

## Matthew 5:13 “The Extra Salt Diet” 1/24/21

The story is told of a Bible study that was discussing the text; “You are the salt of the earth” - One suggestion after another was made as to the effect of “salt” being like the effect of the Church on our society

“Salt imparts a desirable flavor,” said one - “Salt preserves from decay,” another suggested - Then a girl’s comment made everyone think - She said, “Salt creates thirst”

Everyone was thinking: Have I ever made someone thirsty for the Lord Jesus Christ?<sup>1</sup>

Matthew 5:13 is an excellent one-verse parable - It is part of the Sermon on the Mount and in it Jesus says, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.”<sup>2</sup>

There are so many ways a believer can be compared to salt - Salt preserves, penetrates, flavors, spreads, works quietly, and creates a thirst - These are all qualities that the believer, the disciple of Jesus Christ should have

In chemistry, we learn that salt is made of two poisonous elements - Sodium and chlorine individually can kill you - But combined into sodium chloride they form one of the necessities of life

Another thing we may learn from chemistry is that salt is a very stable compound - If you go to the supermarket and buy that box with the little girl in the raincoat with the umbrella - The salt inside that box is always going to stay salty

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<sup>1</sup> Paul Lee Tan, “Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations”

<sup>2</sup> Scripture quoted has been taken from The Holy Bible, English Standard Version,

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So hearing Jesus warn about salt losing its saltiness - Might lead us to believe that the Lord needs a lesson in chemistry - But if that is what we think, we are the ones who need a lesson in history

Those who heard Jesus say this in the Sermon on the Mount would have had no such problem - They would have been well aquatinted with the salt of that day - And would have known that salt could lose its saltiness

In that day, salt was not produced by separating seawater into sea-salt and distilled water or by refining a mined mineral - But it was gathered in salt pits like the one we read of in Zephaniah 2:9 where a salt pit is associated with a desolate land that is of no use to anyone

Therefore, the salt of that day, when Jesus shared the Sermon on the Mount, was not pure sodium chloride - And it really could lose its saltiness - Since it was gathered instead of being mined and refined, the salt of that day was a mixture of many different elements

And sodium chloride was probably the most soluble chemical in that mixture - Therefore, it would have been the quickest to dissolve and rinse away - The remaining mixture may have still been white - But it would have been little more than dust

History has taught us that when that happened, the people would spread it on the rooftops of their houses - Which then would harden on the surface of the roof

And the roof in that day was an important outdoor room of the home - Like our patio or screened porch or deck would be today - So once spread on the roof, it was continually trampled under foot

In that day, no one would wonder about salt losing its saltiness - But they would have immediately understood Jesus' point - That like salt, believers shouldn't lose their saltiness

Sadly, we all can probably think of someone like that - Someone who becomes a new believer, and is just on fire for Jesus Christ - But after a while that passion cools, and the believer drifts

Sometimes that person ends up doing more harm than good - Because here was a person who everyone knew was excited about Jesus - But now that person may have slipped into many sins

For some, losing their saltiness may only damage themselves - And you probably know some of those too - That would be the person who comes to Church all the time - Often they are involved in everything that goes on

But then they start to drift away - Their attendance starts to slip - And maybe they don't come to Bible study or other Church activities very often anymore

At home, perhaps their passion for spending time in God's Word drifts into an occasional time spent in the Scriptures - And before long their Bible is on a shelf somewhere gathering dust, instead of guiding the steps of that person

Instead of drifting away, the message of this verse is that we are all to keep our saltiness - We do this by keeping close to Jesus and connecting in the Church

The best antidote against slipping away is prayer, Bible study, and the fellowship of other believers - Being a part of a faithful Church like ours is so important

In the words of Hebrews 10:24-25 "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near"

Another way to keep solid in the faith is to have a dedication to keeping close to Jesus - We should also be busy growing in the faith - Loving others the way Jesus loves us and blessing others with our good deeds

Another aspect of salt is that it preserves; it keeps things from going bad or decaying - It cleans and disinfects - And that may remind us of the Church's influence in this world

I would not like to imagine our society without the influence of the Church - We are very often the voice of moral reason - The preserving factor of upholding what is right - And directing those who are heading in the wrong direction to forgiveness and repentance

I do not like croutons on my salad - They may be good in split pea soup - But I like things like lettuce, cucumbers, onions, radishes, and tomatoes in my salad, not little pieces of burned toast

In a restaurant, they will sometimes add them to the salad - So when I'm done there is a little pile of croutons off on the side of my salad plate - Salt is not like that though - If you get a bowl of soup with salt in it - It is not something you can eat around, and leave on the side of the dish

That's why Jesus calls us to be salt, and not croutons - The Church should penetrate - Like a little salt on the top of a pot of soup - It is not very long before it permeates the entire pot - Our mission is the same

We are not called to stay in our beautiful Church building until Jesus returns - Instead, we are to take the message, the Good News of Jesus Christ, and spread it throughout the world

Matthew 28:19-20 record Jesus' Great Commission - He told us we should, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

There also should be a contagious amount of joy that goes along with being a believer in Jesus - And we are to use that joy to flavor the world

The Apostle Paul wrote, in Galatians 5:22-23 “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.” - That sounds like the flavor I would like to find in the world around me

As the flavor of salt spreads, so should our faith - This Christian faith of ours started with Jesus and just a small handful of disciples - In addition to all of those witnesses who saw Him in the Holy Land 2,000 years ago

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came - And the Church has been spreading since then - Here in our Church we may think of ourselves as small - But if each of us were to share the Gospel with just 1 person every 5 years - And that person were to reach 1 more person every 5 years, and so on

In 20 years, we would reach 1600 people with the Gospel of Jesus - In 50 years, an incredible 102,400 will have been touched by our passion to share the message

I guess we will have a multi-million dollar facility by then - Because our current building sure won't hold 100,000 people coming to worship every Sunday

Even better, after only 100 years, we will reach 104,857,600 people with the message of Salvation - At that rate, we will top the 1 billion mark in only 120 years with 1,677,721,600 new believers

And remember, that would all take place if each of us could reach just 1 new person every 5 years - Could we do that?

Peter wrote that we should, “always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”<sup>3</sup> - God's Word tells us that we are to be ready to share our faith

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<sup>3</sup> from 1 Peter 3:15

When we share Jesus with someone - That person may not immediately decide to accept Christ as their savior, but our efforts are not wasted - Once God's Word is shared, it does not return empty

In Isaiah 55:10-11 God says, "For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it."

God's Word truly is living and active - It touches the lives, and hearts of those who hear it

I selected today's passage about being salt in this world because God is glorified and praised both when we are obedient to God's Word and when we are so excited about our faith that we have to share it with others

Glorifying and praising God is something we may do in so many different ways - God is glorified and praised in our worship, in our music, in the way we love others, in the way we serve Him, in our times of holiness, in the way we care for what God has given us, in our witness, in the way our children are raised, and in the way we are obedient to the Lord's commands

So go forth from here today to glorify and praise God by being salt in this faith starved world - Sharing your faith in Christ because in the words of our Savior Jesus, "You are the salt of the earth"