

A sermon delivered by Emma Henderson at the First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, Columbus, Ohio, Feb. 6, 2011, Epiphany 5.

“Spreading Salt”

***Isaiah 58:1-9a;
Matthew 5:13-20***

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May the words of my mouth and the meditations of each one of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O God, our strength and our salvation. Amen.

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First, thank you for attending the Youth Service today. We're glad that so many of you were able to make it despite the weather.

I think we have seen more than our share of snow and ice this winter. All the salt we have had to put down to melt the ice is still around on the driveways and the streets. We don't even think twice about how much we use salt every day. We learned about salt in school and I have been studying compounds, like sodium chloride; common table salt.

We need salt for so many things. It has the ability to give flavor to foods that are otherwise bland. Salt never loses its flavor. Salt is not just a seasoning. It has healing and anesthetic properties, and it is a preservative. Thousands of years ago, salt was held in such high regard that it was valued the same as gold. People then felt so blessed to eat even one meal with salt. We all know that teenagers today love salt for their french fries, potato chips and hamburgers.

The reading today talked about how we are supposed to be the salt of the earth and about being a light for God. What did Jesus mean when he talked about being the “salt of the earth?” I don’t think he meant what you put on your french fries. I think he is talking about people and the core of their being. Some people act a little bit more cinnamony and sweet and some are more spicy like pepper, but we all can be a little salty. As a matter of fact we all need some salt to survive. The salt of our being allows us to reach out to others, and sometimes we need that salt to help us keep going and encourage us. Everyone has encountered someone who has changed their life or that has helped them see things in a different way. These people are the epitome of being the salt of the earth and doing good for God.

I have been through a lot this year on my faith journey. There was a moment in my life last fall where I had to pause and think about who I am. I was diagnosed with a hyperactive thyroid disease and my health issues were holding me back. I realized that I couldn’t be the same Emma involved in 100 things at once, sports, after school clubs, and getting home very late at night because I was so busy. I had to be more selective in my activities. I was scared that I had lost who I was, that I had lost my salt.

But I was lucky because there were people who were my salts of the earth and who had their light on, and I was able to follow it.

As many of you may know, I have a great love for the theater. I was afraid that my illness might prevent me from participating in the shows at school. However, I was given an opportunity, thanks to Kate and Leah, two amazing students at Westerville schools. They were directing a charity production of *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*. I auditioned for the show, and although they knew it would be a risk, they took a chance and cast me anyway. I was cast in the role of a lifetime, as Alice. They flavored my life with God’s salt at a time when I thought it was going to be bland.

This production was a labor of their love. It was a benefit for homeless children and families. Along with the show we also went down to a center that works towards keeping kids safe and out of

bad situations. We taught them about theatre hoping it would guide them, and they would love it as much as we do. I never made the connection at the time, but while we were teaching a lesson about costuming for shows, Kate and Leah dressed up as salt shakers. They were literally and figuratively sprinkling God's love on everyone. We even had these kids come to our school and attend the performance. It was so rewarding to see the light of these girl's happy faces. It brightened the evening. The show was free to everyone, but admission was a donation to support food banks in central Ohio. With the help of the community, and a sell-out crowd each night, we collected enough canned goods to feed 170 families for a week.

The show was so special and so different from any I had been in before. All the students were excited to be involved and help. We knew that the production was much more than a performance. The show was a way to reach out to people in the community and bring them together to help out for a common cause. This brought me back to my salt and to thinking about and helping others. It amazes me that just two girls were able to spread hope and joy, much like the salt shakers that they dressed up as, they flavored the lives of everyone they touched, and sent God's light out a little farther into the world.

I finally realized that you are not identified with what you are involved in, it is who you are as a person and what you do for others that really matters. Salt's properties add flavor to your life and other's lives. Maintaining your flavor is what our salt is and what helps us to spread God's words and his love. How valuable you are in the eyes of God and everything that you do every day is your light for God.

This whole journey of planning the service has helped all of us realize how important it is to be the salt of the earth and spread God's light, and that a little bit of salt goes a long way. So I hope as we leave today, we can all be salt shakers like Kate and Leah, and sprinkle a little of God's love wherever we go. Amen.