

Salt without Savor is Worthless
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church, Kinston NC
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.
May 2, 2021

Text: Matthew 5:13-16 (KJV)

Purpose: Christians have been given the task to be the “salt of the earth.” Yet we are under pressure from the world to lose our “saltiness.” If we lose our “saltiness”, are we able once again, to regain it? Unless we return to the source, we will be cast out and trampled underfoot.
Return unto the Lord and be renewed.

I came across a story this week, that sounds like something I would have done when I was in High School. This person reports, towards the end of their senior year in high school, they were required to take a CPR course. The class used the well-known mannequin victim, Resusci-Annie, to practice. Typical of most models, this Resusci-Annie was only a torso, to allow for storage in a carrying case.

The class went off in groups to practice. As instructed, one of the students gently shook the doll and asked, "Are you all right?"



He then put his ear over the mannequin's mouth to listen for breathing. Suddenly he turned to the instructor and exclaimed, "She said she can't feel her legs!"¹

¹ Mikey's Funnies, April 19, 2021

Over the past three weeks, we have been examining the Beatitudes as a demonstration of the characteristics of citizens of the Kingdom of God. We are to be poor in spirit, to mourn, to demonstrate meekness, seek after righteousness, be merciful, and be peacemakers. What a tall task for a world that seeks its own glory and fame. The world in which we live simply does not understand these Kingdom characteristics and often mocks and persecutes those that live godly lives.

Now that Jesus has laid the foundational principles for those that belong to the Kingdom of God and how they should live, He gives them two more metaphors, or illustrations as to how a believer's actions impact the world. Jesus said, *"You are the salt of the earth."* *"You are the light of the world."*



Can you imagine how the world feels when it comes to this idea? These poor, weak, merciful, righteous, pure in heart, peacemakers – are the salt of the earth and light of the world? What good are people like that? They are not the movers and shakers of the world! They do not head up large countries, lead armies into battle, or lead in conquering over our enemies!



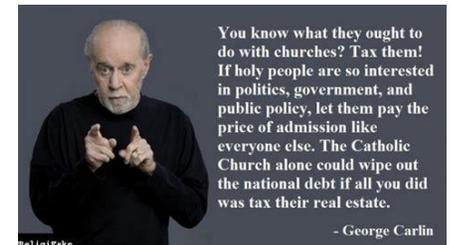
As Jesus was talking with His disciples there by the Sea of Galilee, He was reminding them in their own power, they could not be the "Salt of the Earth" or the "Light of the World." It was only by the Spirit of God dwelling in them

that they could be the transforming, preserving power in the world.



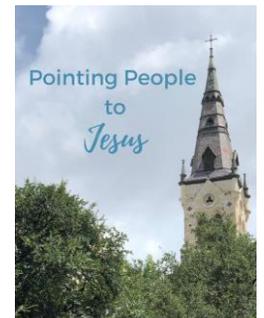
For a few moments today, we are only going to look at the idea of being the "salt of the earth." Next week we will examine the metaphor of being the "light of the world." This word from Jesus is addressed to the Church as well as the individual. This is a solemn word for the believing church and individual when you consider that you may lose your influence – saltiness – and become worthless. It causes us to consider, can we ever regain our saltiness? And if we cannot, what happens then?

Our society does not value the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. In many communities, the church is barely tolerated.



Occasionally you hear of a community that will not rezone a piece of property to allow a church to be built. Some communities see the church as a drain on public resources – fire, police, lost property tax revenue – instead of an aiding influence. From the world's perspective, it does not matter if the church sits here between Madison and Cameron Ave.

Some view the church as the place where funerals and weddings are held. Others like its distinctive buildings or its chiming bells each hour. But the value of the church today lies in the fact that it is the visible representation of Christ's kingdom here on earth. The government is not pointing



men and women to God. The school system is not telling boys and girls about the love of God. The shopping malls and bars are not leading men to Jesus Christ. From my perspective, the church is the most valuable organization on the face of the earth. The church and its people are important because they are salt in a decaying world.

I. The High Task of “Being Salt”²

When Jesus said His disciples were “salt” he wasn’t literally saying they were the chemical compound NaCl (sodium chloride). He was saying they had the responsibility of being salt to a decaying world.



Today we do not use salt as much as they did a century ago. With the advent of the modern refrigerator, we don’t think about using salt as a preservative, instead, we think of it as a flavoring.

Alexander Maclaren, in his commentary on Matthew, made the comment that you don’t salt a living thing. You salt a dead thing so it will not rot. Years ago, when country hams were cured the old-fashioned way, you would salt down the meat to keep it from rotting. Even in the canning of many items today, salt is added to help preserve it longer.

The implication for us being salt means we have to pour ourselves out into our families, community, nation and world, to help preserve others. If we simply keep our faith in God to ourselves, we are like salt in a salt shaker. Salt

becomes useful, and accomplishes what it is supposed to, when it is poured out. Our conduct in this world and our character impact others around us.

Our power as salt comes from our own purity. The presence of a good man or woman in any organization or family hinders the work of the devil. We exercise a repressive presence there. Has someone started a crude joke in your presence and they stop because they know you are a Christian? Your influence and presence arrest degradation and stop a further decline.

Another aspect of our presence among people is that we can call others to a higher standard of morality. You influence others. Every person that seeks to call others to a higher standard of morality influences others and they in turn call others to live on a higher moral standard. It has a ripple effect. I have seen families that have held high standards for their children and most of the time, they live up to it due to the influence of a good mother or father.



But at times I have seen families torn apart by a mother and/or father’s lack of positive influence on their children. Maybe the parents are self-absorbed in drugs, alcohol, or other destructive habits. The result is that their children run wild at home and they run wild at school. Unchecked they ride up and down the roads drunk or strung out on drugs and eventually destroy the lives of others. If only one person in those families had been salt and light to them, their entire family could have turned out differently.

² Outline from Alexander Maclaren’s Commentary on Matthew 5:13

You may never know the impact you can have on one person. That one person could have made the difference in a community. For salt to work, it must stay in contact with those that need our positive influence. If we withdraw from others because they are different, or their families have problems, we may be making matters worse instead of better.

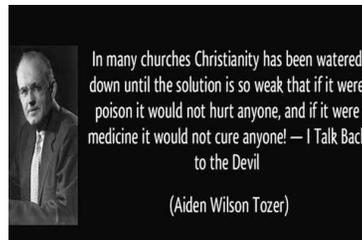
The second metaphor Jesus used was the idea we are “the light of the world.” We like the idea of ourselves being flashy and shiny. The thing with salt is that it is silent. **We will never be the light of the world until we are the salt of the earth. (repeat)** We have to take on the humble part of living, the inconspicuous silent part of stopping corruption around us, the pure example of a Godly life, before we can be the light of Christ in a dark world.



So, let me ask you a difficult question: Is there anything in your life that is causing you to lose your saltiness? Are there impure things in your life that are causing your influence to deteriorate?

II. Is It Possible to Lose Your Saltiness?

Is it possible to lose your saltiness? Yes, that is a real possibility. We may have allowed the influences of the world to become so entrenched in our lives that our ability to positively



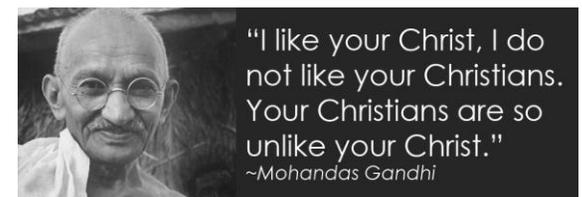
influence our family, community or nation is dramatically compromised.

If you were to take a hard look at Christendom today, you can see the church’s influence is waning quickly today. Many churches have watered down the gospel to a dim reflection of what a church should be. Some have caved to the mindset that we must bring people into the building and entertain them. Some ministers have cut their sermons to ten minutes since people’s attention span is that short. Some ministers never speak of heaven or hell – sin or salvation – redemption or the cross. The church has lost its influence in many places around the world. Some have gone so far as to embrace sin as acceptable doctrine for the denomination.



It is not just the church at large that has lost its saltiness; it is the churches ministers and members. Every week you can find a story of another minister that left his wife for another woman in the church. You hear of another congregation split because of the actions of a youth leader, music director, or an associate pastor. Many students, even students entering seminary, have an issue with pornography.

Our churches are losing their saltiness because our ministers and members are losing their saltiness. Do you know someone that simply quit because they could not maintain a pure life? I do. We all know someone



that simply gave in and walked away from the church. They have lost their saltiness because the world became so much a part of them.

Most people do not see an ounce of difference between the way the world lives and the way church members live. No wonder the world has turned up its nose at the message of the church – they cannot see transformed lives.

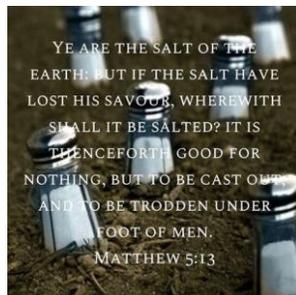
If you were to take a red-hot ball of steel out of a furnace and lay it down on a block of ice, you will see two things happen at the same time. You will see the red-hot ball of steel begin to cool off. You will begin to see the block of ice begin to melt. Eventually, they both will become the same temperature. One will get cooler, and the other will begin to get warmer.

Every person influences another person around them.



The stronger one will influence the weaker one. Some will rub off on you if you are weak. Some of you will rub off on others if you are stronger. Someone once said, “Men must either be hammers or anvils.” For those of you that don’t know what an anvil is, it is that large piece of steel on which smaller pieces of steel are placed on to be hammered and be molded and shaped. We must either give the blows or receive them.

We are called to be the “salt of the earth.” If you are not salting the world, the world around you will rot. If you are not transforming those around you, then are they transforming you?



Sadly, as we look around, the world has had the impact of cooling the fervent devotion of Christians to the point we are ineffective. If you have ever been in a cold climate, you will find nothing grows very well there. You will not find oranges being grown in Alaska. There are some individuals that were once on fire for God. They loved God with all their hearts, but now they have cooled off. Their love for God has been replaced by the cares of this world. Their devotion to studying God’s word has been replaced by the love of entertainment and self gratification.



We need to turn back to our first love and rekindle that fire from within. We may not be as a rapidly burning flame in a fireplace, but we can become like those deep red embers that slowly, steadily: burn and glow once again. We need to realize we can lose the savor – the flavor – the influence – of our life when we ignore our walk with God. Many Christians have gotten out of the habit of meditating on God’s word, have stopped studying the Bible, and rarely pray. These are the key to retaining your savor. If you are not keeping your connection with God alive, then your salt is becoming more and more useless.

III. If We Lose Our Saltiness – Can It Be Regained?

If we lose our saltiness, can it be regained? Is it possible to regain our saltiness once again? The scripture asks, “*If the salt loses its savor (taste), how can it be salted?*” Another translation says, “*If the salt loses its flavor, how can it be seasoned?*”

If the church is to be the purifying agent in the world, and it loses its saltiness, how can it be restored? If the individual is to be salt to their family and community, how can they be restored if they lose their saltiness? Is there anything *in this world* that can help the us be renewed or restored? The silent echo of “No” comes through loud and clear. Apart from God, there is no hope of restoration.



But I believe with Christ, all things are possible. I believe a church can be restored to its vitality once again. I believe an individual can be restored to their place of influence once again. If we go back to the source, we will find an all-sufficient Christ to restore us and empower us once again.

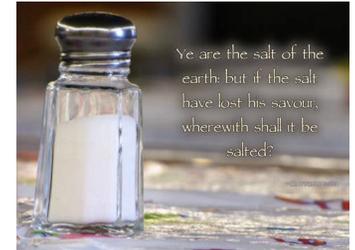
Jesus told the church at Ephesus in the Book of Revelation 2:5, *“Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you and quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent.”*



When we examine ourselves and take an honest look at our “saltiness,” our only response is to repent and go back and do the first works once again. When we do, we will be restored once again. Our lampstand will not be removed and our relationship with God will be restored. Our repentance will make our salt once again salty, and our light to once again, shine brightly.

IV. The Outcome of Salt Without Savor ...

Matthew lets us know quickly the outcome of our lives if we do not remain salty. *“It is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by man.”* Luke 14:35 says this about salt that has lost its flavor, *“It is neither good for the land nor the dunghill.”* You cannot take salt that is flavorless and place it on a field because it will render the field useless.



Apparently, you cannot put it in a dunghill, because it will make that unfit. The only use you have for contaminated salt is to put it on a walking path where people will trample upon it. God has no use for it and man has no use for it. It has failed in the one purpose it was given.

If a knife is dull, it is useless. If a light bulb is burnt out, it is useless. If a pen has no ink, it is useless. If a person has compromised their witness for Christ, that person may seem useless to the Kingdom of God and a mockery to the world. However, if a person turns and repents, they can be useful once again to the Kingdom of God and an example of God’s grace to the world.

All across Europe, you will find large stone churches, built hundreds of years ago, closed up with no one coming to worship in them. All across Asia Minor you will find empty shells of former churches. All of the churches listed in the Book of Revelation have long since closed and their foundations are all that remain. Over an archway of a Mosque in Damascus you can read the



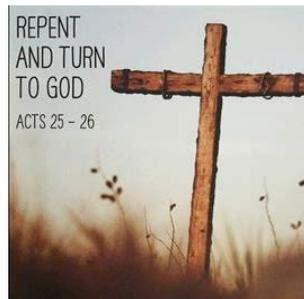
half-obliterated inscription “Thy Kingdom, O Christ, is an everlasting Kingdom.” Above it is written, “There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His prophet!” The salt of that Christian church lost its savor, and has been cast out.³

All across America we see signs of declining churches. Many of those churches will close because they are weak and do not have the vitality to stand when difficult times come. Often the weak are consumed by the adversary. The devil is still searching to find who he may devour. The feeble ones, the ones who have lost their saltiness, will yield a crop of apostates and heretics. Today our weaker Christian denominations have turned their back on God’s word and embraced the theology of the world. They will be trampled underfoot.



We need to remember this clearly: Unless you go back and walk closely with the Lord, you will move further away from Him. The deadness will deepen and the coldness will become colder. You will reflect less and less Christlikeness and more and more worldliness. I pray before it is too late, if you have lost your savor, you will hear the voice of the Lord and turn back to Him.

The fifth church listed in the Book of Revelation was Sardis. The Lord said of that church, “*I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead.*” Let us as God’s people, Hear the



word of the Lord and return to meditating on God’s word, studying His love letter to His people, and praying often to Hear the master’s call upon our life.

Has your salt lost its savor? I pray you have ears to hear, what the Spirit of the Lord is saying to us today.

LET US PRAY

³ Quoted from Alexander Maclaren’s Commentary on Matthew 5:13, p. 187.