

The title for today's message is: **Don't Forget the Salt**

John said: ***“Teacher, we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.”***

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray: Dear Heavenly Father, you sent you Son into our world to seek the lost and to save those who dwell in a land of darkness and despair. Through the power of your Holy Spirit, stir in us compassion and concern for those who think that they are beyond hope and your saving grace. Protect and keep each of us from the snares of hell, and restore in us a sense of value and potential for our lives and for the growth of your church. This we ask, in Christ's holy name. Amen.

Several years ago Rush Limbaugh made a comment that stirred the pots of sports talk and the national media when he said that.

Donovan McNabb was over-rated because the media wanted black quarterbacks to succeed.

After the statement was made, talk shows were lighting up with comments, and the national news media was having a feeding frenzy.

ESPN was also criticized for even bringing Rush into the program. “They should have known what they were getting,” many said.

They were looking for someone to stir the pot and add some controversy, and they got it - more than they wanted.

On the Washburn Campus a statue was put up called “Holier than Thou.” It’s the portrayal of a Catholic Priest who looks like he’s three sheets to the wind.

The quote below it ridicules the priests who the artist had to confess to, who were also molesting children.

This statue has also caused a wave of criticism and controversy on campus.

According to the panel that accepted the statue, it was meant to “generate discussion.” If that was it’s goal, it definitely was met.

There are some people that love controversy you know, to stir the pot. Whereas most people don’t like to argue, yet you’ve always got some people who love to say things, or do things just to get people worked up.

You might say that they like to add some salt to a bland conversation. Sometimes it is obnoxious and out of line.

But sometimes a seemingly radical statement can serve to open people’s minds to think outside the box, or at least get them to defend what they disagree with.

Wouldn’t you say that in a good sense, Jesus was one of those people? When He spoke, people didn’t fall asleep.

They would either end up steaming mad, warm and fuzzy, or at the very least perplexed.

Look, Jesus had an extreme way of saying things that caused divisions and making people angry or happy.

Here, Jesus does the same thing in today's text, by speaking in an extreme manner about several things.

So Jesus is saying to all of us here today, "Don't Forget the Salt" Just last week we learned about how the disciples were arguing about who was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

They were all wrapped up in who could do the greatest things to get the greatest rewards on Judgment Day.

It really came down to a competition of sorts, you know, who could do the most and the greatest things.

You can tell how the disciples were letting their quest for greatness effect the way that they got along with one another and also how they treated other Christians in a bad way.

***"Teacher," said John, "we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."***

Why did the disciples stop the man driving out demons? He wasn't doing anything wrong, and he wasn't misusing Jesus' name.

Yet, according to John, they told the man to stop, simply because the man ***"Wasn't one of them"***.

Now, In light of their previous argument you can't help but assume that they really stopped him because they wanted the glory for themselves.

They didn't want this man or any other man for that matter to have the same powers that they had been given.

Therefore they found a reason to stop him. It's much like the story of young Joshua.

When he, Joshua heard that other people were prophesying besides Moses, he was panicked about it and said, ***“Moses, my lord, stop them!”***

Even though there was nothing wrong with what they were doing, he wanted them to stop, because he wanted Moses to have all of the prophesying power.

These reactions revealed an ungodly and selfish jealousy, that wanted to have a monopoly on doing recognizable things.

This same sin has been repeated time and again throughout the centuries. You would think that two people trying to chase out demons would welcome the help.

But what happens? One starts having more “success” or “recognition,” and the other becomes jealous.

It even happened with John’s disciples regarding Jesus. Then, instead of rejoicing over their success, the devil waltz’s right in.

He quickly whispers in the ear of the one with less success and says; “you could do better than that! He’s only more successful because he’s telling the people what they want to hear.”

Sadly we can see this competition at the congregational level. When lay members become more involved in the church.

You have jealousy over things like, who gets elected as elder or who sings the solos or who leads the choir.

One can become so accustomed to leading a congregation, that they subconsciously don’t want anyone else to make the decisions.

So if they don't get their way, they throw a little tantrum. Instead of helping the one elected.

The one who feels rejected does everything he or she can do to make the leader's job miserable, or even a failure.

He or she complains about the way the leader is doing his or her job, looking for any excuse to stop the other from using his or her gifts.

Now, if left unchecked it can become a back-biting civil war in the very battle lines that are supposed to be safe and united.

It looks as if two people see a demon in the distance, but both of them want to get the glory of slaying it.

So one says, "let's use a song to slay him!" Then the other speaks out and says; "don't be stupid! Let's use this Bible passage instead!"

Before they know it, they get in an argument over who should chase which demons, and how he should be chased.

And meanwhile the devil just keeps doing his work, and you can bet he sits there and laughs.

But what was Jesus mainly concerned about here? His Name. That's right, as long as they were doing miracles in His name, they couldn't turn around and degrade Jesus reputation.

So as long as it was glorifying His name, there was no reason to stop them..

And ultimately, God would give rewards for even giving someone a cup of water in His name.

Are they going to hinder that too? So don't worry about who is chasing out demons, as long as it's being done in Jesus' name.

So what's the lesson here? As long as Jesus' name is being glorified, more than one person can serve in the same way, and with different people.

Look, God can use other people besides us to serve, and we don't all need to serve in the same way.

So, be careful not to flatter yourself and think that other people can't do just as good a job as you can.

My friends, it's really a lesson in humility, and yes, it stings a bit, just like salt in an open wound.

You see, in this big race for greatness, the disciples were losing their salt. They were forgetting that even though they were chasing out demons.

They still needed to remember what they themselves really deserved. They needed to keep the fire of hell burning in front of them.

So to remember what they deserved, and why they needed forgiveness of their sins and salvation.

So Jesus said, ***Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.***” Just don't forget the salt.

Amen.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.