

“Out of the Saltshaker and into the World,” was the title of a book I remember reading when I was in high school. It was an invitation to consider Jesus’ words “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste what worth is it?”

The author, Becky Pippert, was inviting us to share our good news. The premise was this: if the church is the vessel to contain the salt, then we are invited to turn the dial to open the little holes at the top the salt shaker, turn it upside-down and shake it to spread the salt into the world. After all, that is what we are called to do: permeate the places we live, work and go to school with a flavour that makes people want more, and a quality of preserving the things that are good for us all.

We know how important sodium is, not only as an important element to maintain a delicate equilibrium in our physical bodies, but also as a



preservative, a flavour to make us want more, a melter of snow, a softener of water and more. But

salt in too much quantities, like in the Dead Sea, while incredibly buoyant, is also fatal to life. So it’s not like the sower spreading the seed generously everywhere, the salt is spread with intentional care and in modified amounts. We just want to flavour things a bit that people want more. We just want to shine enough light that people can see clearly.

This text comes immediately after Jesus offers what is described as the Beatitudes. The meek, the mourners, the persecuted, the justice seekers are all blessed. And because you are blessed, you have a responsibility to be light and salt in the world. But if you hide that light or lose that saltiness you have lost your key role of shining or flavouring the various layers and aspects of life with God’s presence. So get out and be a blessing to the people whom you meet.

It is summed up in the sentence for the season of Epiphany. They are the same words spoken to us at our baptism, “Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.”

So how do you do this? How do you be the salt and light in the world, to the extent that your

righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and pharisees? How do we “proclaim the mystery of God, not in lofty words or wisdom, but in weakness, fear and much trembling?”

Maybe it’s precisely that: the first thing is we show up and we come alongside the most vulnerable: the sick and the dying; the residents of Portage; the students in schools; residents of long term care homes; people at the community meal program; or groups learning about the historical legacy of indigenous peoples of Canada.

Like the the church historically, we also at St. John’s show up and support the arts, because we recognize that the arts and music move us and shape us in ways that the world needs to be moved and shaped.

We also show up in the corridors of the powerful in corporate board rooms, places of research in universities and in the health, legal, civic and financial sectors because these are places that shape our societal structures. And we show up in the retail and service sectors because we know that these are places where people are.

In all of these places, we are called to be a presence of salt and light that permeates the fabric of society to elevate it into a place that honours the dignity of every human being and recognizes the presence of God’s love in places it hasn’t been recognized before. That is what we promised to do at our baptism.

It is interesting that in the gospel of Matthew, the gospel is framed by blessings and woes. At the beginning of the gospel Jesus announces blessing, or favour, to the last and the least. At the end of the gospel Jesus offers a series of woes to those who do not recognize Jesus in the last and the least. Jesus says, “When you clothed me, fed me, visited me in prison, or comforted me when I was dying, then you did it to me.”

So if you want to encounter Jesus, get out of the saltshaker and into the world where people are longing for mercy, looking for hope, and needing to belong and announce to them the blessing of God, just as it was announced to Mary, the shepherds, the disciples in the upper room and to us: a peace that passes understanding. And thereby you will be blessed.