

THIS STEAK NEEDS SALT, BUT I CAN'T FIND WHERE IT IS

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NICKNAMES. MANY OF US HAVE THEM. IN MY LIFE I HAVE BEEN CALLED “STANLEY,” “KERMIT,” AND EVEN “LOUD-MOUTH BEETS” (WHICH STARTED OUT AS “BEETLE BAILEY”). NICKNAMES OF MY FRIENDS AND ACQUAINTANCES HAVE INCLUDED “CASEY,” “WHITEY,” “CHESTER,” AND “SWEET.”

JESUS USED SOME NICKNAMES, TOO. HE CALLED TWO DISCIPLES “SONS OF THUNDER” AND ANOTHER ONE “ROCK” (PETER). HE CALLED A WILEY KING, “FOX”.

AND HE CALLED THE BODY OF HIS BELOVED FRIENDS “SALT,” AND “LIGHT.”

THE BELOVED FRIENDS, OF COURSE, WERE NOT A SINGLE PERSON, BUT RATHER THE ENTIRE GROUP OF HIS DISCIPLES, FOLLOWERS AND STUDENTS – NOT ONLY IN THAT TIME, BUT IN ALL TIMES, UNTIL HE COMES AGAIN TO CLAIM THEM AND TAKE THEM HOME.

WE ... YOU AND I, IF YOU HAVE RECEIVED JESUS AS YOUR SAVOIR, LORD AND KING, ARE “THE SALT OF THE EARTH.” WE ARE “THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.”

SO, WHAT DOES THAT MEAN? WHAT ARE “SALT” AND “LIGHT”?

IN JESUS’ DAY, SALT WAS A PRESERVATIVE. IN THOSE DAYS BEFORE REFRIGERATORS, IT KEPT CERTAIN FOODS FROM SPOILING.

DID YOU EVER EAT FOOD THAT WAS STARTING TO SPOIL? THINK BACK TO THAT EXPERIENCE NOW, AND EVERYBODY LICK THEIR LIPS. ... NO?

SALT SLOWED DOWN THE DECAYING PROCESS. IT ALSO IMPROVED THE “ZEST” OF THE FOOD--THE FLAVOR, SO THAT THE FOOD WAS MORE OF A DELIGHT TO THE EATER, IN ADDITION TO NOT MAKING THEM SICK.

IN OUR DAY, SALT OF A DIFFERENT TYPE IS USED TO MELT ICE AND SNOW ON SIDEWALKS. IT KEEPS PEOPLE FROM SLIPPING, LOSING THEIR BALANCE, AND POSSIBLY FALLING AND INJURING THEMSELVES.

THAT IS WHAT SALT DOES. SALT PREVENTS ROT AND INJURY.

WHAT ABOUT LIGHT? WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE “THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD?”

WHAT DOES “LIGHT” DO? WHAT DOES ITS ABSENCE DO?

LIGHT REVEALS WHAT IS HIDDEN BY DARKNESS. IT REVEALS TRUTH THAT IS OTHERWISE BEYOND OUR ABILITY TO PERCEIVE: BOTH THINGS WE NEED TO BE AWARE OF TO CHART OUR PATH IN A HOUSE OR IN LIFE, AND THINGS WE NEED TO AVOID SO AS TO NOT END UP IN A PIT. (LUKE 6:39)

LIGHT SHOWS US THE WAY. IT KEEPS US FROM GETTING LOST OR FROM JUST STANDING STILL IN THE DARKNESS. IT LIFTS OUR GAZE, SO THAT WE CAN MOVE FORWARD. IT DRAWS US INTO LONG-TERM THINKING.

PEOPLE WHO HAVE NO LIGHT TEND TO AVOID THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE; THEIR FOCUS REMAINS IN THE PRESENT. THE BIBLE SAYS THAT PEOPLE WHO SLEEP, SLEEP AT NIGHT, AND THOSE WHO GET DRUNK, GET DRUNK AT NIGHT. BOTH OF THESE ACTIVITIES HAPPEN IN THE DARKNESS. BUT WE ARE NOT CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT. WE ARE CHILDREN OF THE DAY. AT NIGHT, PEOPLE TEND TO EITHER HIDE IN THE DARKNESS OR STICK CLOSE TO THEIR HOMES.

BUT, WHEN THE SUN COMES UP, PEOPLE VENTURE OUT. THEY WORK. THEY TRAVEL. THEY INVEST IN A LARGER WORLD THAN JUST WHAT IS SAFE AT NIGHT IN THE DARKNESS.

WE SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE ONCE WE HAVE LIGHT’S ILLUMINATION. WHERE WE NEED TO GO, WHAT OUR PURPOSE IS, OUR REASON FOR BEING HERE, AND FROM WHENCE WE CAME – WE CATCH GLIMPSES OF THE ONE WHO PLANNED OUR DAYS FROM OUR MOTHER’S WOMB.

LIGHT SHOWS US THE ROAD AHEAD. IT ENABLES US TO TAKE THE RIGHT ROUTE. AND IT REVEALS AND WARNS US OF OBSTACLES AND DANGERS TO AVOID. (PSALMS 119:105 SAYS, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.”)

IMAGINE TRYING TO TAKE A ROAD TRIP IF YOUR CAR’S HEADLIGHTS DIDN’T WORK. YOUR PATH WOULD BE HIDDEN. NOW ADD THAT NONE OF THE ROADSIGNS ALONG THE WAY WERE LIT AT NIGHT. YOU MIGHT EITHER END UP IN UP POUGHKEEPSIE – OR IN THE DTICH.

“LIGHT” CAN BE A METAPHOR FOR UNDERSTANDING, WISDOM, OR INSIGHT.

TO “SEE THE LIGHT” MEANS TO GAIN A NEW FOCUS ON WHAT IS ACTUALLY REAL...TO PERCEIVE WITH A NEW ACCURACY, TO GRASP WITH TRUTH AND WISDOM, TO BE ABLE TO REALIGN ONE’S LIFE AND TRAJECTORY MORE IN KEEPING WITH THE WAY THINGS REALLY ARE.

RECALL THE OLD “STAR TREK” SHOW. (SOUND EFFECTS). OHURA SAYS “CAPTAIN! WE AT LAST HAVE A BEAD ON ALPHA CENTORY.” KIRK: “ITS OVER THERE? BUT I ALWAYS

THOUGHT IT WAS OVER THERE!” SPOCK: “WHAT YOU THOUGHT BEFORE IS NOW ILLOGICAL, CAPTAIN – NEW INFORMATION CLEARLY SAYS THAT IT IS OVER THERE!” Kirk: “MR. SULU, REALIGN OUR TRAJECTORY BASED ON THE NEW EVIDENCE REGARDING ALPHA CENTURY!”

“LIGHT” TELLS US WHERE TO FOCUS OUR ATTENTION – SUCH AS WHERE TO LOOK WHEN AT A DRIVE-IN THEATER (BOY, I AM DATING MYSELF WITH THAT ONE)!

THE SUN GOES DOWN. YOU HAVE PARKED IN YOUR SPOT. THE WHOLE PLACE FADES INTO DARKNESS. BUT – WHEN THAT BIG SCREEN LIGHTS UP, YOU KNOW EXACTLY WHERE TO FOCUS YOUR ATTENTION – NOT ON THE CONCESSION STAND, NOT ON THE CARS DRIVING BY ON THE NEARBY FREEWAY, BUT ON THE SCREEN ... BECAUSE THAT IS WHERE THE SHOW YOU PAID TO SEE IS GOING TO BE.

THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT LIGHT CONQUERS DARKNESS ... HOWEVER, IT ALSO SAYS WE MUST USE THE LIGHT AND KEEP FOLLOWING ITS LEAD, BECAUSE THE DARKNESS DOES NOT STAY STILL AND CAN CATCH BACK UP WITH US.

JESUS SAID, “Walk while you have the Light, that darkness may not overtake you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.” (John 12:35b). WE HAVE RESPONSIBILITY TO SEEK AND FOLLOW LIGHT, OR DARKNESS CAN OVERTAKE US AND THE BENEFIT OF THE LIGHT BE WASTED.

SOOOO. IF WE ARE TO BE “SALT” OF THE EARTH AND “LIGHT” TO THE WORLD, WHERE DO WE START? WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW?

FIRSTLY, WE OURSELVES ARE NOT THE LIGHT SOURCE. BY OURSELVES, WE DO NOT HAVE ABILITY TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. JESUS WARNS US, “APART FROM ME, YOU CAN DO NOTHING.” (JOHN 15:5)

WE ARE NOT THE SOURCE OF LIGHT, WE ARE REFLECTORS OF THE LIGHT.

THE STORY OF THE SOURCE OF LIGHT COMES FROM THE VERY FIRST SECTION OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN, THE “DISCIPLE WHO JESUS LOVED.” LISTEN AFRESH AS I READ IT TO YOU:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being by Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.” (John 1:1-5)

DO YOU SEE THE PATTERN THUS FAR? JESUS CHRIST, THE SON OF GOD, DIDN'T BEGIN AT BETHLEHEM. JESUS WAS THERE AT THE BEGINNING. HE PARTICIPATED FULLY IN THE BEGINNING OF ALL THINGS. HE, LIKE THE FATHER, WAS LIFE – WAS THE SOURCE AND MESSENGER OF LIFE. AND THIS LIFE THAT HE WAS, WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN.”

“... There was the true Light, which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and those who were His own” (the Jews, the people God had prepared for Him) “did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God...” (John 1:9-12a).

“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14) “No man has seen God at any time; the only begotten God [Jesus Christ], Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.” (John 1:18).

THAT’S IT. JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. HE CAME INTO THE WORLD TO ILLUMINATE IT WITH THE TRUTH. CHRIST IS THE SOURCE OF LIFE. THE WORLD WAS WITHOUT LIFE. TURNING TO GOD AND RECEIVING JESUS AS SAVOIR AND LORD RECONNECTED PEOPLE TO THE LIFE SOURCE. AND THIS REALITY WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN.

AND GOD PUT THIS REALITY INTO FLESH AND BLOOD IN JESUS SO THAT, AS A HUMAN REACHING OUT TO HUMANS, CHRIST COULD “EXPLAIN” TO HUMANS WHAT GOD WAS ACTUALLY LIKE.

JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. JESUS BECAME FLESH TO EXPLAIN GOD. BUT JESUS IN THE FLESH IS NO LONGER HERE.

HE WAS CRUCIFIED. HE ROSE AGAIN. HE ASCENDED IN HIS PHYSICAL BODY BACK INTO HEAVEN. HE SITS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD, INTERCEDING FOR US.

HOWEVER, IN SPIRIT, JESUS STILL IS HERE. HE CAME IN SPIRIT TO INDWELL EACH OF US WHO HAS “RECEIVED HIM” AND WHO BELIEVES.

SO, THE PHYSICAL BODY OF JESUS IS IN HEAVEN. THE FLESH OF THE WORD BECAME FLESH IS NOT HERE. BUT THE SPIRIT OF THAT SAME JESUS – THE SOURCE OF THE LIGHT – IS HERE. HE’S IN OUR PHYSICAL BODIES.

JESUS STILL WANTS TO “EXPLAIN GOD” TO PEOPLE WHO DO NOT YET KNOW HIM. BUT HE “EXPLAINS GOD” TO THEM THROUGH THOSE PHYSICALLY HERE ON EARTH IN THE PRESENT DAY. AND GUESS WHO THAT IS?

YOU AND I.

DO YOU FEEL UNWORTHY? DO YOU FEEL INADEQUATE FOR SUCH A TASK? DO YOU NOT KNOW WHAT TO SAY? ARE YOU AFRAID YOUR SINS AND YOUR HUMAN FRAILNESS WILL DISQUALIFY YOU FROM BEING A LIGHT-BEARER IN HIS NAME?

REMEMBER, WE ARE NOT THE SOURCE OF THE LIGHT. HE IS. WE ARE MERELY THE VEHICLE THROUGH WHICH THE LIGHT SHINES.

WE ARE THE LIGHT HOUSES.

IT IS JESUS' JOB TO SHINE THE LIGHT. IT IS JUST OUR JOB TO DESIRE TO KEEP THE GLASS CLEAN THROUGH WHICH HE SHINES IT.

WE ARE TECHNICALLY NOT THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

JESUS TRUTH IS WHAT KEEP THE WORLD FROM SPOILING.

BUT HE NEEDS A VEHICLE TO DO IT.

WE ARE THE "SALT BAGS" THAT HOLD THE SALT OF THE EARTH.

JESUS DOES THE WORK; OUR JOB IS TO BE WILLING TO LOOSEN THE DRAWSTRINGS OF THE BAGS AND LET THE SALT OUT TO DO ITS WORK.

SUS PHYSICALLY IS BACK WITH THE FATHER IN HEAVEN. HE IS WITH US IN HIS SPIRIT, BUT THE WORLD CANNOT SEE THE SPIRIT OR KNOW HIM (JOHN 14:17).

SO, WHAT IS A PERSON TO DO? THE ONE WHO CAME TO "EXPLAIN THE FATHER" TO A LOST AND SUSPICIOUS WORLD (REFERENCE) HAS LEFT THE SCENE.

SO, WHO IS GOING TO DO IT?

WE ARE.

WE ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH. WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.

OH, THE LIGHT HASN'T CHANGED. IT IS STILL THE SAME. IT IS STILL JESUS, AND JESUS ONLY.

BUT WE ARE THE PHYSICAL ONES, STILL IN THE WORLD. WE ARE THE ONES WHO NEED TO “EXPLAIN” THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD, ABOUT JESUS CHRIST, ABOUT WHAT REALLY IS “REALITY” TO A SUSPICIOUS WORLD.

JESUS IS STILL THE LIGHT. BUT WE ARE LIGHT HOUSES. WE BEAR HIS SPIRIT, AND WE ARE THE WINDOWS INTO THE WORLD THROUGH HE CAN SHINE HIS LIGHT AND ILLUMINE THE WORLD.

AND WE ARE THE SALT, THE BAGS OF SALT FOR IT TO BE APPLIED, TO SLOW DOWN THE ROT OF THE WORLD, TO KEEP IT FROM SPOILING, TO BUY MORE TIME AND HOLD OFF THE WORLD REACHING THE POINT THAT GOD MUST JUDGE ITS SIN AND DESTROY IT...

...TO BUY MORE TIME SO THE LIGHT CAN SHINE A LITTLE LONGER BEFORE THE TIME RUNS OUT.

WE ARE THE LIGHT HOUSES. WE ARE THE BAGS OF SALT.

TO THE WORLD. TO MY WORLD. TO YOUR WORLD. TO EACH OF YOUR WORLDS.

WE ARE LIGHT IN FRAGILE PACKAGES. BUT WE HAVE THIS PROMISE “If we walk in the Light, as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7).

LET US PRAY.