

Welcome to the High Plains Preacher! Stories about the Bible, high wind, fast horses, lack of moisture and other elements of life in the Texas Panhandle

Hearth and Home

by Fr. Jim Schmitmeyer

Sometimes one word has more than one meaning. And, sometimes, that meaning depends on where you live. For instance, in Texas the word “Coke” can mean “Seven-up.” In the Midwest, which is where I come from, Coke is pop and Seven-up is pop, but Seven-up is never Coke. Since moving to Texas, I’ve also encountered a new definition for the word, Yankee. In the Midwest, a Yankee is someone from New England. But in Texas, a Yankee is anyone who is not from Texas!

So, yes, sometimes words have more than one meaning, This is especially true when it comes to religion. If you are *poor*, you are *rich*. And if you are *last*, you are *first*. In the Sermon on the Mount, the word *persecution* implies *honor*. Consider also how the Lord employed the word, *salt*. When we read his words, “You are the salt of the earth,” we naturally think of salt and pepper on a kitchen table. But we’re from Texas, whereas Jesus hailed from the Middle East. In the Aramaic language that he spoke, the word *earth* and *oven* are the same word. So, when Jesus used the word salt, he was not thinking of the kitchen table, but of the kitchen oven, an earthen oven. Why? Because the people of Jesus’ day, like the pioneers on the Texas plains, used dung instead of wood as fuel for their fires and salt was used as an accelerant to start the cooking fires in the earthen ovens of a kitchen.

So, when Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth,” he means, “You are the salt that ignites the fire inside the kitchen oven.” He then goes on to talk about something else that is very ordinary and domestic: the flame of a lamp in the family room. “No one lights a lamp then puts it a bushel basket!” says the Lord. “Rather, they set it on a table where it gives light to all in the house.”

All this talk about cooking fires and oil lamps can be summarized in the phrase, “keep the home fires burning.”

We all love a cozy fire and we all long for a place to call home. And it is in that place called home that we learn what it means to be Christian, to be meek and mild and to put others first.

Keep those home fires burning! Be the salt that lights the fire. Be the light that shines for all to see.