

**The Messiah Has Come
Week 15
Matthew 5:13
“Salt and Light” (part one)**

Introduction

I have given them Your Word. The world hated them because they are not of the world just as I am not of the world. I am not praying that You take them out of the world but that You protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by the truth; Your Word is truth. As you sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. I sanctify Myself for them, so that they also may be sanctified by the truth. **John 17:14-19**

I have been attending church regularly for most of my life. And in that time I cannot even begin to count how many times I have heard it said that as *Believers*, we are to be both *salt* and *light*. And while I was only partially aware of what that really means, I knew that it had something to do with how I was supposed to conduct myself in this world. But to be honest, I don't really remember anyone ever fully explaining just how I was to go about that. Oh, they may have, but apparently if they did.....it didn't stick!

Immediately after Christ went over the beatitudes in His *Sermon on The Mount*, He began to describe in great detail what the citizens of His kingdom would be like in their dealings with the people of this world. The beatitudes describe the heart attitudes of those who would be willing to humble themselves and cry out for God's mercy and grace. And after they have been reconciled to God, they will long to bring others into that same reconciliation:

Blessed are the peace makers, for they will be called sons of God **Matthew 5:9**

But sadly, not everyone in this world desires to be reconciled to God, and therefore, many will despise those who have come with the gospel message of peace. So then we have the final beatitude.

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of Me. Be glad and rejoice because your reward is great in heaven. **Matthew 5:10-12**

So the blessing, the *upside* if you will, of not fitting in down here, is the knowledge that one day there is coming a kingdom that will be a perfect fit for our faith, and pursuit of righteousness. God will reward us for our time of suffering here below. So with this in mind, Christ transitioned His sermon to illustrate how His subjects are expected to behave in a world that is hostile to them in the meantime. He calls it, “*being salt and light*.” And that is the subject of today's message.

Just what is it to be the “*salt of the earth*” and “*the light of the world*”? After all, it sounds nice, but how is that to be lived out? How can I know that I am being salt and light? And is there a way that I can be sure that I am obeying this command from our LORD? These are the questions that we will attempt to answer in today's study. The very heart of the matter is, Christ expects us, in fact commands us to have an influence upon the world in which we live. We will never fit in here, but we are expected to have an impact none the less. We are being sent out as “*influencers*” into a place that will largely reject us, but there will be some, who will see our good works and be drawn to The Savior as a result. And *that* is how we will know that we are truly becoming *salt*. Next week will talk about becoming *light*. For the true meaning of these verses is far too great to cover in one session! Please allow me to explain.

The Salt of The Earth (vs. 13)

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. **Matthew 5:13**

First off, let us take note of the fact that The Savior chose two different words to describe our role here (besides *salt* and *light*). He says "You are the salt of the **earth**", and "the light of the **world**." For many Bible teachers, it is a distinction without a difference. However, our LORD is far more intelligent than we can even imagine, and I believe that He chose two different "*world words*" for a specific purpose.

When He referred to His kingdom subjects as salt of the earth, the word that He used (translated *earth* in the CSB) is "*Ghay*" (*Pronounced gay in the Greek*). The word is most commonly used to describe the ground or the soil here on good old "terra firma". So Christ commanded us that we be the salt "of *the ground*" as it were. I am convinced He is saying to His disciples (and to us as well), that after He returned to heaven from whence He came, He would be leaving us here "*on the ground*" to carry out His will. We the Church are in essence the ground forces of the kingdom of God. And we have a mission to complete before our King returns.

The fact that Jesus chose "salt" as a description of the influence that we are to have upon the world is quite striking. Salt was very important in ancient culture. Some governments even paid their armies in salt. This is actually where "*isn't worth his salt*" a term used to describe a lazy person comes from.

In the Old Testament, salt was often used in making covenants, unbreakable treaties by which the parties involved would agree to uphold. God commanded in The Law of Moses that every grain sacrifice made to Him would be seasoned with the salt of the covenant:

You are to season each of your grain offerings with salt; you must not omit from your grain offering the salt of the covenant with your God. You are to present salt with each of your grain offerings. **Leviticus 2:13**

Which would lead an inquiring mind to wonder, "*What has salt got to do with a covenant?*" And I am so glad you asked! To the Hebrew way of thinking, because salt acts as a preservative, adding salt to a covenant sacrifice carries with it the meaning of permanence, it is a lasting covenant that shall endure.

Don't you know that The LORD God of Israel gave the kingship over to David and his descendants forever by a covenant of salt? **2 Chronicles 13:5**

So what does this have to do with us? We are God's chosen *covenant* people. And we have been sealed by His Spirit with an enduring promise. And because of this, we are assured to endure, for Christ Himself will see to it that we are preserved. This world may even kill us, but we have an everlasting covenant with God, through Christ. As the writer of Hebrews has so eloquently said:

Now may the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our LORD Jesus—The Great Shepherd of the sheep—through the blood of the everlasting covenant, equip you with everything good to do His will, working in us what is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to Whom be glory forever and ever. Amen. **Hebrews 13:20-21**

We are His covenant people bound to Him in everlasting covenant relationship, a covenant of salt if you will. We shall be preserved, we shall endure. And just as salt represents preservative in us, it also represents how we are to act as a preservative in this wicked world. Salt has always been used as a deterrent against decay. And it is the church of Christ that has held at bay much of the moral decay that exists in this world. While we have not kept the world as a whole from rotting away in its own moral filth,

we have, and still do prevent the complete ruination of mankind, by acting as salt among them. We are in fact the salt, the preservative that has kept this world from utter putrefaction.

Think of how many hospitals, orphanages, homeless shelters, and just general acts of kindness that are inspired and carried out by God's chosen people in this world! Imagine a time when the influence of God's people no longer is available. You do not really have to imagine this, for you can read of it in the book of Revelation. When the church is raptured, this old world will be infected with a level of corruption unseen heretofore. God's covenant people filled with His Spirit have been holding much of the devil's schemes at bay, keeping him from the complete devastation that he so eagerly desires to inflict upon the earth. The devil would love to send his antichrist to do his worst in this world, but he cannot until that which restrains his coming is removed.

And you know what currently restrains him, so that he will be revealed in his time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work, but the one now restraining him will do so until he is out of the way, and then the lawless one will be revealed. The LORD Jesus will destroy him with the breath of His mouth and will bring to nothing at the appearance of His coming.

2 Thessalonians 2:7-8

We the Church of Jesus Christ, empowered by The Spirit of The Living God, sealed with an enduring covenant of salt, are ourselves the salt that holds the moral decay of this world in check

Salt is also an irritant, if poured into an open wound it most certainly can bring healing, but it is also very painful. This is why the world resents our stand against its immorality. For the message we bring reminds people of their sinful condition. No one likes to hear that they are wicked. It is not an easy message to hear, and yet it is essential. If the salt doesn't sting when applied, then it isn't doing its job. Is it any wonder The LORD warns us that we will be persecuted for trying to reconcile sinful people to a holy God?

Yet another thing that salt does is to add flavor. What we have to offer this world is meaning (taste if you will) in an otherwise meaningless existence. We are to go about showing this old world that there is a better way, for in Christ life has meaning, life has flavor! It is the message of The Church which unashamedly proclaims:

Taste and see that The LORD is good.

Psalms 34:8

And another thing that salt does is create thirst. When you eat something salty, water is usually the next item on your agenda. I had some friends of mine many years ago who took a Christmas vacation, and were gone the whole week of Christmas and New Years. Little did they know that one of their friends had mailed them a country ham for Christmas. So when it was delivered and no one was there to accept the delivery, the postman left it on the doorstep. Well, these folks owned a large German Shepherd dog that lived outside. And when it discovered the ham, needless to say, it had a pretty substantial Christmas dinner of its own! When my friends returned home, they found their dog stretched out in the yard barely able to move. They had no idea what was wrong with it, but they noticed its water dish was completely dry. So they gave the poor animal some water. My friend swears to me that the dog emptied a five gallon bucket of water within a few hours!

As we go about being salt in this world, we are to create a thirst in people that makes them long for the living water that Christ so freely gives. In short, our love and good deeds should cause people to *thirst* for Christ. I can tell you from personal experience that when we "do it right" yes many will despise us, but God also uses our testimony to draw others to the cross to find the wellspring of life. And when that happens, it far outweighs the sting of those who despise us!

On the last and most important day of the festival, Jesus stood up and cried out, "if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, will have streams of living water flowing from deep within him."

John 7:37-38

And last but certainly not least, salt in its purest form is white, which represents the holiness of God along with the holiness of His covenant people. The Bible plainly says, “**Without holiness, no one will see The LORD.**” (**Hebrews 12:14**). We are called to be holy, set apart and pure. “**Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God.**” (**Matthew 5:8**). And can I tell you this, not only must we strive for purity if we belong to Christ, but also, without holiness, no one will ever be able to see God...*in us*! This is what Jesus meant when He said:

But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty again? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. **Matthew 5:13b**

Now here's the thing. Salt really cannot lose its flavor. But do you know what causes it to become tasteless? When it is filled with other minerals. In other words, when it isn't pure! Can I tell you, that when we compromise in our personal holiness, we will no longer have any influence over this wicked world. We will no longer be...well, “salty”. And if you try and compromise with the world, and then claim to stand for Christ, even the most hardened pagan will walk all over you, because they will see you for the hypocrite you are. No, a person of the covenant cannot lose their salvation, but you can most certainly lose your testimony by moral compromise. By becoming impure. Then your purpose for being here is nullified. Jesus will go on to say in this very same sermon:

No one can serve two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money. **Matthew 6:24**

Remember here, that Jesus is not speaking of a person who has lost their salvation. For in Christ we have entered into an everlasting covenant with God. He is saying that we will lose our ability to have any lasting influence on the people around us when we compromise with the world. In Jesus time, they had no asphalt or concrete with which to pave the paths on which the people walked. So the people would take impure and useless salt to spread it along the pathways, thus packing them down and keeping anything from growing on them. The Christian who claims to be a follower of Christ, but is enamored by the things of this world, can no longer be useful in God's kingdom. To lose one's influence is a terrible thing, and to fully recover it after it is gone is nearly impossible. This is why we are warned in Scripture:

Do not love the things of this world. If anyone loves the world, the love of The Father is not in him. For everything in this world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride in one's possessions—is not from The Father, but is from the world. And the world with its lust is passing away, but the one who does the will of God remains forever. **1 John 2:14-17**

Christ has called us to be “*the salt of the earth*”. It is the noble calling of God's covenant people. We are to be a preservative, to add flavor and meaning to the life of others, and to create within them a thirst for the living water. These can only be accomplished when we remain pure and true to His commands. Lord help us to become the salt of the earth! This is our prayer, as next week we will learn how to become “the light of the world.”

Truth!!!