

Matthew 5.13-16
Are You Worth Your Salt?
WRCOB 5.26.24

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMJyBTN3bK8>

Chickens are a bit stupid, I know
But they do eat rocks, pebbles really
To help break down food.

But unless you're a chicken like Hei Hei here
Salt will be the only rock you'll ever eat.

Salt, nowadays is pretty commonplace.

But at one time it was an extremely valuable product.

In Africa, salt was mined in the Sahara
And hauled out on camels
To all corners of the world.

To this day, camel convoys travel trails
Used for centuries to carry salt to markets.

Salt was not only used to flavor foods
It was used to preserve foods.

It was so valuable
That in the time of Jesus
Roman soldiers were paid in salt rations.

That's where the word "salary" comes from.

And that's also where the phrase
"Worth your salt" comes from.

We begin our summer sermon series
With Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

This teaching running from Matthew 5 through 7
Is arguably one of his most important teachings.

According to John Stott, the sermon

Describes what human life and human community look like when they come under the gracious rule of God.

The sermon might be one of the most important
But the least understood
And definitely the least followed of his teachings.

Nonetheless, it is a sermon Jesus preached
And what he wanted his followers to be and do.

It is what Jesus wants us strive for.

Here is a Christian value-system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude toward money, ambition, lifestyle and network of relationships—all of which are totally at variance with those of the non-Christian world (Stott).

It is the ethical and moral heights of Christian living.

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Our Wednesday evening Bible study
Has gone through the first verses of the sermon
Known as the Beatitudes.

Because of this
We will move right into verses 13-16
The verses read this morning.

Jesus tells his disciples
“You are the salt of the earth.”

As I said, salt is commonplace and even ordinary.

It's in every kitchen, in every home
In every country in the world.

So is Jesus telling us
That we are ordinary and commonplace?

No.

Salt is commonplace but extremely valuable.

Because salt, sodium chloride, is essential for life.

You have to have it.

Salt is essential for nerve and muscle function
And it's involved in regulating
The fluids in the body.

Of course, too much salt is detrimental to health.

But I find that the most fascinating thing about salt
Is that it does not exist for itself.

Its function is only in what it does for something else.

In and of itself, it has no value.

Its worth rests on how it reacts
When it is associated with some other thing.

For instance

One of its uses is to enhance the flavor of food.

We don't put it on food so that we can taste salt.

I love salt on corn-on-the-cob

But I don't put salt on corn and say

“Wow, good salt!”

I put salt on corn and say,

“Wow, that's great corn!”

Salt's sole purpose

Is to bring out the flavor of tasteless things.

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Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.”

In a similar way, light doesn't exist for its own sake.

We don't turn on a light to see the light-bulb.

We turn on a light to see something else

The book we're reading

The features of a face

The path on which we walk.

And so, metaphorically speaking

We are to be like salt and light

Our sole purpose is to enhance others

And be a light for them to see by.

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Salt and light are metaphors for love.

Because, love too, does not exist for itself.

Love sole purpose is for the sake of others.

Now that we are in Christ and of Christ
We are not our own.

The Apostle Paul writes

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV

Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? ²⁰ You are not your own. You were bought at a price.

We exist to love God, to love others
And to love Creation.

Thomas Merton wrote

We do not exist for ourselves alone, and it is only when we are fully convinced of this fact that we begin to love ourselves properly and thus also love others.

We are told by Jesus to be salt of the earth
And light of the world

We are to give flavor to the more mundane existences
So many people find themselves living today.

To be peacemakers, to be merciful
To be meek, to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We are to be the light of the world
Lighting up those places deep in darkness.

Our light shines not to show who we are
But to show others whose we are! We are Christ's.

I heard someone once say
There are people around us everyday
Who never open a Bible.

Yet, if they know we are followers of Jesus
They read us.

Do they see Christ in our lives?

Do our actions or words emulate those of Jesus?

Do we let our light shine so they know
That what we do is not about us, but about Jesus?

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I said this in a sermon not so long ago
That the church is to influence the world
Not the other way around.

Spurgeon goes on to say

I believe that one reason why the church of God at this present time has so little influence over the world is because the world has so much influence over the church.

He said this in the mid-1800s
How applicable it is for today.

Put your finger on any prosperous page in the Church's history, and I will find a little marginal note reading thus:

Never were there good times when the church and the world were joined in marriage with one another.

The more the Church is distinct from the world in her acts and in her maxims, the [truer] is her testimony for Christ, and the more potent is her witness against sin.

Even more so, as we see the church move
Towards a merger between church and state
Under the auspices of Christian Nationalism.

The church is to flavor the world, like salt
Like light, we are to shine in dark places.

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There was a man who was stuck in traffic.

He heard the person behind him honking his horn.

The guy wouldn't quick honking.

So, the man sticks his hand out the window
And flips the guy the bird.

Now, this man has forgotten two things:

He has forgotten his behavior as a Christian

And he has forgotten that he is in his wife's car
And she has bumper sticker that reads
"Honk if you love Jesus!"

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Jesus says, we are the salt of the earth
But if we lose our saltiness
Is it any good?

No, it is thrown out and trampled on.

Jesus says, we are the light of the world.
But if we put it under a bushel basket
What good is it?

Are we “worth our salt”?

Are we using what God has given us
To enhance those around us
To be the good that flavors a tasteless society.

Are we hiding the light that God blessed us with
Under a bushel basket?

Or are we letting our light to shine
For the world to see all of God’s goodness

Psalm 34:8 NRSV
O taste and see that the Lord is good

Again, from Charles Spurgeon

The Bible is not the light of the world, it is the light of the Church. But the world does not read the Bible, the world reads Christians! ‘You are the light of the world’.

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Years ago, at a Billy Graham Crusade
An executive of a big firm went forward
And accepted Jesus Christ as Savior.

The following Sunday
He went to church for the very first time
And recognized a fellow businessperson.

After the service he went and spoke to the other person.

He said to him

“I was at the Billy Graham Crusade,
And I went forward and received Christ.”

The person said,

“Yea, I heard and I think it’s wonderful.”

Then the man who had just received Christ asked

“How long have we known one another?”

“How long have we worked together?”

“I expect it’s been twenty years,” said the other.

“And all this time you have known Jesus Christ?”

“Yes, I have,” the person said.

The new Christian man looked his friend in the eye

“I don’t remember you
Ever speaking to me about Christ
During all those years.”

“Had you any concern over my spiritual welfare
To ever mention Jesus to me?”

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Are we worth our salt?
Or is it trampled underfoot?

Does our light shine?
Or do we simply hide it under a bushel basket?

Salt and light don’t exist for themselves
Neither does love

Their sole purposes are to influence and light the way
To God, our Creator
To Jesus, our Savior
To the Holy Spirit, our advocate.

Say it with me.

- Be the salt
- Be the light
- Be the love

Let us pray.