

The Salt Of The Earth

Text : **Matt. 5: 1-16**

INTRODUCTION :

A. If a survey was taken in town asking people about this congregation, how would we be described ?

1. Are we known in town :
 - a. As loving people ?
 - b. As caring people ?
 - c. As those who exemplify the virtues of Christ ?
2. Far too often Christians are thought of :
 - a. As being self-righteous and “holier-than-thou.”
 - b. As being argumentative and judgmental.
 - c. Or as being self-centered, sometime to the point of exclusiveness.

B. The scriptures teach us that our Lord desires better from His people.

1. Jesus is a sovereign Lord, the absolute ruler of His people, a great King.
2. Thus, in order to become a Christian one must accept HIS sovereignty in all things.
3. As sovereign, Jesus requires all of His people to possess certain attributes.
 - a. Two of those attributes are stated in our text, but we will discuss only one in this lesson.
 - b. **Matt. 5: 13- You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.**

I. We must bear in mind that an attribute is what one IS not something he DOES.

A. For example, we often discuss God’s attributes,

1. We observe that He is infinite in all His attributes and list such things as :
 - a. Omni-present
 - b. Omnipotent
 - c. Omniscient
2. One attribute of God is love; God IS love.
 - a. Being love, His actions are loving.
 - b. The actions emanate from His attribute; they do not make Him love.

B. Jesus identifies one of the attributes of His followers as being salt.

1. He does not command us to saying :
 - a. You should be salt.
 - b. You need to working toward becoming salt.
 - c. You need to do salty things.
2. He made a simple declarative statement, “**You ARE the salt of the earth.**”
 - a. Either one is salt or he is not.
 - b. There is no such thing as part-time salt. (**Under certain conditions I will ...**)
3. Therefore, **if** one is a follower of Christ, **he is** salt.
 - a. Salt is not something one can “**DO.**”
 - b. When we say, “The table is oak.” We don’t anticipate it will **DO** oak.

C. How do I know I’m salt ? If one IS salt, he will have the characteristic of salt.

1. We anticipate an oak table will have the characteristics of an oak table.
 - a. Oak is a moderately light color with a pronounced grain.
 - b. Oak is a hard wood which is difficult to penetrate and will easily crack if nailed.
 - c. Oak is strong enough to bear more weight than woods like pine.
2. Scientists have labored for years trying to make a substitute salt with no success.
 - a. They say salt takes about 2000 years to form and solidify.
 - b. Only the combination of Sodium and Chloride will form salt.
 - c. Salt can be readily identified by its characteristics.

**D. When one becomes salt, he does what salt does,
BUT nothing he can do will make him salt. (Rom. 12: 2 ,****II. Salt was a much more valuable commodity in Jesus day than it is now.****A. The Greeks valued salt so highly, it was called “the vine.”****B. The Roman valued salt as much as gold.**

1. Saying : “*There is only one thing more important than salt,
and that is the sun itself.*”
2. Roman soldiers received salt as part of their salary. (Root of “*salary*” & “*salad*”)
This was the origin of the saying, “*He’s not worth his salt.*”

C. The Hebrews viewed salt as essential to the binding of an agreement.

1. **Lev. 2: 13-** Every grain offering of yours, moreover, you shall season with salt, so that the salt of the covenant of your God shall not be lacking from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt.
2. Compare ... **Num. 18: 19**

D. Modern technology has made salt readily available and very cheap.

1. Salt is essential to all animal life, but toxic to most plants. (**salt blocks for cattle**)
2. Without salt we would die so wars have been fought to protect the sources.
3. **Thus**, for Jesus to refer to His followers as the salt of the earth was meaningful.

III. There are readily identifiable characteristics of salt. (We're all familiar with them.)

A. Salt is a preservative.

1. We have to look at this through the eyes of those who had not refrigeration.
2. For millennia salt was used to preserve meat and fish. (**Salt found in Mummies**)
3. Salt removes the cause of decay, water and bacteria.
4. **Jesus** sent all who would serve Him into the world to preserve the world.
 - a. **Mark 16: 16** ... Go preach & teach; those who accept will be preserved.
 - b. **Read ... Rom. 10: 8-17** ... Briefly exegete

B. Salt purifies.

1. In times of old,
 - a. Salt and salt water was used to cleanse wounds.
 - b. Newborn babies were rubbed down with salt.
2. Today some older people use salt as part of oral hygiene.
 - a. They gargle with salt water for sores in the mouth and throat.
 - b. They use salt and soda to cleanse their teeth.
3. The world needs salt because it has been corrupted by sin. (**Christians are that salt.**)
4. Salt burns when poured into an open wound. (**Sometimes pain is required to save.**)

Note :

- 1- Christians may never be deliberately abrasive. (**Col. 4:5-6 ; Eph. 4:15, 29**)
- 2- Christians were not told to be the world's "honey."
- 3- **Salt does not change what it is in order to get people to accept it.** (**Rom 12:2**)

C. Salt makes people thirsty.

1. Bartenders put out salty snacks to cause people drink more.
2. Observing a Christian's life should make the world want what the Christian has.
3. Hearing Christians talk about the gospel should make people want more.

D. Salt flavors everything with which it comes in contact.

1. Food without salt does not taste good.
2. Likewise, the world is a better place because of Christian influence.
 - a. People place greater value on human life. (**War & peace**)
 - b. Since Christ, people grant more human rights to other people. (**View of women**)
3. Everyone who comes in contact with a Christian should be made BETTER by exposure to his influence.
 - a. It only takes a little salt to make a big difference.
 - b. Christians give the flavor of a loving God ... NOT their own individual flavor.

E. Salt has a distinctive flavor. (**Other white crystals look like it, but taste different.)**

1. Every time one uses salt, he knows exactly what to expect. (**consistent flavor**)
2. Salt does not conform to the taste of other things, but gives its flavor to them.
3. The church has a clear and a distinctive message for the world.
 - a. We must never change the flavor of Christ to attract new members.
 - b. However, the scriptures COMMAND creative marketing. **I Cor. 9: 19-23**
 - c. Even so, common sense tells us that changing the label on a package does not change the flavor of its contents.
4. The flavor of the Christian (individually or collectively) must be that of their loving God who gave Himself to rescue all men from sin.

IV. Salt is only of value when it performs its function.**A. Jesus says salt that has no flavor has no value.**

1. When ancient miners didn't separate out all other minerals, salt was thrown on dust.
2. If salt will not flavor the food, **why** put it on the food; it has no value.
 - a. Disposal becomes a problem because it kills plants.
 - b. It must be discarded where it will do no harm.

3. Salt has no function so long as it is left in the shaker. (**absorbs water – gets hard**)
 - a. Flavor requires contact.
 - b. The longer the exposure, the deeper the salt penetrates.
 - c. Leaving sugar in a salt shaker doesn't make it turn to salt.

B. Too many Christians are contented to just stay in the shaker.

1. **The church building is our salt shaker. (Not for storage)**
2. Jesus said we are the salt of the world,
NOT the salt of the church building.
3. You can leave salt in a shaker for 50 years and it won't accomplish a thing.
4. Christians setting on a pew for 50 years won't accomplish anything either.

C. Jesus is teaching us that so called Christians who are not salt are so worthless they aren't even fit to be thrown on the manure pile. HOW SAD !!

1. Jesus can tell WHAT we are by the effect we have on those around us.
2. What we DO demonstrates what we ARE. (**Salt is consistently salt.**)
2. WHAT we are will determine if Jesus keeps us or casts us out.
3. Are you making the world a better place ?
 - a. Are souls being saved because they are in contact with you ?
 - b. Are people being made more palatable to God by your influence ? (acceptable)
 - c. Let each of us ask ourselves, "**What is my value to God ?**" **AM I SALT ?**

CONCLUSION :

A. Christians are the hope of the world.

1. Jesus created us in Christ in this place to be its salt. (**work place, school, home**)
2. Jesus expects Christians will **BE** the salt of the earth.
 - a. We must BE that which **preserves** the souls of men.
 - b. We must Be the influence which motives them to seek **purity** in their life.
 - c. We must **flavor** those with whom we come in contact.
 - d. We must make them **thirst** to drink of the living water.
 - e. We must maintain our **distinctive identity** as we creatively draw people to Christ.

B. Salt isn't something we DO; it's what we BECOME when Christ lives through us.

C. It's what we ARE that determines the influence this church has.

INVITATION : This very day, let's each commit ourselves to be the salt of our world.