

The title for today's message is; **Why am I a Christian!**

Jesus said; ***"You're the ones who are the salt of the earth. If the salt becomes dull, how can it be made salty again?"***

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

Many people have heard of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. A sermon which speaks of salt and light.

No wonder people say good things about it. But Jesus did not speak these words to people in general.

In fact, the world loves to take words and expressions from Jesus' message here and use them for other purposes, often in ways that contradict Jesus.

They spin his words to advance their own agendas, dressing up their schemes in Christian-looking costumes.

For whom, then, did Jesus speak this sermon? The Bible clearly tells us. At the beginning of our text that Jesus was speaking to his disciples.

And today He's speaking to you and me. So the Sermon on the Mount assumes the hearers already know God's plan of salvation.

And believes in Jesus as their Savior from sin and death. It does not describe God's saving plan or Jesus' mission in any detail.

But that's not the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus speaks these words to his disciples in order to describe the life of a disciple.

As well as your life as a Christian, a follower of Jesus, an imitator of him, a little Christ, if you will.

It answers questions like these: Now that Jesus has saved me from death, how am I to live?

Now that he has freed me from slavery to sin, how do I serve him? Now that he has graciously given me God's forgiveness and eternal life, how can I thank him rightly?

Answers to these and similar questions fill the Sermon on the Mount, much more than we can cover today.

But today we want to start with a very basic question for each one of us to ask ourselves: Why am I a Christian?

Yes, Why are we to listen to his words and put them into practice just as his first disciples did? Why am I a Christian?

What's the wrong reason to think you're a Christian? Now, some people have a hard time turning down a good deal.

Buy one jar of jelly and get the second free. We think hey, if I buy ten, I get ten free. If I buy twenty, I'll get twenty free and so on.

So some think that's the reason to be a Christian. If I sin once, Jesus forgives me. If I sin twenty times, well Jesus forgives me.

So why not fill up my life with sinning? Who cares if I do right or wrong? I'm forgiven.

Even though such a blatant rejection for God's law strikes us as wrong, how often aren't we tempted to neglect God's law, at least a part of it.

Some think if we convince ourselves it's a minor part, one of the least of the commandments? "Why keep struggling against this sin?"

I pray that is not why you are a Christian. If that kind of character controls your heart and mind, you are an enemy of Christ not a disciple.

Jesus says. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets".

Here Jesus does correct the false interpretations of God's law taught by many of the religious leaders of his time and ours.

But he wasn't at all abolishing the law. He isn't adding to it either. His mission was not to change old rules or make new ones.

What, then was Jesus' mission? Again he tells us, *"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them."*

Yes! Jesus fulfilled the law. He kept every legal requirement that God's justice rightly demands from all people.

He dotted every "i" and crossing every "t" of the law. And he fulfilled the prophets.

Every prophecy concerning the Messiah and pictured in the Old Testament ceremonies finds fulfillment in Jesus.

Every detail foretold about his first coming, his birth, life, ministry, miracles, suffering, sacrifice, death, resurrection, and ascension, every detail was completed.

And what's still to be fulfilled concerning his Second Coming and that Last Judgment, he will fully accomplish when the sky above and earth below pass away.

"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished".

That was his mission: to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. And that's why we are a Christian, because Jesus has fulfilled his mission.

If Jesus had broken even one of the least of the commandments, you and I would be damned. For our righteousness cannot stand before God.

Jesus brings that home as he parades out the model citizens and religious leaders of his day and says;

"I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven".

And you know what the alternative is. Only if you're better than the best, only if you have a spotless record before God.

Who exposes the thoughts and attitudes of the heart, only if your righteousness is flawless as perfect and holy as God himself.

And only then are you part of God's kingdom, only then are you a Christian. We don't find that righteousness in ourselves, do we?

We confess with Isaiah in chapter 64, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags".

Therefore we cannot stand before God. Yet we hunger and thirst for a righteousness that comes from outside of ourselves, which only God can give.

How our soul hunger for a perfect righteousness that stands before God's judgment seat and hears the verdict: "Not guilty!"

How our hearts yearn for that righteousness, which all our labors, all our efforts. Which all the riches and advancements of the world cannot gain for us.

That's the righteousness that only Jesus has attained, for he alone has fulfilled the Law, His righteousness stands before God, spotless, blameless, perfect.

His righteousness already has God's verdict of not guilty. For that is what his resurrection from the dead declares.

Look Christ's righteousness is yours and that's why you are a Christian. That's the only way anyone could ever truly be a Christian.

Always remember our purpose as a Christian is to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world.

The world does not like our testimony, for salt has a bite. But we dare not blend in, compromising the testimony of Jesus.

When salt blends in, it's no longer salty. Then what's it good for? It would have been better if we had never been a Christian.

Jesus said; *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

But your not only the salt, your also the light of the world. Like everyone else we too once lived in darkness under the shadow of death.

But the one, genuine Light came into the world. He shown into our dark hearts, and through the water and word of baptism he ignited the lamp of your heart.

Yes, water lit the light in you. What a miracle! Together with our fellow Christians in the Church we shine out into this dark world like a city on a hill.

Inviting those who are still lost in the darkness of unbelief and spiritual ignorance. So let your light shine brightly.

But understand what that means. This is not some sort of inborn or natural light that people imagine.

So many think they let their light shine by spotlighting their talents, accomplishments, successes.

Others put a spin on it, thinking it simply means to do good whether you're thanked for it or not. None of this is listening to all that Jesus says here.

Jesus said; *let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

It's a life that places his word and worship at the top of our priorities so that others can see where our hope and strength comes from.

And a life that supports the spreading of his word because Jesus is the only Savior for sinners.

As you shine out with those kinds of good deeds, then others will realize that your acts of kindness and love are also reflecting the light of Jesus.

And only his light shining through you can bring them to praise your Father in heaven.

What a mission for you and me to carry out! What an answer to the question: Why am I a Christian!

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.