising this freedom from Cesear. What Jesus embodied and lived into was even more

radical and revolutionary. Than the future anyone had imagined.

Being a catalyst for change in our time means speaking loudly and clearly when people are denied dignity, freedom, peace, and life, or are otherwise harmed by self-proclaimed Christians who do not love their neighbor, welcome the stranger, or following the commandments that Christ gave us to observe hospitality, justice, and mercy, in the pursuit of freedom and peace on the Earth.

This is not a time for a discussion or debate about politics we are not talking about if the role of federal government should be “big” or “small”, if the role of state governance is more or less important federal responsibility. A question of civil oversight or how to spend taxes in a community is in fact a worthy endeavor.

What is being done in the name of Christ right now, is not debatable. James Baldwin, renowned author, essayist, and activist for all people said, “We can disagree and still love each other unless your disagreement is rooted in my oppression and denial of my humanity and right to exist.”

Denying anyone’s right to exist, not just exist, but to live and thrive in the world which God has made is non-negotiable.

We are ALL bearers of God’s image in the world. Followers of Jesus especially, the time is now, to choose being the light and the salt that Christ has called us to be.

Owning our Christian identity first and formost, at this moment means, standing up and living into the promises we made (or that were made on our behalf) in baptism, to seek Christ in all persons, loving our neighbor as ourselves, and respecting the dignity of every human being.

It is not hyperbole to say we stand in the breach, and we have the choice to be the catalyst for change, or to follow those who assert power and authority through violence, to follow the leaders of the world, or to follow Christ.

I recognize, the breach is a new place for some of us to be. The events in Minnesota have made issues concerning immigration, customs and enforcement no longer an academic, or abstract legislative question but instead a real time demonstration of what Christians who live in America, are witnessing, as well as what we are willing and able to do to protect human dignity.

Humankind bears God's image to the world, and as such it is unimaginable that any Christian would stand aside and watch while another person is denied their God-given rights.

When Jesus says we are salt and light capable of changing the community, nation, and world in which we live, it doesn't mean that we will stay as we are, that we are meant to stay comfortable and unchanged. It means that being transformed as well.

It can feel as if restoration is impossible. That city of Jerusalem was too far removed Isaiah's community, where they were physically, spiritually or emotionally. But like the Israelites we are called to leave this place of relative comfort and recognized that our discomfort, which may feel like salt being rubbed into a wound, is nothing in comparison to the hatred, violence, and suffering associated with the denial of someone's humanity.

Sometimes dis-ease happens, when recognize that we had been told a lie. But while a lie was at some point believed, doesn't mean one needs to remain faithful to that lie.

Christians know that it is always within our power, to reflect, repent, and return to the Lord.

We can lament of the sin we have committed, the sin committed on our behalf, and amend our behaviors and advocate for change in our communities, nation and world.

Accepting unacceptable behavior simply because we are Christians and Christians love one another is not the kind of love that God calls us to observe. This would not be the advice you would give a person being abused by their spouse, nor would it be the advice we would give to a child being neglected by a parent. Likewise is not acceptable for any Christian to stand silent while a government denies rights to the people who live within it's borders to citizens or strangers, no one should be denied the rights guaranteed us by God. Every person should be afforded the ability to live, love and learn about how to live into a right relationship with creation.

Now is the time to recognize we have sinned, those we love have sinned on our behalf, and those in whom trust and authority have been given have betrayed that trust.

Now is the time to be the salt, to be the fire, to be the catalyst for change.

Now is the time for Christians across the nation to stand in the middle of the chaos, in the face of violence and discomfort, to continue protecting the most vulnerable amongst us. Loudly let us proclaim that “This is unacceptable”. These actions are not being done in my name, nor your name, and especially not in Jesus’ name.

Even people who previously supported those in authority, legislators who created the policies, and agree with the intention behind the enforcement chaos- can change their point of view. It is possible to still be part of a long standing political party and take a stand saying this is not loving, Christ-like, or something that I can condone.

Just because some one uses Christanity as their shield and buckler, it does not mean they are Christians. There is a long and complicated history of the Powers of the World claiming Christianity when it is convenient. But living fully into the promises of Christ: that all are welcome, that all are valued, that all are salt and light, and that all can make this creation beloved as God intends it to be is not something we should adopt or abandon based upon its benefit to us or our allies. We are called not to just tolerate one another but to love one another, to be welcoming, affirming, inclusive, of all human beings and see their worth as equal to our own.

In the tradition of music being a tool that allows us to see and journey on paths that lead to reconciliation and hoping that we can do better when we know better to paraphrase Maya Angelou.

I’d like to teach you song, written just last week, by a woman Annie Schlaefer who leads song circles in Minneapolis, MN, in the hopes that you will come to understand that we are working together as reparers of the breach, and that you are loved, as all of us are loved.

https://www.patreon.com/posts/its-okay-to-your-149541284?utm_medium=clipboard_copy&utm_source=copyLink&utm_campaign=postshare_fan&utm_content=web_share

It's okay to change your mind. Show us your courage, leave this behind.

Oh, it's okay to change your mind, and you can join us, join us here anytime

Stand tall in the breach.

Be the fire.

Be the light.

Be the salt.

Be the precious,valuable, important, and necessary person that you are.

Be Christ-like.

Be Christians. And remember-

It's okay to change your mind. Show us your courage, leave this behind.

Ohh its okay to chang you remind and you can join us, join us here anytime.

Amen