

2023-02-05 ... 8am Communion Sermon ... Revd Canon Judy Hunt

Isaiah 58: 1 – 9a; Matthew 5: 13 – 20

'Salt, Light and restoration'

Prayer ...

You may have seen a plaque in someone's house that says: *'If it's open, close it. If it's empty, fill it. If it's dirty, clean it. If it's sad, love it.'*

Through Isaiah, God calls his people to restore, to put right what is wrong and Jesus also says to us: **'that's your job!'** The readings from Isaiah and from Matthew both describe how we are called to live in the world in a way that will shine God's light into dark places in order to make a difference. Isaiah goes so far as to suggest that by our practical care for others we can rebuild our ruins and restore our streets. After 2,800 years we can still see damage in areas of our societies, and we know which 'streets' need to be restored, which areas are blighted by poverty, neglect and crime.

During Covid, some streets gained a sense of community by helping each other. Others have been pulled apart by health and economic pressures. Which is your 'street' – your area – that needs to be restored? Your street, your area, the place where you spend time, might be your family, church, neighbourhood, online circle of friends. What can you make a start on restoring or repairing?

Dealing with injustice and oppression points to our call to challenge authorities, as Isaiah knew well. His warnings about turning away our own flesh and blood, or using a pointing finger or malicious talk strike closer to home. How can we sprinkle a little salt to improve life, or shed light into a dark situation close to us? We might think we are but one very small light to make a difference to the world, but one torch makes all the difference in the darkness of a power cut. You don't always have to be the source of the light: a few visible reflective strips on a jacket can save lives. And when many small lights are brought together they make a strong beacon!

And remember that a torch needs to be energised and switched on, and a candle needs lighting – action is required to make something happen. Salt has to be sprinkled from its container. And not too much in one go! No amount of instructions on the label or box will achieve anything by itself with a torch, or a candle or a container of salt. We are called to take action, to restore what has fallen into brokenness, to repair relationships, to 'rise in the darkness'.

Adapted from [Explore and respond \(rootsontheweb.com\)](https://www.rootsontheweb.com)