

Title: STAY SALTY *The Salt of The Earth*

TEXT: Matthew 5:13

"You are the earth's salt." These were bold words to a handful of fishermen and farmers. ~~///a//t/~~ The earth's salt? These fellows called to be disciples?

Jesus was a young man. His listeners were young men. Not one had prestige or political power. Not one posses wealth. Not one was well-educated. They had not even been very religious. They were to be the salt of the earth.

It is difficult to imagine more unlikely candidates. An opposing slate could have listed the majestic might of Rome, The splendid Roman legal system, The Greek heritage of art and philosophy, the Jewish priesthood's exacting discipline of beliefs and practices. Surely these were the bulwarks of socity.

But Jesus called a handful of common men the earth's salt. They were to preserve truth and goodness and beauty. This time the Twelve understood the word's of Jesus. They had lived in the low bowl of Lake Galilee. They had suffered intense heat along the Jordan. They knew how difficult it was to keep food fresh. The fisherman remembered fish spoiled because they had not been quickly salted down.

~~There are three good reasons why you may want to be a good person's~~
tr677

Let us look at the properites of salt.

We use salt because it draws out the flavor of food. It cures and preserves. And salt is so ordinary, so commonplaces, so "everyday." It works quietly, with no fanfare, no fireworks. It does its job by being what it is -- in contact. It adds zest just by its presence.

Christians - by their presence - are to excite spiritual interest. They are to spice life. They are to increase the thirst for God.

A pinch of common salt can be very effective. Because it is concentrated, it is surprisingly influential.

Salt does not do its job in the shaker. Neither do Christians do their job in church buildings. Like salt, we must be in touch to fulfill our purpose. We are to be involved. We are to penetrate human life.

Many Christians need to be shaken out of the church into the places where men and women wonder, where they aspire and are hurt, where they dare to doubt and to decide. Christ's people are to be where men feel frustration and long for fulfillment, where they choose second-bests, where they sin and die. We who would follow Christ must touch the rotting spots of human life. Thus, we bring a fresh force-- the power of a new life.

The fundamental characteristic of the Christian life is a sharing in the ministry of the risen and ascended Lord, and this sharing must take the form of direct witness from person to person. This is not the responsibility of the pastor. It is the responsibility of all who call themselves Christian.

We share in Christ's ministry. Each of us has a mission. There is a place where you are to be the Christian seasoner. An office, a home, a school, or a shop may be the place where you are to increase the thirst for God.

There are two dangers which threaten us as we try to be God's salt; we can lose touch with the world, or we may not be redemptively different.

WE MAY NOT BE IN TOUCH.

Christians try to escape witness thus conflict. They fall into the trap of saying --"Witnessing is the Pastor's job. That is why we called him. To do all the visiting." They retreat into a comfortable conor. Now they don't have to stand accountable for what they believe. We can not be threaten. We will not be disturbed by new ideas. ~~We will not be euresed.~~ If I do not confront people the claims of God on their life, ~~no~~ one can blow smake in my face.

~~By~~ God has called ^{us} ~~you~~ to be in touch. Salt can not do it job unless in comes in contact with food. It is no good in the shaker. Christians must be in touch with people. We must listen to them and then urge them to hear God's living Word.

The second danger that we can fall into is that we may not be redemptively different.

Christians are often tempted to lose themselves in crowds, to blur their Christian identity, to blend into the background as just part of the furniture.

Salt does lose itself in serving. Yet, it must be distinctly salt or it cannot serve. It must keep its character or it becomes useless.

A Christian can lose his saving quality. A congregation can become just another club. We have got to stay salty. (A Parable)

omit The Twelve to whom Jesus spoke had seen crude, impure salt heaped along the beaches of the Dead Sea. They knew that occasional rains dissovded some of the salt and washed it back into the sea. After a few months, all the salt is washed out, and grit is all that is left.

Don't
Jesus said that the life of the spirit, too, may slowly disappear, almost without notice. The redemptive fellowship can lose its tang. The empty shell of religion can stand long after life has evaporated.

There is always the danger of not being redemptively different. Sometimes I believe we water down our faith in order to attract members. After all, we do want to appear successful. And in our personal lives we do not want to stick out like sore thumbs.

But God's servants are different. ~~There must be a difference between the Christian and the non-Christian.~~

There must be differences between the Church and the World. These must be essential differences. Our problem is finding those narrownesses that rightly define the Christian life and the Christian task.

Those who merely wear Christian labels do not make any difference. Those who ~~call~~ *claim* themselves to unchangeable expressions of faith make differences that do not matter. The ~~nominal~~ nominals have betrayed the distinctives. They have nothing to say - nothing to share. The legalists have been ~~tyr~~ tyrannized by trivialities. They cannot claim and intelligent hearing.

Christians must ~~hold~~ hold to the distinctives that count: Christ's atonement, personal salvation, the outpouring of God's love, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our concern is to be "in the world," yet "not of the world" ---this means INVOLVED, but not indistinct.

Here The strategy for salty Christians is an alternation of retreat and assault. To maintain the Christian quality of life, we need times of withdrawal. To fulfill the Christian responsibility, we must have times of encounter.

George Webber says it in God's Colony in Man's World:

Our life is one of rhythm, from the battle of life in the world back into the sanctuary...where vision may be renewed by the preaching of the Word, our bodies fed by the ~~sa~~ Holy Communion, and our ~~orage~~ courage renewed in the community of fellow soldiers. What we do within the life of the Church are not pious exercises, but, rather, preparations directed toward our mission in the world.

The Christian salt must be gathered to keep its character. There must be assembling and cleansing. Then, there can be scattering and dissolving. The fellowship draws together for worship and training. Then, it goes out to minister.

Christian identity is retained only in this discipline of alternation. Worship and work, service and study, communion and communication, are all essential. The congregation must be a school and a mission. Christians must be disciples and apostles, learners and announcers.

The Christian salt is to penetrate. Effective penetration in our day requires the ministry of every Christian; the strategic employment of all available resources; and the deepening of the life of the Spirit.

You can take up your own ministry. You can work together with others in sharing the Good News. You can dedicate yourself to personal development of your own spiritual life. You can be a loving and concerned neighbor. You can demand of your staff the highest quality of spiritual training. You can live the fruits of the Spirit: "love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control."

"You are the earth's salt." You have a great church -- you have a great job. We may muff the job. But I believe and I hope you believe that Christ's frightening confidence inspires us to believe that, by his grace, we will be the earth's salt.

"LIFE-SAVING STATIONS" - A Parable

of The Church

Bill Harrison
Church

"On a dangerous sea coast where shipwrecks often occur there was once a crude little life-saving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but the few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves went out day and night tirelessly searching for the lost. Many lives were saved by this wonderful little station, so that it became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others in the surrounding area, wanted to become associated with the station and give of their time and money and effort for the support of its work. New boats were bought and new crews trained. The little life-saving station grew.

"Some of the members of the life-saving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge of those saved from the sea. They replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in the enlarged building. Now the life-saving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they decorated it beautifully and furnished it exquisitely, because they used it as a sort of club. Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on life-saving missions, so they hired life-boat crews to do this work. The life-saving motif still prevailed in this club's decoration, and there was a liturgical life-boat in the room where the club initiations were held. About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boat loads of cold, wet and half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick, and ~~some of them had black skin and some had yellow skin.~~ The beautiful new club was in chaos. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwreck could be cleaned up before coming inside.

"At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's life-saving activities as being unpleasant and a hindrance to the normal social life of the club. Some members insisted upon life-saving as their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still a life-saving station. But they were finally voted down and told that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own life-saving station down the coast. They did.

"As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred in the old. It evolved into a club, and yet another life-saving station was founded. History continued to repeat itself, and if you visit that sea coast today, you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are frequent in those waters, but most of the people drown!" 1