

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

Well, here we are! By the grace of God we've weathered another fierce storm. And look forward to yet one more coming at us. Are any of you worn out yet? Should we be asking the Lord tonight to not pay attention to the damn Groundhog and bring on an early Spring?

How we are dealing with all the challenges this weather brings tells a lot about us. One friend said, "I'm tired of being Amish!" Maybe we should start talking to our Amish neighbors about how to live happily off the power grid.

As I reflected on the Word of God given to us today, it occurred to me what a great opportunity these Winter storms afforded us. For instance, did anyone here help a neighbor dig out his or her car or help shovel or plow someone's driveway or walkway? Anybody?

You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world!

Did anyone here provide shelter or a hot meal for someone without heat or water or power? Anybody?

You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world!

Did anyone here check on a sick person or an elderly person to see if he or she needed help? Anybody?

You are the salt of the earth! You are the light of the world!

Or did you rather hunker down in your house, complain bitterly about the weather or the power company or the way in which your street was plowed or not? Please don't raise your hand. But, well, you have some work to do. Your salt has lost its flavor. Or you haven't figured out yet that it's better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.

That reminds me of the story of a man who wanted to figure out which of his two children was more worthy of inheriting his property. So he gave each a coin, saying, "Buy something with this coin that will fill the house." The son tried to think of something he could buy that could fulfill his father's wishes. He decided on a truck-load of straw. But, when he returned home, he didn't even have enough straw to cover the floor.

The younger child chose a wiser course. She spent her coin on candles. As she lighted each candle, their light filled the house.

The happy father said to his daughter, "To you I give over my business. You have shown true wisdom."

Many of us have found out the truth to this saying during the past week. “There is not enough darkness in the entire world to put out the light of even one small candle.” It is this truth that is at the heart of the imagery of light in today’s Scriptures.

Jesus tells us today, “You are the light of the world.” What an amazing compliment and what an awesome responsibility. Just as the Prophet referred to Him as “a great light”; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

St. John wrote in the Prologue to his Gospel, building on Isaiah’s vision: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all humanity. The light shine in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. “There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...”.

When Jesus tells us “You are the light of the world,” he is telling us that He, the true light who has come into the world to overcome the darkness, is reflected in the world today in our good deeds, in our random acts of kindness for others. Just as his life was not focused on only his own needs, but the needs of others, so he calls us to be men and women for others. This is not just His wish. It is his command to us. This is our awesome responsibility.

This church does not exist to exalt a great teacher or an outstanding healer. We exist to glorify the Son of God—the light that has come into the world and overcome the darkness of sin and death. It is only as the light of Christ shines into our lives that enlighten the darkness around us that our lives have meaning and purpose.

So, when the next storm comes, as it surely will, don’t just sit and curse the darkness, but let your light shine by looking for the opportunity to help someone who is in greater need than yourself.