

Rev. Dr. Yugo Suzuki's Sermon

2/6/2011 **You Are the Salt of the Earth, the Light of the World.**

Matthew 5: 13-16

Jesus said to his followers, "You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world." The metaphor of a pinch of salt and a lamp on a stand clarifies for us the purpose of JAUC.

After the collapse of the Kingdom of David and Solomon, the Jews in Palestine had suffered under the oppressive rules of Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, Greece, and then most recently Rome.

Despair and meaninglessness pervaded the entire nation. With it the people of Israel lost the purpose of life. The crowd who came to Jesus wanted to hear him speak about this particular question: what human life was all about.

Jesus gave them a clear answer. "The purpose of life is to be the salt of the earth." Salt, of course, was the most important seasoning. A pinch of salt lent flavor to food. The meaning of Jesus' utterance is clear. "You are to bring God's flavor to the world."

Jesus continued his metaphor. "The purpose of life is to be the light of the world." Its meaning is clear. "You are here to make God's work visible. You are to make God's love and compassion as public as a city on a hill. You are light bearers."

Then Jesus concluded, "I am putting you on a light stand. So shine! Shine in the midst of darkness. Reflect my light. Be instruments of unity in God in the world where estrangement and separation prevail."

2000 years later, human beings are still not clear as to what they should live for. A Japanese poet described this sorry situation this way.

'I don't know what I live for. I often ask myself, "What do I live for? For women? For good food? For prestige?" Then my soul cries out wildly, "No, no, neither this nor that. Neither this nor that.'

It is to such a world as this that JAUC is called to bring the flavor of God. It is in such a world as this that we are to make God's work visible.

That is to say, JAUC is called to be a community of the faithful where the passion for unity is real, where compassion and mutual care are visible, and where energy and courage to live beyond business as usual embrace all of its members.

Is it too idealistic? Is it too much for us? Well, Jesus does not think so.

His expectation for his followers 2000 years ago is the same today: to bring God's flavor in the world, and to reflect God's light here and now.

This is the aim and purpose of our life. This is the aim and purpose of JAUC. Jesus continues to persuade us. He never gives up on us, even us. Herein lies our joy and hope.

Thanks be to God.