

CHRISTIANS AS SALT
Matthew 5.13

**This is another special day for the Church.
It's Christian Education Sunday.**

**We thank God for all-who teach or follow, all who mentor or model the faith in some way.
We are grateful for you teachers, students-young and old,
and you faithful who have been generous with you time, talent, and money.**

**Jesus calls you the salt of the earth.
We take those words from the Sermon on the Mount.**

**Jesus gives you a compliment and for lack of a better word a command.
The compliment "You are the salt of the earth."
The command, "YOU ARE the salt of the earth."
The implication is like when you went someplace, your mom or dad
reminded you that you are a Johnson, or a Smith, or a Jones.
In other words behave! Act like you are suppose to act.**

**When Jesus said to them, "*you are the salt of the earth,*" it was huge.
It might not seem like much to us.
Salt might not look like much in this little saltshaker
but salt is and has been valuable throughout history.**

**Salt is an essential part of our diet.
We can't live without it.
If you end up in the hospital,
you probably get hooked up with an IV with a salt solution to control your metabolism.**

We feed salt to our cattle, and fertilize plants with it.

**Salt has been used as a trading commodity and has even been taxed like gas or tobacco.
In Jesus time salt was it was even used for money.
The Roman soldiers were paid their wages, their salary in salt.
In fact our word salary comes from "salarium" which means payment in salt.
You might even heard the expression, "they are worth their wages in...salt.**

**Wars all over the world have even been fought because of salt, won or lost because of salt.
In the US the Union army early in the civil war targeted and captured
a salt plant in Avery Island, Louisiana.**

**Salt was needed not only for the diet, but for healing wounds,
preserving meats, tanning leather and dying cloth.**

**Confederate President Jefferson Davis even waved military duty
to anyone willing to attend the salt kettles that supplied the South.**

Some say there are 101 ways to use salt.
Morton salt company would tell you there are 14,000+.

Know we have value first and foremost because we're made in God's image.
The psalmist realized this. He said, *"I'm fearfully and wonderfully made."*

And if you don't believe the psalmist, listen to what
God told the people in Isaiah 43.1, *"I have made you, do not fear,
I have redeemed you. I have called you by name and you are mine."*
Are your children valuable to you?
Take heart you are God's child.

FIRST, WE'RE TO FLAVOR

I like Matthew 5.13 from the Message, *"Let me tell you why you are here.
You're here to be the salt seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth."*

Salt is different and distinctive.
So it influences and impacts what it comes into contact with.

We use salt to flavor our food. It seasons the food. It tastes better...right?
What would French fries be without salt?

Think too about how bored we get with the same food.
We're always looking for something new, hungry for something different.
Well it's worse in ancient times and in the time of Jesus.

There was no Pizza Hut or That's a Pizza, Taco John's or Taco Bell,
Twist Cone or Dairy Queen, Wendy's, Burger King, or Hardie's.
Believe this not, no McDonald's.
There was no Minerva or Millstone, Mexican, or Chinese.
There wasn't much choice...just a diet of rice, wheat, or corn.
And that depends on where you live-you have the same thing for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

Job 6.6 asks, *"Can flavorless food be eaten without salt?"*

Part of our value is that we are different and distinctive from our culture.
And because we are different we are to impact and influence the culture we live in.
We can't dodge it or duck it. We're to be responsible. We're to be used.

Salt flavored their religious sacrifices as well.
And Romans 12.1 tells us that,
"We are to offer ourselves as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God."
The operative word is pleasing. That means flavoring.
We're to bring out the God-flavors, the God-values, the God-beliefs
in others and ourselves in all we say and do.

**We don't have to be bland and boring to live lives of faith.
After all, we've been claimed and called by the creator of the universe.**

**Our lives should season and stir others to live with passion and purpose.
One kind of flavoring is to give generously.**

**There are several good examples of that this month.
You supported Jamie Kenny's mission trip to Haiti,
You sent health and school kits to the In-gathering,
You even bought the paint for the addition, and
You filled Ken's carts with groceries for the Salvation Army.**

Another kind of flavoring Forgiving.

**We're called to forgive quickly just as Jesus has forgiven us.
We value people, we're to love people, love the sinner and hate the sin.**

And yet another kind of flavor is being blessed in our brokenness.

**We should inspire and influence others because we are blessed even in seemingly
unhappy, unblessed, and broken times because we have the presence of God.**

**Remember the Be-Attitudes, we're blessed if we're poor in spirit,
if we mourn, if we're meek, if we extend mercy,
if we hunger and thirst for righteousness,
if we are pure in heart, peacemakers, or persecuted for God's sake."**

Romans 5.3 and following covers that,

***"We rejoice (we're happy) in the hope of the glory of God.
Not only so (in glory), but we also rejoice in our suffering...
because God has poured His love into us by the Holy Spirit."***

**People should see our faith in the midst of the trials + troubles and struggles + sorrows.
Our grief and pain (as Pastor Eldon says) should not be wasted.**

**We went to a wedding in Rapid City a few weeks ago.
We talked to a friend whose husband was unfaithful.
When confronted he became mean-spirited and malicious.
The children became hurt, angry, confused, and divided.
She was devastated, but she was a God-fearing, God-loving woman.**

**She was hurt. She had feelings of fear, anger, and betrayal but she got through
the crisis and the divorce with out bad-mouthing her husband and becoming bitter.
She lives her favorite verse, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."**

**You know it hurts to see a friend in these situations...it leaves a bad taste in your mouth.
But when I heard her say, "I grew through this experience, I grew in my faith,
I grew closer to the Lord", the experience had a bit different flavor.**

WE ARE TO PRESERVE

**Salt has been and is often used in religious rituals.
Salt is a symbol of covenant, symbol of purity,
and a symbol of something that is to last forever.
because it never loses it's saltiness.**

In Numbers 18.19, God makes an agreement, a covenant with the people, *"It is an everlasting (eternal and unchangeable)covenant of salt both for you and your offspring."*

2 Chronicles 13.5, Abijah stands on the mountain and says to the people, *"Don't you know the Lord God of Israel has given the kingship of Israel to David and his ancestors forever by the covenant of the salt?"*

**Also in ancient times there was no refrigeration.
So meat was salted to keep it from rotting, from being "corrupt."
The salt would retard the decaying process.
Most of us love small dried and salted strips of beef, deer, or whatever.
It's called...jerky.**

**Now back to the words of Jesus.
Matthew 5.13 says, *"You are the salt of the earth,
but if the salt loses it's saltiness, how can it be made salty again?
It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men."***

**And the same verse from the Message ,
*"If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness?
You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.***

**Luke 14.34-35 is a little more earthy,
*"Salt is good, but if it loses it's saltiness, how can it be made salty again?
It is fit neither for the soil nor the manure pile; it is thrown out."***

**Wait a minute-you just said salt doesn't lose it's saltiness.
You're right. Salt doesn't change and it never really loses it's saltiness.
So what was Jesus talking about?**

**The people of that time would easily understand this.
Much of the salt at that time in that area was taken from the Salt Sea or the Dead Sea.
When the water of the Dead Sea evaporated it left salt usually mixed with other minerals.**

**So it didn't season foods or retard the spoilage.
They didn't have the technology we do today to extract the salt .**

**So what good is the salt?
The question that begs to be asked is, what good are we if we don't God-flavor
the culture and keep it from being corrupted, from becoming rotten?**

Our lives can be cluttered by many things.

Some of us are too busy and too tired to take care of our business with God.
We can become discouraged with all the greed and graft in politics and business,
We see and hear of so much violence in families, among peoples, among nations.
I saw a news clip that a manufacturing company
has six million new play stations full of violence headed for market.
We spend way too much money on toys and recreation.
We're saturated with sex advertisements and shows, sex scandals,
sex among same sex people, sex before and sex outside of marriages.
We see and hear of so much abuse of children, spouses, and employees.

We hear so much filthy and foul language in the streets and on the screen.
Some of us eat too much especially on Eating Awareness Day.
Our credit cards are maxed out. We could be better stewards.

It's like Jesus is saying to us, "You are the salt of the earth."
You're the folks God has chosen to bring joy, peace,
hope, healing, and help to a hurting world.

God has chosen you to keep his laws.
God has told you what to believe and how to behave.

It's for your own good.
You'll be happier and healthier people.
And you know what, other people will see this stuff and want to get in on it.

If you get too mixed in and too mixed up about what is good, right, and holy,
then how is anyone going to know more about me let alone trust me.

Friends, we're the salt. You and I are to preserve what is good, what is right, what is holy.
You and I are to preserve Biblical doctrine and reverence for God.
We're to keep the culture from being corrupted, from becoming rotten.

How can we keep our "saltiness?" This particular passage warns us, it doesn't tell us.

But Hebrews 12.1 does, "let us throw off every sin that entangles us."
We're salt, let's get rid of the extra stuff so we can be what God wants us to be.
Trust God to shake the saltshaker and see what happens.

Jesus said, "Repent and Believe the Good News." Mark 1.15

And in Matthew 11.28 he says, "Come unto me all who are weary and burdened.
I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me..."

I want to mention one more thing, **WE ARE TO HELP HEAL**

As a child I remember a cut on my finger getting infected.

Mom got out the Epsom Salt and put the salt in water.

Then I soaked the infected finger in the salt water and, walla-I was healed!

It isn't a far stretch to think of Jesus taking on spiritual infection of our lives-SIN, Jesus absorbed the banging of the nails, and the bite of the thorns, the blows of the whip and the blasts of the tongue, so that, "by His strips we are healed."

Think about the salt in your water softener
cleaning out the mineral deposits in your water.

It's true, I John 1.9, "If we confess our sin, God is a just and righteous God and will not only forgive that sin but cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

In Judges 9.45, when Ablimeleck conquered the city of Shechem it says
"He destroyed the city and scattered salt over it."

Ablimeleck was using salt in a symbolic sense.

He was cleansing the city, purifying the area of sin, and warding off evil.

That's what our prayer life is about.

When the men of Jericho came to Elisha and told him their water was bad and their land unproductive Elisha said, *"Bring me a bowl and put salt in it... then he took it to the spring and threw the salt into it saying, 'This is what the Lord says; I have healed the water. Never again will it bring about death or make the land unproductive. And the water remains wholesome still today...'"*

II Kings 2.20+

Oh that we might keep our saltiness.
That God might continue to use us,
to bring about his love, healing, and forgiveness
to this community and beyond.

Let us pray.