

Matins at LTS (27th July 2015): Mt.5:13-16 NIV

Dear friends:

A king had 3 sons. When it came to handing over to one of these as his successor, he gave them the task of filling the royal reception hall with something of their own choosing – filling it to the brim and right up to the beams of the roof. It was supposed to show their innovation skills and entrepreneurial abilities. They each had one month for this task of filling this colosseum. The eldest started off. He worked hard at getting the enormous palatial gallery filled with corn. Day and night the carts rolled in from all the corners of the kingdom, offloading their precious bounty through the widened gates of the palace. After 30 days and an tremendous effort of infrastructure and managerial expertise the huge space was filled about half-way. Now it was the 2nd son's chance. After clearing out the corn, he decided to flood the space with olive oil. The windows were sealed, the wide entry ways too and the oil was poured in through gigantic spillways through the gable. Well, although most olive barons and wealthy traders of the royal cities gave him resounding support, the palatial chamber was but filled to about one third after another month had passed. Well, things were clearly going in favour of the eldest prince. Still there was the youngest one left. But instead of going on a frantic mission, he just seemed to be going about his normal routine of leisure with his friends and companions in the beautiful parks and royal fields and surrounding woods. Everybody thought he had already given up any hopes of contesting the royal throne and fatherly inheritance. Every question in that direction was but deflected with friendly smiles, leaving the inquisitives with inconclusive shrugging of shoulders or shaking of the head. Then the final day came. Nothing seemed done. Still the youngest prince summoned his father – the king – and all his advisors and royal staff to the palatial hall just before sunset. He had something to show them. When all were seated and king and queen were seated on the throne and darkness was falling fast, the youngest prince resisted the royal servants, who wanted to light up the palace – and so they were all seated in darkness. The curtains were drawn and it was pitch-black. No light. Not even the rich jewellery of the nobility shone. The people were getting impatient. There was murmuring all around. Then you heard footsteps and the striking of a match. In the glow of the flame, the youngest prince was visible in the centre of the hall. He held the match to a torch and that started burning brightly. Suddenly the entire hall was illumined by that flaming light in the centre. "Father," the youngest prince exclaimed: "You gave us the task of filling up this hall in the course of one month! My brothers failed with corn and olive oil, yet now you see it is filled to the very corners and highest torrents of this your palatial space." He had triumphed by filling the hall with light in but a few seconds.

In today's reading Jesus says to his disciples during the sermon on the Mount: "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." The task is clear: Let your light shine in this world, that your Father in heaven is glorified. The question remains: How is this to happen? How is this done?

When Ghandi started off his program of non-violent protests against British rule on the Indian sub-continent, he went on the so-called "Saltmarch" or Dandi March (Salt Satyagraha).

It began on 12 March 1930 and was an important part of the Indian independence movement. Mahatma Gandhi led the Dandi march from his base, Sabarmati Ashram near Ahmedabad, to the coastal village of Dandi, located at a small town called Navsari, in the state of Gujarat. As he continued on this 24-day, 240-

mile (390 km) march to Dandi to produce salt without paying the tax, growing numbers of Indians joined him along the way. When Gandhi broke the salt laws at 6:30 am on 6 April 1930, it sparked large scale acts of civil disobedience against the British Raj salt laws by millions of Indians. The campaign had a significant effect on changing world and British attitude towards Indian independence and caused large numbers of Indians to join the fight for the first time. Over 80,000 Indians were jailed as a result of the Salt Satyagraha. However, it failed to result in major concessions from the British. Non-violence – a man in a loin-cloth and the glasses of a scholar – toppled British rule in India. This great movement however only affected India really.

Our Lord starts off today's reading with the words: "You are the salt of the earth." The Jews were but a tiny drop in the big pool of nations. Yet they were God's holy people and from them the light of the gospel was to shine forth into the wide, open spaces of pagan darkness and shadows of sin and death. (Benedictus Pg 226 v6)

Still the Queen of Sheba came to hear the wisdom of king Solomon, which had spread even to that far off place in Africa. So also the treasurer of Candace came to Jerusalem to visit the holy temple, get to know true wisdom and was converted to the true and saving faith in Jesus Christ and baptized there in the wilderness by St.Philip. Yes at pinnacle of time, when Jesus – the saviour of the world – was born, wise men from the East arrived – these stargazers, astronomers, Magoi – and beheld the fulfilment of God's promises of old – not just that of the bright star in the sky, but the true light of the world: They fell down at the manger and worshipped the king, glorified and praised him, who is the redeemer of the world. The big highlights of the church calendar - the liturgical lampstands – all reflect the light of our Lord and our God:

- Christmas: Light shines bright in dark night!
- Easter: Morning breaks, the night is past. Death's dark grave is open, IX is risen – the new creation starts, a new morning and fresh start – God's new beginning.
- Pentecost: The Holy Spirit illumines first the hiding apostles, brings them out of the closet and into the open of the glorious confession of the true gospel story of Christ's victorious resurrection and glorious reign. 3,000 hearers are converted and come to the saving faith in the true gospel of our Lord IX.

This story has continued. The entire world has never been the same again. IX – the true light – has lit up the face of the world so that it's become a far better place ever since and it's still going to get better still – just wait and see, when Jesus returns on glory. The torch bearers are still carrying his light out to the nations – be it in the hidden places in Congo, in the forbidden places amongst the Muslims or in dark prison camps of N.Korea. His light

brings hope in all darkness, hope of salvation and redemption in eternity: A new heaven and new earth in which righteousness dwell.

You are light of the world. Don't look so much on your small number, your little power, your dwindling faith even. Remember rather that a little faith like a mustard seed can move mountains. And remember him, who says: "I'll not snuff out the smouldering wick, nor break off the broken reed." Much like the story of the little, unpretentious and quite insignificant Hobbits. Such a great task and mission was entrusted into their little hands and with the help of their friends it was accomplished after great toil and endurance. Our friend, brother, physician, saviour, God and Lord Jesus Christ is with us all the days of the world – and all power and authority have been entrusted to him. He says: "*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*" (Presence/Future, Already and not yet) Mostly you don't notice the salt, until it's not there. Porridge without just a little bit of salt is just dismal. A world without the Christian witness/fait h is lost. Great promise/responsibility: (cf Rom 10:14-15 NIV)

Our Lord first asked this weighty question: "*But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again?*" Our Lord draws the conclusion: *It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.* (Mat 5:13f)

We talk a lot about load shedding. Much worse than loosing some hours of electricity – much worse than job shedding, financial loss etc – is the loss of Christian witness and this missionary light due to discrimination, persecution and other terrible signs of these bad, latter days – not only in Syria by Islamic state, not only in Nigeria by Boko Haram, but also in those places where due to false accommodation and neutralization the salt is loosing its saltiness, Christians are just like the rest – there's no difference between good and evil, law and gospel, night and day, man and women, truth and lie, war and peace. It's only in the dark of night, when you can't distinguish colours anymore: "*Nachts sind alle Katzen grau!*"

Thank God through IX that he is the light of the world and that he has promised to be with us all the days of this world with his light, love, grace and mercy. Amen.