

*Lord, illumine our hearts, illumine our minds, illumine our spirits,
That we may be like lanterns, shining your light into this world. Amen.*

I bake the bread we use for communion. And it's a great recipe –
It's a recipe that makes bread out of ordinary ingredients.
It's a recipe that makes saints out of ordinary people.
I think this recipe is a great metaphor for our life in Christ –
It's starts with water, as we do, the water of baptism;

We add yeast, which is a small thing that starts a reaction that brings life.
Jesus said the Kingdom of Heaven itself was like a little yeast,
that a woman kneaded into the dough, and it leavened, lifted the whole loaf.
People often interpret that dough as the Church. I think it's the whole world.
I think that dough is people who don't know Jesus.
We're that yeast, my friends. A chemical reaction waiting to be activated.

Yeast requires a sweetening agent to get it going – my recipe uses honey –
The sweetness and love that are to mark Christian community,
The love of God. A psalm speaks of the Law of God as sweeter than honey.
Jesus said, in the passage we heard today,
*"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets;
I have come not to abolish but to make perfect."* That's what 'fulfill' means.

After you add the sweetening agent, you let the yeast proof –
you have to be sure it's good, or the dough won't rise.
I think every day of our lives as Jesus-followers we're invited to "proof."
If nothing's bubbling in us, ain't nothin' gonna happen to the rest of the loaf!

Okay, what comes next? In my communion bread recipe, you add some oil.
In baptism, the oil represents the Holy Spirit. And the Spirit, my friends, is power.
A church without demonstrations of spiritual power is... not the church.
Then there's flour – we'll call that all the stuff of life. It all gets added in.

There's one last ingredient: salt. And one time I forgot to add it. I thought,
"It can't be that important, can it?" It was awful! Just didn't taste good at all.
Bread without salt is ... like anything without salt. Bland. Dull.

When Jesus said we were to be salt, he was saying a mouthful...

Salt is a preservative; salt melts the ice; salt is a flavor.

And here's something: Salt is an agent that releases the taste of other ingredients.

When Jesus says we are to be salt for the world, we are to be "flavor enhancers!"

We are to salt the people around us with hope, with love, with peace, with power. And help to release those qualities in them. We salt them with Jesus. It is Christ within us that makes us salt, his tears, his blood.

That's what empowers our work that shows to the world the power of God.

A church without demonstration of spiritual power is not being the church.

As we get busy on our outreach and growth initiatives, we are invited to exercise faith in the name of Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit; to join God in what God is already up to healing the world, to make him known through our love.

We don't have to focus on needs – I told our vestries yesterday the church is not in the business of meeting needs. We are in the business of God's mission.

God has an amazing way of dealing with needs, as we make God known.

It's not that we don't do the works of mercy and justice – that passage from Isaiah, often read on Ash Wednesday, reminds us how central to God's vision of wholeness is our engagement in healing and restoration and reconciliation. But to only engage in those works without also bringing people the Spirit of God, the healing that is sometimes miraculous, the strength of a community connected to the divine? That makes us a social service agency, not a church.

What the world needs from us is our faith, our spirituality, our capacity to see what is unseen, to believe the promises of God before we see outcomes, and to act on those promises in such a way that the Life of God is made known in this world. That is what Jesus meant by being salt and light, to be our spiritual selves not just in here, but out there, Monday through Saturday.

What do I mean by being our spiritual selves? Well, we each contain any number of selves – our hopeful self, our despairing self; our confident self, our ashamed self; our professional self, our playful self; our romantic self, our competitive self. We have different spheres where these selves are dominant –

We don't bring out our romantic self at work – or we'd better not anyway!

We get into trouble when we bring our competitive self to our personal relationships, or our professional self to the kitchen table.

But our spiritual self – that awareness of being in relationship with God,
of maintaining an open line of prayer and cultivating a Christ-centered life...
that we can carry with us 24/7, even at the board meeting or kitchen sink.
That is how we are salt to the world – by bringing the Holy Spirit with us into
every encounter. We don't have to use words – sometimes I just pray
during a conversation or situation, "Be here, Jesus. Give the words."

Think a moment of a situation in your life that needs the spiritual life you bring.
It might be a person, it might be a group of people,
it might be an organization or even a nation.
How might you salt that situation with your spiritual connection to the
power that made the universe?

Jesus called his followers to do a whole lot more than improve the lot of their
neighbors. He called them to a ministry of radical transformation –
First, they had to be willing to be radically transformed, and then they were ready
to be agents of radical transformation for the world around them.
The gospels are an account not only of Jesus' life and ministry, but of the halting
progress those men and women made in taking on this mission of God.
We see times when they failed, when they allowed the short view to sway them
from the big vision – but we are testament to the fact that they prevailed.

The only thing we have to give the world that it can't get somewhere else
is our connection to God, our spirit-filled life, our faith, our identity as the
Body of Christ, the way Christ is made known to the world today.
If we leave that out, we are truly salt that has gotten wet and lost its saltiness.
As we cultivate that and spread it around, we salt the world into wholeness.

What happens next to bread? It's ready to be eaten.

But we all know that if bread is to be eaten, it has to be broken.

So we are a loaf that is delicious, but has to be broken to be consumed.

We have to be broken, separated into smaller bits in order to feed the world.

Just as our Eucharistic loaf gets broken to feed us.

But something mystical happens – this bread we are, this Body of Christ dispersed
all over the place during the week comes back together the next week!

Here we are, whole again. Here we are, our light breaking forth like the dawn!

*Let your light so shine before others, Jesus said, so that they may see your
good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Amen.*

Matthew 5:13-20

Jesus said, **“You are the salt of the earth**; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 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. In the same way, **let your light shine before others**, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; **I have come not to abolish but to fulfill**. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

I Corinthians 2:1-12

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the mystery of God to you **in lofty words or wisdom**. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. **My speech and my proclamation were not with plausible words of wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God.**

Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to perish. But we speak God's wisdom, secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

None of the rulers of this age understood this; for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, **what God has prepared for those who love him**” – these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human being knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. **Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.**

Isaiah 58:1- 12

Thus says the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
Shout out, do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet!
Announce to my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins.
Yet day after day they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation
that

practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;
they ask of me righteous judgments, they delight to draw near to God.

“Why do we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers.

Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.
Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself?

Is it to bow down the head like a bulrush, and to lie in sackcloth and ashes?

Will you call this a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD?

Is not this the fast that I choose: **to loose the bonds of injustice,**

to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?

Is it not to **share your bread with the hungry,** and **bring the homeless poor into your house;** when you see the naked, to cover them, and not to hide yourself from your own kin?

Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly;
your vindicator shall go before you, the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say,
Here I am.

If you remove the yoke from among you, the pointing of the finger, the speaking of evil,
if you **offer your food to the hungry** and **satisfy the needs of the afflicted,**
then your light shall rise in the darkness and your gloom be like the noonday.

The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your needs in parched places,
and **make your bones strong;** and **you shall be like a watered garden,**
like a spring of water, whose waters never fail.

Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many
generations;

you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of streets to live in.