

Did you *hear* that?!?!?!?

YOU are the salt of the earth. **YOU** are the light of the world.

YOU!!!! Do you realize how useful you are???

— how important it is to become **God**-salty & **God**-light ???

Let's look at **salt** for a minute:

Random House Kernerman Webster's College Dictionary

salt • **y** ('sɒl ti) *adj.* **salt** • **i** • **er**, **salt** • **i** • **est**.

1. tasting of or containing salt; saline.

2. piquant; sharp; witty.

3. racy or coarse: *salty humor*. ...

4. of the sea or sailing.

[1400–50] **salt**'i•ly, *adv.*; **salt**'i•ness, *n.*

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InternetSlang.com:

SALTY means "Upset, annoyed, embarrassed"

- that's about *too much* salt, right? eat too much salt and *nya-ugh!*

... just like too much light is blinding, right?

But I want to talk about being **God**-salty & **God**-light

– and it IS about moderation – about using —being— the right amount of salt – adding a little at a time and testing the results before adding more. – about using light to illumine dark places and not blaring it into the eyes of a victim like an interrogator into the eyes of an inmate... trying to force a confession.

On an East Indian reformed church website called <http://www.openchurch.com/377/6-ways-to-be-salt-of-the-earth/>.

I found a list of salt attributes posted by Viji Zachariah.

Here are his main points (marked with *) & my riff on each...

Salt is tasty.*

- It turns bland food delicious.
- As Eugene Peterson says in his Bible interpretation, *The Message*:

God-salty people bring out the God-flavors of this world.

There is so much going on all around us. No-one notices it all —except maybe some autistic people – and they notice so much, it's quite overwhelming. But the rest of us only see a smidgeon of what's happening around us. And **God-salty people** point out – hey, look at this! Isn't that a miracle? Look at what God has done here: more than we can ask or imagine!

Salt makes people thirsty.*

- This is why they serve salty stuff in bars, right? pretzels and peanuts & chips – They make you thirsty! ...
- So maybe **God-salty people** make others thirsty for God...

Salt thaws ice.*

- As our recent weather reminds us: ice is cold and hard.
- Maybe **God-salty people** help thaw and heal cold, hard hearts who are afraid to love and afraid to understand just how simple the gospel is.

Salt heals & purifies & draws out infection.*

- have you ever used an Epsom-salt soak to draw out a splinter or an infection? This old-fashioned cure is amazingly effective.
- Maybe truly **God-salty people** are a healing presence: physically, emotionally, spiritually. Why? How? because LOVE HEALS.

Salt is a preservative.*

- one of the ancient ways of saving food for later also allowing you to take food –like fish— with places far away.
- Preservatives guard things from decay and corruption.
Maybe God-salty people help root out corruption they see in the world around them. The Rev. Suzanne Guthrie says these are the “dissidents, truth-tellers, [and] reformers” – those who “lean into the danger of the times in which they live” [and risk imprisonment and torture] “giving their lives to principles larger than themselves.”

<http://www.edgeofenclosure.org/epiphany5a.html>

last point from Viji Zachariah:

Salt helps things grow.*

...I also looked this up on an agriculture website...

- Salt CAN help things grow. Salts are used in fertilizer.
...but again we are talking **moderation**. It needs to be the right kinds of salts and the right amounts.
- This is a challenge for the families of religious people.
What is the right amount of religion? ...and when is our God-salty enthusiasm out of whack??? –so over-emphasized– that it withers living things in the immediate environment?
-- as with table salt – you gotta check as you go...

So YES. Moderation & reflection & discernment are necessary, but what a world God-saltiness & God-light opens for us! A world – a life full of wonder, and surprise, ... full of pain, yes! and full of joy!

And it seems that Paul –in this convoluted epistle today –1st Corinthians–is telling us that the gospel is really quite simple!

--The gospel – the Good News of Godly living is not complicated and it's not new.

Scan today's old passage from Isaiah about how to let your light shine:

It's *not* about *acting* religious.

It's about helping real people you know & encounter:

- paying your workers fairly & promptly
- sharing your bread with the hungry
- bringing the homeless poor into your house
 - I myself have benefitted from the hospitality of strangers and brought the homeless poor into my house. risky? yes. also amazingly eye-opening & enriching... would I do it again? I don't know!... but wow!
- and what about “not hiding yourself from your own kin”
 - the gospel can be as simple as truly engaging your own family, flawed though we may be...

How has the gospel become real in my experience?

in elementary school: when a shy kid dropped her lunch tray and everyone laughed, but one kid got up and helped pick up the pieces ... and the teachers who came and fixed everything.

in high school, when one tough-looking teen invited a new kid to sit at their lunch table.

in college, when someone drank too much and became suddenly and violently ill and another someone – a mere acquaintance – helped clean up the over-drinker and the place and loaned clothes off her back, and they became close friends.

later, when there were young back-packers making their way from the train station to a youth-hostel at the top of hill in France, and an elderly couple stopped in their Alfa Romeo convertible and gave them & their humongo heavy back-packs a ride to the top.

Whenever people hold the door when you're carrying a load, or offer to help carry it, pick up things you've dropped, loan you money when you come up short, smile, greet & make

conversation with new folks. Give a hand and a word of encouragement to a young parent carrying a toddler or dealing with a child in full-blown tantrum mode.

That is God-salt & God-light... transforming the giver and the receiver.

If you look at **today's collect** – the prayer that goes with these readings, it says: Set us free, O God, from the bondage of our sins, and give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.

Living as God-salt and God-Light is about being set free.

and that word “sin” – I think we get hung-up on it.

“Sin” is whatever is holding us back from generosity, from love, from integrity, from forming the best relationships. Mostly I think SIN is about our EGO. –Ego, as in our need to judge others to prove our superiority. or EGO as in our preoccupation with feeling not-good-enough.

Just think of all that we could do if we could stop worrying about whether we are sufficient or better or worse than others.

As the Islamic mystic Rumi puts it:

“We need to wash ourselves of ourselves”

and just get on with the call of the Gospel.

We are not here just to worship Jesus & put him on a pedestal.

We are here to embody Christ and carry Good News out into real lives.

Jesus tells us:

WE are God's salt and light.

“Set us free, O God, ... give us the liberty of that abundant life which you have made known to us in your Son our Savior Jesus Christ.”

AMEN!