

We daily hear what we must do to save the earth, and much of that is practical stewardship for God's creation, but do we really have it in our power to save something as incredibly diverse and complicated as Planet Earth? So what can we really "save?" What is in our hands and what is in God's? Why assume we can control what might be beyond control?

St. Paul arrived in Corinth and announced there he brought no human wisdom or power, and instead shared only the message of Christ crucified for the world. He acknowledged only Jesus had the power to save.

Why assume we can control seasons and weather or life itself but claim impotence when it comes to the selfishness that tears apart families and communities and stunts the future of our children? We argue about whose rights must be protected by but ignore millions who die every year without knowing as Savior.

More appropriate for people of faith is a healthy concern for "stewardship and love of ALL creation" (not just for water and animals, but people as well – even those we don't like.) And not just for what is fashionable at the moment, but for every single person or thing that God has created!

One day a hungry stranger came into a village and went door to door asking if he could buy some food. No one would help him. He sat by the edge of town and cried out, "why will no one help me with food when you have all these wonderful stones lying around. I will make enough stone soup to feed all of you!" There was confusion, until one woman ran home and brought her best soup kettle. Another said, "Carrots will help." Others brought potatoes, onions and all sorts of goodies. And in the end, everyone enjoyed a wonderful meal of "stone soup." That gets to the heart of what Jesus was seeking his audience to consider.

He reminded that God blesses abundantly, and daily. Our problem is not so much with waste but LACK of use. We worry too much about what we want to control rather than what we might willingly surrender. Obsession with conservation can be selfish in that God's gifts are "saved" and protected but not fully used. For instance, the Pharisees withheld love from those who they felt didn't deserve it. Jesus daily outlined instructions for servant love for ALL who live on the planet he loves and has given his life to save.

He was very specific! "YOU are SALT! You are a LIGHT! SALT seasons and preserves. Similarly, Jesus' servant love changes the "taste" of how we live. His death, and resurrection preserve us for all time. LIGHT reveals and leads. Jesus' life, death, and resurrection reveal the power of God's love, and guides us through the darkness of

this world. Even if we could change the weather and prevent every leak of oil or radiation, but did not use all our gifts to share God's love, we would have failed!

Jesus "saved the world" in a lavishly, sacrificial way. Instead of holding back, he poured out his life, surrendered his power, by literally USING every ounce of love and life just for you and me! (His disciples warned against that strategy and would have fought to keep him from accepting the cross.) What they saw as a destroying of God's greatest gift was the only means for achieving his purpose from the beginning.

The miracle of Easter was like that finished pot of stone soup. Through the miracle of using every gift at his disposal, Jesus flavored the lives he touched as he washed feet, healed lepers, fed the hungry and gathered the lost. He lit up a dark planet with the light of his birth and the power of his resurrection. We are never alone, and his power fills our gifts!

The world's judgment is that Jesus wasted his life in trying to save the planet. But one day Planet Earth will be only a distant memory, and his concern is in keeping our lives with him for even longer. How ironic that Jesus' loss is our gain; and in our mirror-like surrender, we not only show God's glory, but offer the same gifts to those around us. That is the meaning of his command to "*Let your light so shine that the world might see your God's love and give glory to our Father who is in heaven!*"

In other words, failure to take advantage of giftedness and opportunity is no different than a rejection of all that God has done for you and me. Just as salt that never leaves the cupboard is wasted, so the gifts we have been given, which if kept in the dark, will never reach the potential for which they are created. FAITH means no worry no fear -- that is the flavor of our living! FAITH means sacrifice and surrender, not so we can change the world, but to announce to the world the change Jesus makes in me!

That is why we collect food for the hungry and warm clothing for poor families. Why clothing and quilts and layettes are sent to impoverished rural areas overseas, and school supplies are gathered for school children whose parents can't afford such support. Why we support campus ministry and engage in servant ministry projects throughout the year. How *easy to SHINE and SEASON, realizing how a little bit goes a long way!*)

*One day, an old man was walking along a beach that was littered with thousands of starfish washed ashore by the high tide. As he walked he came upon a young boy who was eagerly throwing the starfish back into the ocean, one by one. Puzzled, he looked and asked what he was doing. Without looking up the boy replied, "I'm saving these starfish!" The old man chuckled aloud, "Son, there are thousands of starfish and only one of you. What difference can you make?" The boy picked up a starfish, gently tossed it into the water and turning to the man, said, "I made a difference to that one!"*

Faith is our power from God. We can't waste it unless we don't use it! And if we use it, God's power changes me and all whom I touch! Where will you serve? How will you love? Where will you shine?

I knew a young mother who dealt with her dying by insisting that her husband and children embrace family counseling, together, before her death. She understood SALT and seasoned their lives with such love. She understood LIGHT and recorded baby book stories for each of her children and talked to her husband about his future.

Because of that faithful love, her children are now adults who season their own children's lives with incredible support, love and faith. Many of you have similar experiences and similar role models in your lives.

Just don't forget to do the same for those around you, whether family, friends, or strangers. Remember Jesus words: "Let your light so shine before others!" This is not so that we can save the planet, but because God has saved the world. We have been loved for a reason, and for that reason, now, we love. We have been rescued from darkness and for that reason, we lift up that light. Amen