

**13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.**

**14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

OK, let's review where we are in the **context** of our text.

People gathered around Jesus on a hillside and he began to teach his disciples. We talked at great length about the word **BLESSED** and I find myself wanting to keep going back to it. I think it is because I have missed its importance for so long. I have some **catching up** to do. I hope you have joined me in this. We are the **happy people** of a **happy God** or scripture does not mean what it says.

Now who are these happy people? Who are these people in the most fortunate state.

First they are people who have seen that they are in **abject poverty** when it comes to accomplishing truly **spiritual** improvements **in** themselves **by** themselves. They have concluded, **I cannot do this thing**. It must be done **to me** by one who has the resources.

These same people also see not only **the good** that they **cannot do** but the **bad** that they **have done** and it pierces them to their soul. They mourn their state.

These people are driven by the Holy Spirit to surrender their will to their Master's will. They are meek, in that they are always looking at their Master for His guidance of what to do next. They are MEEK.

In this pursuit they are driven back to Christ to **feed on His goodness**, they are driven to **rightness**. And when they see they **lack it** they are driven right **back again** to Christ. They become obsessed with the rightness that only comes from Christ.

Then this life begins spilling out on their **regard for others**. Just as Christ has concerned Himself with the misery sin has created **for us**, we begin to care about the misery sin has caused **for others**. We care about the suffering of others.

All of the above succeeds in driving us to a **single minded devotion**. We find more and more that we only want **one thing** in life. We want to please Christ.

We want to make much of Christ. We want to stand for Him. We become pure in heart.

And as our only desire is to **make much of Christ** and **represent Him well**, what else could happen but that our mercy compels us to **tell others** how **they can have peace**. We call on everyone in every situation to be reconciled with God. The ministry of reconciliation happens in all kinds of settings. We become people who are always offering people the possibility of peace. Peace with God and a method of having peace with each other.

And what will happen?

Some people will respond **positively** to the offer. And some will want to **harm us**. They may do it by slander or gossip. They may do it at gunpoint. It is all from the same source, even if it does not all have the same effect on us. Now, what is the **response** of those who really believe their Master? Is it despair or anger or depression to see their unfair treatment? No, these people are happy. They are glad. Why? Because they **like** hurting? Of course not. **They have irrefutable proof that they are barking up the right tree, they are living the right way.** They are proven to be Christ followers.

These people are offered eternal rewards, some beginning right now. They have so much to look forward to. They are the most blessed people on earth. No matter who has **more success** or **status** or **wealth** or **fame**, or **power**, these people are the winners of God's lottery and they know it.

That is a summary of the sermon on the mount up to verse 12. Maybe a good practice this afternoon, or this week, would for you to paraphrase the beatitudes so far based on what you learned. It would be a shame to go on from here without gaining a lasting knowledge of what a Christian is according to Jesus.

Now where do you think Jesus would go next in His sermon?

It looks to me like the next question that Jesus answers is this: **What is to be the relationship of Christian people to the society and the world?**

Christ has told us who these blessed people ARE. We see what makes them tick. They have had a profound supernatural change **happen to them** that manifests itself in all these changes. But what is their **purpose**? What are they on this planet for? Why not whisk them up to heaven when they reach a certain level? Why keep them here at all? There may be more than one answer to those questions, but clearly what Christ is saying in our text is that a Christian is here for the purpose that John MacArthur summarizes in one word- **INFLUENCE**.

Now, we are **in** the world. You and I may have varying degrees of how much we **rub shoulders** with the world. But we are all **in** it. So this becomes a very important question to us.

We know that the **influence** of the **world** on people is bad. And we mean the **world** as defined by its **spiritual influences**. We are not to love the world. We are not to be led by the world's influences. We are not to be absorbed with the world's stuff. With all that said, we might get the idea we should seclude ourselves from the world. Maybe the Catholic monks are right to protect their spirituality by removing themselves from any influence of the world? Maybe Christians should live in communes and keep the world's influence to an absolute minimum?

We might conclude these things if scripture did not say things like-

<sup>13</sup> **“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.**

Or

**2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (NKJV)**

<sup>15</sup> **For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.**

<sup>16</sup> **To the one *we are* the aroma of death *leading* to death, and to the other the aroma of life *leading* to life. And who is sufficient for these things?**

It is very clear. Our purpose is more than just **avoiding** the deadly influence of the world. We are to be **overcomers**. We are to walk **in** it but not be **of** it. We are to be distinctly and obviously different from it. We are to mingle with the world the way water mingles with oil.

We have a **mission** in the world as **peacemakers**. But we have an **influence** in the world as **salt and light**.

Now to the topic of salt. I have a book that I cannot find. In it, it describes how a lot of Jewish people would have made use of salt. Salt was readily available in the local area. But it would not be pure salt like we have. It would be mixed with gravel and other things. So these people would put a bunch of what they dug up into a cloth. Then, to use the salt, they would dip that little sack in water and sprinkle that water on their food. Eventually they would use up all the salt in the rag and they would dispose of what was left. But they had to be careful not to throw it in the garden because any salt that was left in the remains would do harm to the garden. So they would throw it on the path where they did not want anything to grow anyway.

I do not know if this is true. But it makes much more sense of what Jesus said if it is true. If it is true, all of His listeners would perfectly understand what He was saying. They knew what it meant to be using something, depending upon it for the qualities of salt, but being disappointed because it no longer had a salty flavor. It was time to throw out that salt and get some new.

Let's start with our verse again.

**13 "You are the salt of the earth;**

Now I have read that the way this is worded in Greek it means **you and only you**. There is no other salt of the earth. Christians **alone** are this influence. So whatever the influence is, it is a heavenly one. The world will **only get this** influence from one place. Believers.

And notice the word **ARE**. You **ARE** the salt of the earth. Notice Christ is not commanding you to do **salty things**. Christ simply says you **ARE** this salt. He has just shared what He is talking about. He is not talking about the person who, at one point in his life said, **I accept Jesus**. He is not talking about anyone who might join a church or cheer at Christian concerts and wear Christian t-shirts. He is talking about someone who has had this **fundamental change in His life**. These people **are** something and what they **are** will have a profound effect. They almost cannot help it. I say **almost** because we can quench the Holy Spirit and that will have negative effects.

Now the million dollar question is what does this salt do? Because what we determine **the salt does** will determine **how we will interpret this passage**. I looked at what MacArthur and Jones had to say on this passage and I find myself in the rare spot of having to disagree. I liked what they said intensely and wanted very much to preach it because there is so much good material to back their application in scripture. And I even think their application is of a true thing found elsewhere. But this text does not say it.

Both of my current bible study mentors believed that the main use of salt intended in this passage was to **impede corruption**. Their examples were of Christians who had such an influence that those around them would be uncomfortable with their own godless behavior due to their presence. And there is no doubt that Christians are to be this kind of people. But I can't see anything in the context of this verse that makes me believe that is what Jesus had in mind.

Look at the text.

**13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?**

I come to the conclusion, based on what the text says, that what this salt does is gives a **taste of heaven**. It's influence is flavor, not preservation. Our

influence is a taste of heaven. It is much like in we are to be a **smell** of heaven like in **2 Corinthians 2:15-16 (NKJV)**

**15 For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.**

This is not to say that everyone who experiences our **taste** will **like it**, any more than everyone who experiences our **light** will **like it**.

Well what does scripture say about taste?

**Psalm 34:8-9 (NKJV)**

**8 Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!**

**9 Oh, fear the LORD, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.**

Now how do we **taste** and see that the Lord is good? We **experience** Him. We place **our trust** in Him. We move outside of the world of the theoretical and we bring Him into our real decisions about the things we care most about. He becomes a real point of direction in our lives. And we are told here that if we will **experience our Lord** that way, we will find out that **He truly is wonderful**. He truly does want and do what is best for us. He truly is good. Here is another verse using taste.

**Psalm 119:103-105 (NKJV)**

**103 How sweet are Your words to my taste, Sweeter than honey to my mouth!**

**104 Through Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way.**

**105 Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**

Again we see that the taste is not literal. David is not eating sugar coated Bible Verse cereal. He is **experiencing** them. They are **active** in his life. He is encountering these truths. And the effects they have are **sweet** to Him. They are good. They are positive. They give him something that **he wants** and something that he **did not have** prior to encountering them. He knows stuff that he wants to know. He knows more and more how to live this life. He knows more and more about the God he loves.

In the same way I believe this is what we are to like in this life.

I think Paul may give us another clue.

**Colossians 4:4-6 (NKJV)**

**5 Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.**

**6 Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.**

I think Paul is telling us that speech with grace **is the same as** seasoned with salt. Seasoned with salt is another way of saying speech with grace. I believe that being the salt of the earth means living our lives in the portrayal of grace. There are lots of things naturally present in people's understanding. They are concepts people understand. Justice is not an odd concept. Righteous is not an odd concept. Perfection is not an odd concept. Oh, no one attains to it, but it is understandable. But Grace, as represented by Christ's attitude, is other worldly. It is a seasoning that gets the world's attention. On rare occasions Carla has misread a recipe and used the wrong quantity of salt. I am sure every cook has one of those stories. There is one quality of salt. You notice it. It can be the best meal in the world, but with too much salt it is ruined because salt has such a strong and noticeable quality. And a meal can also have all the right ingredients, but if it lacks salt it is noticeably not as good.

Grace is like that too. It is noticeable. When it is there, it is hard to miss. When a believer does a kindness to one who has done nothing to deserve a kindness, that gets noticed. And when that grace is done to someone who has only done that person harm, that is doubly noticed. That is a taste of Christ that a person cannot get out of their mouth. That is Christ tasting living. I believe that our salty living is ultimately Christ tasting living.

Mr MacArthur says this-

**To speak with grace means to say what is spiritual, wholesome, fitting, kind, sensitive, purposeful, complementary, gentle, truthful, loving, and thoughtful. Paul wrote in [Ephesians 4:29](#), "Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, that it may give grace to those who hear."**

MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary – Colossians and Philemon.

Christ is telling us that we are the **only source** for such salt in our world. Our world exists in an economy. You give things to get things. If someone treats you well, you give good things to them. If someone treats you badly, you avoid them or respond badly to them. But a Christian is different because he has a completely different agenda. He is not living for himself. He is submitted to King Jesus and has a heart with only one agenda. He is not self serving. He is **Christ** serving. He is looking to promote peace between man and God. That is a different creature altogether.

Christians are a different flavor, a different taste.

Think of someone in your life that tastes so much like Jesus that you are changed by being with them. I can think of a few people like that. They are people that, if given the chance, would far rather talk about spiritual things than anything else. Their radar is always up looking for opportunities to introduce peace to people needing peace. They make you uncomfortable with any degree of worldliness. They may not say a word, but you just feel after being with them that Jesus deserves more from you. Do you know what I mean?

That is salt. That is Christ tasting living. I **love** being with people like that almost as much as I **dislike** being with people like that. They make me feel uncomfortable, but I know that it is not their fault. It is my fault. They are just displaying life how it **ought to be lived**. It is me who does not live up to the standard, not them.

It is very clear that when you, and you only, are the salt of the earth, this salt is very different than that which it is counter to. **Our taste** is very different than the **world's**.

It may be that our greatest failure as Christians in America is not that we have failed to have enough evangelistic programs. I think the failure, in the end, is that we were not as **different** from the world as we were **designed to be**.

Maybe we are not as **heavenly smelling and tasting** as we ought to be.

On any given day, what is the difference in how our ticks on the clock are used than the world around us? This is not meant to be a rhetorical question. It is a real one.

How are our **reactions to tragedies** different than theirs?

How are our reactions to be **being treated badly** different than theirs?

Where do we run for **encouragement and hope** as opposed to them?

When we are **ridiculed for what we believe**, how is that any different from what they do when they are ridiculed for what they believe?

Would we be destroyed **the same way they are** if selected things were ripped from our lives?

Do we have a different message on the tip of our tongues **to help people** than they do?

What do our minutes say is important, as opposed to what their say?

Do you see what I mean?

Salt will be noticeably different tasting than non-salt. It will be impossible to miss. It stands out. It only comes from the beatitude life process.

How do we stand here?

Now there is also something to notice in our text that is interesting.

**13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?”**

Where it says if the salt loses its flavor, it essentially means **tasteless** or to become **insipid**. **Insipid** means lacking in qualities that interest, [stimulate](#), or challenge, tasteless.

Our world is cursed with a life that is insipid. That is why there is such a craze for entertainment and distraction. Life itself, without those things, is not enough to interest or stimulate. So there is a rush to fill that gap.

As a Christian we may enjoy all kinds of things. But we are not compelled to run after them to meet some unmet longing of our hearts. We are not depending upon the next experience to relieve us from our meaninglessness or purposelessness. A life without Christ is truly **insipid**, no matter what things are added to fill that longing. Salt displays a life that is **not insipid**. It portrays life that is **full, life that has purpose, life that matters**.

Now salt, itself, never truly loses its flavor. Salt that is salt is salty. Sodium Chloride tastes like sodium chloride. But the presence of that salt, like in the cloth we talked about earlier, could be lacking. That is a possibility. But we see by what Jesus says that this cannot be a **permanent reality** in a Christian’s life. The signs of life must be present in a Christian. They may **vary** through the seasons of life, but they must exist. Saltiness is like that. Tasting like Christ is like that. We may have **moments** of not tasting like Christ to the world. We may have **seasons** of not tasting like Christ. But we cannot have **lifetimes** of not tasting like Christ. If we **never** taste like Christ, our future will be like the cloth full of sand that is lacking its salt.

These people knew exactly what Christ was talking about. They would have known that a salt bag with all its salt leached out is **worse** than worthless. It is a **danger** to other soil. It is to be disposed of. It is no good for anything. They would have understood that this is not something anyone should aspire to. To be **expected** to be **salt**, but not being **at all salty** is an awful state. These people would have understood that what Christ is saying is that His true followers will have an **unmistakable difference** about them. And anything less than that would be a travesty.

Also one more thing before we close. Look at this verse again.

**13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?”**

What is the point of the salt in this verse?

It is to season the earth.

That is one of our purposes for being left on this planet after we are justified. We are here to salt the earth. We are not here to **cram as much pleasure as can be had** into these short years. Oh, we can enjoy lots of things and God is so very gracious to us. And we should enjoy those things that God gives us in our worship of Him. That is all good. But we are here to present the flavor of Christ to all those around us. How are we doing with that?

Scripture is so full of descriptions **of purpose**. We may often **feel** unimportant, unnoticed, unproductive. We may **feel** all kinds of things. But when we submit our moments to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we are partaking in the most spectacular purpose that this life presents. We are tasting like Jesus Christ. We are smelling like Jesus Christ. We have the taste and smell of heaven in a rotting world. Scripture speaks of our position as being tremendously important. How thankful we should be to have such an opportunity.

I would like to read a short story of a person just like us who lived what I have been saying. She is just one of millions of examples that display that what Christ said is true, and it can be more true in our lives.

**Helen Ewing was saved as a young girl in Scotland and gave her life completely to the lordship of Christ. When she died at the age of 22 it is said that all Scotland wept. She had expected to serve God as a missionary in Europe and had become fluent in the Russian language. But she was not able to fulfill that dream. She had no obvious gifts such as speaking or writing, and she had never traveled far from home. Yet by the time she died, she had won hundreds of people to Jesus Christ. Countless missionaries mourned her death because they knew that a great channel of their spiritual strength was gone. She had risen every morning at five in order to study God's Word and to pray. Her diary revealed that she regularly prayed for over three hundred missionaries by name. Everywhere she went the atmosphere was changed. If someone was telling a dirty story, he would stop if he saw her coming. If people were complaining, they would become ashamed of it in her presence. An acquaintance reported that while she was at Glasgow University she left the fragrance of Christ wherever she went. In everything she said and did she was God's salt.**

*MacArthur New Testament Commentary, The - MacArthur New Testament Commentary - Matthew 1-7.*

**13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall the world be seasoned?"**