

Our reading from the Gospel of Matthew picks up from where we left off last week. After Jesus tells them about the blessing. He continues with his teaching. I particularly love the translation of this passage from the Message. “Let me tell you why you are here. You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You’ve lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage. Here’s another way to put it: You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colours of this world. God is not a secret to be kept. We’re going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don’t think I’m going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I’m putting you on a light stand. Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on the light stand— shine!” (Matthew 5:13 – 16) Isn’t that a wonderful way of saying what we are about as a people of faith? We are the seasoning that brings out the God-flavours of this earth. We are the light that brings out God-colours of this world.

This is not some future promise or hope of something to come, it is present. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. You are the salt of the earth – right now. Present tense. Dr. David Lose in his weekly reflections “In the Meantime” writes, “Once people believe that they are salt and light – not simply becoming or hoping to be but actually are—then you can encourage them to continue to be salt and light, letting their light shine so that people will see their good works and give thanksgiving and glory to God.”

I think right now we need to bring out the God-flavours and God-colours of this world that we can get. I, like many of you, woke on Monday morning to hear the news of 6 people murdered and many more injured as they prayed in their mosque. It was terrifying. I like to think I live in a country where this wouldn’t happen. But it did. As the week unfolded we learned that this terrible attack was motivated by racism.

Something else also happened this week. Something that reminded me of the God-flavours and God-colours that we sorely need. People from across this country sent letters of support and began organizing. Our Moderator, The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell in her letter to our Muslim Brothers and Sisters writes, “The heinous violent act and other recent attacks targeting Muslims in Quebec and elsewhere are designed to instil fear and divisions within and between our

communities. We will not let this happen. The United Church of Canada stands with our Muslim neighbours. We share your grief, as we share your determination to stop the forces of that that seek to divide and destroy us. ... May the Creator, Allah, God, who gives our common humanity, give us the strength and will to walk in unity and love in these troubled times.”

All week long in communities across this country have stood up and said no to hatred and violence. People of all faiths gathered to support and surround the Mosques with love and prayers. Right here in St. John’s hundreds of people gathered to surround the Mosque on Logy Bay Road on Friday. It was called Human shield. The crowd included religious leaders, Politicians, citizens, one teacher took her class, children, seniors and teens. Woven through all the words was the need to let love guide us not hatred.

The words that stood out for me, came from the Imam who gave the sermon on Friday. He said something like – “we have taken precautions; we’ve increased security and spoken with the Royal Newfoundland Constabulary. It is a time to be vigilant but not fearful. We still will welcome people to our community. There will be love not hatred. There will hope be hope not fear.” Friday marks the beginning of what needs to be an ongoing dialogue of friendship between our communities. It is the beginning of sharing the God-flavours and God-colours in our broken world.

Jesus says, “Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16) Today we gather at the table with our brothers and sisters to be fed with gifts of bread and wine. This spiritual food nourishes our bodies and souls so that we can go into the world and be the salt that brings out the God-flavours of the earth and the light that brings out the God colours of this world. May your salt and light burn brightly this week. Amen.