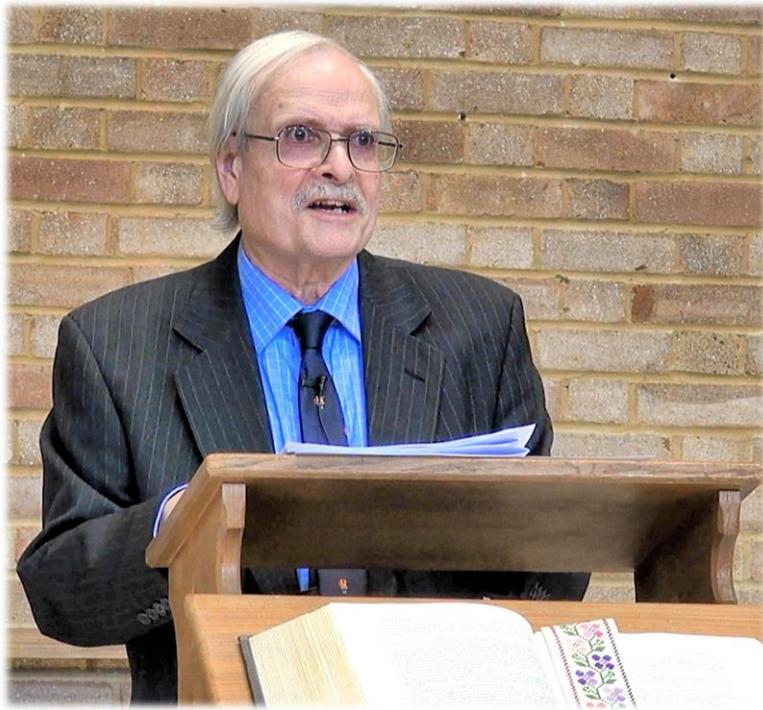


Morning Service Sunday 8th February – led by Martyn Macphee



Last week I commented about Mike Findley “walking the talk”, so it’s nice to be able to observe that Martyn fits the definition of “The Salt of the Earth” so very clearly.

The Salt of the Earth: Living as Salty Christians

We were to focus on the first verse of the day’s NT reading “You are the salt of the earth.” The image was straightforward and unmistakable. Jesus employed an everyday object—salt—that was as familiar to his listeners then as it is to us now. The message was clear: just as a pinch of salt unlocked the flavour in food, a small group of believers could transform the world around them. They became the salt for the earth, carrying the message to others.

The image of salt challenged us to consider how we could be “the salt of the earth” as we were called to

be—salty Christians. Salt worked best when dissolved into food. The point was not to eat the salt itself, but to enjoy the food enhanced by it. Similarly, Christians were not called to draw attention to themselves, but to work quietly behind the scenes, adding the right flavour to the world.

Jesus had warned his disciples not to make a show of their good deeds, such as giving alms with ostentation. Instead, he taught them to give discreetly—“don’t let your left hand know what your right hand does.” Salty Christians blended into the community, making the world a better place without seeking the spotlight. The trick was to blend in without losing one’s identity as a disciple of Jesus Christ. As Reinhold Niebuhr put it, “be in the world, but not of the world”.

Standing too far apart from the world could lead to being seen as odd or out of touch. On the other hand, standing too close risked blending in so much that one’s Christian witness was lost. The challenge was to engage with society without being assimilated into it.

Salty Christians lived in the world without becoming part of it. They interacted with all members of the community, from the powerful to the ordinary, without losing their distinction as Christian witnesses. It could be tempting to go with the flow, but Christians had to ask themselves: “if you were on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict you?”. Would others know you were a disciple of Jesus Christ if you did not tell them? How did your words and actions reflect your faith? Was there anything you would not do because you are a Christian?

The story of Eric Liddell, the Scottish runner who had refused to compete in the Olympics on a Sunday, illustrated this principle. He had been expected to win the 100 metres but chose instead to run the 400 metres on the following Monday, winning gold and breaking the world record. His actions had spoken louder than words, and his faith shaped his choices. Salty Christians were known by what they did - and by what they would not do.

Everyday choices, from what we watched to what we read, reflected our faith and influenced others. Others were watching, and our decisions spoke volumes about our values.

Jesus had not only called his disciples “the salt of the earth” but also warned them, “if salt loses its flavour, it is good for nothing except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot”. In Jesus’ time, most salt came from the

Dead Sea and was often contaminated with other minerals. Over time, exposure to the elements could cause it to lose its flavour and become useless, then used only for salting icy roadways.

For Christians, losing our saltiness was a real risk. Yet the Gospel assured us that our saltiness could be restored by turning away from the influence of the secular world and returning to Christ. The word was “repent.” Through repentance, prayer, and seeking forgiveness, we drew closer to God, much like the way a rope cut and then knotted became shorter, as in Beth Moore’s Bible study illustration. Though our lifeline might be full of knots from past failings, it connected us to the same God—and each time we returned, and with each new knot, we grew closer to Him.

Joseph Hart, who had written the hymn “Come ye sinners, poor and needy,” had understood this well. Jesus stood ready to save, full of pity, love, and power. As Christians, we were called to be the salt of the earth: quietly adding flavour, living out our faith, and drawing closer to God despite our imperfections.

Martyn has a serious face, and whilst there is humour in his reflections, we rarely see him smile. So being caught out on the date of the Olympics in which Eric Liddell competed (proving that at least one person in the congregation was awake!) we got a smile. It’s one of the pleasures of editing the Service videos.

