

# SALTY

*Salt deposits beside the Dead Sea.*



Matthew 5: 13-20

August 2022

*You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot. (Matt 5: 13).*

Living as many of us do in cultures of plenty, we take household goods, like salt, for granted. Yet, throughout

history, salt was one of the most sought after commodities. The ancients believed salt would ward off evil spirits. Salt was used for medicinal purposes, to disinfect wounds, check bleeding, treat skin disorders. Roman soldiers were sometimes paid in salt - hence the English word "salary". And of course, in all the centuries before refrigeration, salt was essential for food preservation.

Today, we still use salt for all sorts of purposes. Salt accentuates flavours, melts ice, soothes sore throats, rinses sinuses, eases swelling and cleanses wounds. Salt has an edge to it too. It stings, burns, abrades and irritates. If we do not have enough salt in our bodies, we die. But if we have too much? We die.

Did you notice how Jesus called his listeners "the salt of the earth," and here he is saying something profound, something easy to miss in our 21st century context. First of all, he is telling us who we are. We are salt. We are the salt of the earth. We are that which enhances, or embitters, soothes or irritates, melts or stings, preserves or ruins. For better or worse, we are the salt of the earth, and what we do with our saltiness matters a lot. We are the salt of the earth and we impact the world we live in whether we want to or not.

Second, we are precious. Again, it's easy to miss the importance of this in our modern world where salt is cheap and plentiful. Remember the audience Jesus was speaking to - the poor, the mournful, the meek, the persecuted. The hungry, the sick, the crippled, the frightened. The outcast,

the misfit, the disreputable, the demon-possessed. "You," he tells them all. "You are the salt of the earth. You who are not shiny and well fed and fashionable, you who've been rejected, wounded, unloved and forgotten - you are essential. You are worthwhile. You are treasured. And I am commissioning you."

Third, salt does its best work when it's poured out. When it's scattered. When it dissolves into what is around it. Salt is meant to share its unique flavour in order to bring out the best in all that surrounds it. Which means that if we want to enliven, enhance, deepen and preserve the world we live in, we must not hide within the walls of our churches. We must not cluster and congregate for our own comfort.

Now let's take a look at the '**Salty Christian**'. Christian saltiness heals; it doesn't wound. It purifies; it doesn't desiccate. It softens; it doesn't destroy. Even when Christian saltiness has an edge - even when, for example, it incites thirst - it only draws the thirsty towards the living water of God. It doesn't leave the already thirsty parched, dehydrated, and embittered.

The salty Christian is called to live wisely, creatively and in balance. Salt, at its best sustains and enriches life. It pours itself out with discretion so that God's kingdom might be known on the earth - a kingdom of spice and zest, a kingdom of health and wholeness, a kingdom of varied depth, flavour and complexity.

We are the salt of the earth. That is what we are, for better or for worse. May it be for better. May your pouring out - and mine - be for the life of the world.

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