

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY- February 8, 2026

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

“This is my Son, my Beloved with whom I am well pleased” Matthew 3:17

Gospel: Matthew 5:13-20

[Jesus said:] 13 “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.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. 15 People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 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.

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. 18 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. 19 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. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Sermon:

Jesus—the Beloved in whom God is well pleased—lives on the fringes of society. It’s a good bet that the church has followed him there sometimes. In each generation we’re called to follow him there again.

Jesus grammar matters when he speaks to a gathering of everyday people who also live on the margins—“All you all”are *ALREADY* light in and for the world.”

No picking and choosing who might qualify. No stipulation about getting your act together.

Many who hear Jesus declare that they are light for the world more likely felt like they were invisible. Or worse, that they are targeted as prey for a greedy empire.

People who first hear Matthew's retelling of Jesus' words are displaced people. The occupiers have destroyed their centre of worship and locus of community life. In the Beatitudes and in this part of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks to those for whom the system either doesn't work, or it actively works against them. Jesus tells them *'you are seen, you are known, and you are loved...by God!'*

What's more....we aren't defined by the power brokers who seek to brand us as loyal subjects or target audiences with credit cards at the ready. Jesus announces God's rule and realm of justice and mercy is breaking through like pin points of light in a night sky. Except the light is here....as Jesus tells a crowd of everyday people—You...all of you ARE the light of the world.

Most of today's church around the world lives on the margins. In many places it always has. "On the margins" may well be exactly where we need to be because that's where "the beloved Son" chooses to live his life.

Some forty years ago, a woman from a church group I was part of returned from a mission trip to Central America. She met Christians who gathered in house churches and open air spaces. Anne recalls "I thought I was going as a missionary but these people, the poorest of the poor, were so generous and joyous. They made the Gospel real for me." Anne concluded places wealthy and powerful as North America are actually a mission field.

These days some who identify as Christian believe that God intends for them to be the primary if not the sole light bearers—you might have read about the "Seven Mountains of Dominion" or about the New Apostolic Order calling for Christians to occupy and control society's major institutions including media, courts, government, schools, and medicine. These so-called "Dominionists" take offense at the Beatitudes and ridicule anyone who strives to live by them as "woke" and "weak".

Clearly the agenda insisting that religion dominates society collides with the Beatitudes. Unexpectedly, if not palpably, such a clash connects Jesus' words

announcing that everyday people are light of the world to His warnings about people breaking commandments and teaching others to do the same.

We shine our light not by cranking up klieg lights and blasting them into peoples' faces. Instead as one writer about Good News Sharing, the Dutch scholar Stefan Paas expresses it “. . . only if people do not feel threatened by an institutional grasp for power by Christians will they feel free to appreciate what Christians have to tell.”

Jesus calls us out to the margins and we see God's light there. And as our baptism vows remind us, We let our light shine so others might see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven.