

# Go you! Susan Boyle

1 Corinthians 2:1-12; Matthew 5:13-20

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One of the highest compliments you can say *about* someone is they are the salt of the earth. We mean they are grounded, reliable; straight forward, no airs, honest, no frills – just really, solidly good. Salt of the Earth. Think about it...

How many of you can't resist watching reality talent shows like the *Voice* or *Australia's Got Talent*? If you are a YouTube buff, can you resist the replays of outstanding and surprising children's auditions from around the world?

It's because we get goosebumps when we see ordinary people shine. People who look like us – not too pretty, not too fancy – just ordinary, hardworking, normal humans. The plumber who sings opera so beautifully, it makes you cry. The pudgy 10-year-old girl who belts out "It's a man's world" in a blues voice that is 40 years old.

Salt of the earth – it all comes from this passage.

I'm going to talk about salt and light in Matthew's reading and touch on Paul's media and the message in Corinthians to see whether they can speak to us. But let's go back and start with Paul and work up to Matthew.

Paul begins admitting he was scared and felt unprepared when he came to speak to the Corinthians. He admits his sermon(s) were not eloquently structured or even beautiful but from that very human place of inadequacy, God speaks. The Spirit seeks and yes, takes over.

The first time I preached – long before I was ordained, after reading and writing and editing and rewriting for probably 3 weeks because we can see that rostered date rolling around towards us. (Plenty of time to angst). I stood up trembling to my boots, looked out at the congregation, took a big breath and I hardly remember anything after that. The Spirit moved and the confident words of the Lord proclaimed. Just like that.

At the end of a *Voice* audition, you see the audience go wild and the 'talent' put their hands up to their mouths in wonder, eyes wide, unbelieving what just happened – that was me. I've heard other lay leaders talk of the same amazement. Shy people – ordinary people with barely the courage to step forward and God did the rest. Paul says...

"...The Spirit searches all things, even deep things of God. For who knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God" What we have received is not the spirit of

the world, but the spirit of God so that we may understand what God has freely given us.” (1 Cor 2:10-12)

What he is saying is the achievement is not in the ‘lofty words. It is not in a perfect sermon, perfectly performed. It is not human achievement but Christ – faith. The same ideas were resurrected by 16<sup>th</sup> century reformers that believed faith comes from faith. In other words, there are no words or performances; there is no eloquence on my part that will lead you into faith– but rather, it is a gift of God. It may happen while I’m speaking – but I am not the author.

Perhaps, when God speaks *through* me, as Paul suggests, there is a chance.

It is not un-noticed that Paul speaks against eloquence and performance, eloquently. He was, after all, a master of Greek discourse but what is happening is two-fold. Number one – that any talent, even those hard earned in practice, are a gift from God. Secondary to that, perhaps in performance, perhaps in **good** performance, we make space for the Spirit to do its work.

Which is a very neat segway into Matthew – Salt and light.

These elements were chosen because they DO something. This passage is about discipleship individually and collectively.

Salt preserves things, brings flavour out in food. It was important for rituals (cleansing) and used in incense and offerings. It had commercial value.

Light pushes back the darkness. It illuminates the unseen and it can liberate the captured.

You are the salt. If you do not use your abilities, if you do not open yourself up for opportunities, then it will be wasted. We all know stories of people (and ourselves) that got to the brink of an opportunity – and chickened out.

Go back to the back stories of the *Voice* and you see so many who were nominated or pushed by friends and family.

The city on the hill is the whole church. If the individuals shine, you cannot but see the light. Now whether your light is hidden under a bush, a basket or a bowl (as in different translations) – you are the one who put it or kept it there.

The passage makes it your moral obligation to release your capabilities. The ones God gave you – even if you are uncomfortable doing it.

The next part of the reading puts the demands of discipleship within the context of existing religious law. Jesus makes it clear – we are not the moral police. Religious practice at the time could take moralism to the extreme, Jesus is tempering this with God’s love.

“The law that Jesus came to fulfil, the perfection of God, the standard to which we are called, is not that of perfect moral legalism, but of love. Our reading this week tells us that even though we are utterly flawed, we are sufficient for each other’s needs. We, when living in the flow of God’s love, are sufficient salt, leaven, salve for one another and they for us.”<sup>1</sup>

Yes, we are flawed. We are prone to judging others. We are guilty of loving too little or too much or too late. And especially in not loving ourselves enough and not having the faith we need to stand up and nurture the gifts we have been given.

The message is clear:

“You are salt of the earth ... you are the light of the world ... a city built on a hill ... a lamp on a lamp stand ... so let your light shine before others.” Scripture affirms that we are unique, precious and of great value - we are loved, worthy and desired. We are called to be all that we are and all that we could be; we are called into the fullness of life and the fullness of our own particular life”<sup>2</sup>.

It is our lack of courage that makes our hearts leap for others – like Susan Boyle. They stand up for us and do what we think we never could do and we, vicariously, thrill and are often brought to tears. “Go you!” We say – hardly ever “Go me!”

God loves and values us. it is also because God loves others and desires that they be blessed by and through us.

Go You! All you Susan Boyles.

Watch this and see how you feel **Video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yE1Lxw5ZyXk>

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<sup>1</sup> Adapted from Rev Sue, *Companions on the Way*, 1 Feb 2023, <https://www.companionsontheway.com/post/salt-and-light?>

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

