

Salt Enhances

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[0 : 00] All right, would you take God's Word with me and turn to Matthew chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5, we'll read from verses 13 down through verse 16.

I want to take the time while you're turning to thank Greg Cox for filling in for Jared Adams, a regular minister of music, while he is out of town, and also the choir and Linda and June for doing the excellent job they always do as well.

So, special Sunday today, especially for the Dweber family with Dally getting baptized, and congratulations to her and that family as well. Matthew chapter 5, and let's look together at verses 13 down through 16.

Before we read the text together, I want to give you a little recap. For some reason, Harlan, this isn't working for me. Would you? What's that?

Would you exit out of that software and then open it up again? It should load. All right, if we have to go slideless today, we'll go slideless, and that'll be just all right.

[1 : 12] But I want to give you a little bit of a recap from what we talked about last Sunday, and that is the value of salt. How many of y'all knew that salt was on equal par with gold back in the ancient times?

Some of y'all are smarties. How many of y'all knew that before last Sunday? There we go. All right, yeah. Some of y'all actually know some things. That's good. I was not aware of that until I started studying in preparation for this, and that was a fascinating little tidbit.

And of course, salt was the primary way to preserve meat back then. And so they called it white gold. So when Jesus says, you are the salt of the earth, well, that was an impactful statement.

So we see that there is inherent value that Jesus is giving and assigning to his children as he is calling them the salt of the earth.

Specifically, he was talking to his disciples, and the crowds gathered there as he is preaching this famous sermon called the Sermon on the Mount that we read here in Matthew chapter 5.

[2 : 16] And he takes this little parenthetical section to talk about salt and light. Well, from the word salt, we get the English word salary, which literally means salt money.

We learned last week that often Roman soldiers and others would receive their form of payment not in gold or credits, but in salt. So that was so valuable.

So it was highly impactful and meant a lot more than just the table salt that we use today as Jesus called his followers the salt of the earth.

So we're going to get into it today now. And our takeaway from last Sunday before we dive in was, are we worth our salt? Are we worth our salt?

Well, we know that expression, don't we? Are you worth your salt? He's not worth his salt. We now understand a little bit of context of where that comes from. So when we're asking ourselves, are we worth our salt in the kingdom of God?

[3 : 22] We're asking that challenging question. We're called to be the salt of the earth. Are we fulfilling our purpose? Are we acting as a preservative to those around us, to the lost world who needs to hear the truth about Jesus?

Are we being a preservative? Are we worth our role as salt? Matthew chapter 5, verses 13 through 16. We'll get the screens figured out in a moment.

But would you all join me if you're able to? Look at a copy of the Word of God if you can. I'm reading from the Christian Standard Bible. If you don't have a Bible with you, there should be one in the pew in front of you.

Salt is the theme. In Matthew chapter 5, verse 13, Jesus is speaking and says, You are the salt of the earth, but if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty?

It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden.

[4 : 30] No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

Let's pray right now and ask God to give us wisdom from His Word. God, I pray that you would enlighten us to the truth that you were teaching so many years ago, but is still alive today, still relevant, still meaningful for us in this room.

I pray that you would give us, by your Spirit, the ability to learn what we need to learn today and apply what we need to apply. It's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen. You may be seated. Thank you for standing. I want to talk for a moment about salt and its many, many uses.

See, my wife is a baker. How many of y'all have tasted one of Holly Bunnell's cookies? Anybody? Or something? Yeah. Some people just shot their hands right up. I saw you, Brian. Those things are incredible.

If you haven't, I'm not trying to make you feel left out, but you probably do feel a little left out, and I'm sorry for that. I didn't mean to ruin your Sunday. But look, right now it's January. Everybody's trying to go on a diet.

[5 : 45] It's probably good that the slides aren't working right now because, y'all, I had, like, a picture of some delicious-looking baked goods and candies and such with salt on top.

Did you know that salt enhances the flavor of sweet things? I didn't know that, really, until I started being around a baker.

Apparently, when you add salt into dessert, it just makes it a whole lot better. So if you get one of her, you know, brown butter, chocolate chip cookies, whatever she does, they're great.

But she puts sea salt on top. And the first time you see that, if you're not familiar with that concept, you might say, did she mess up? She meant to put sugar, and actually, she put salt?

No, that's a thing out there. So salt actually enhances the flavor. Now, you can certainly overdo it, and then the salt can take over the dish. But if you use just the right amount, man, it takes that up to a whole other level of deliciousness, all right?

[6 : 53] It's probably good that I don't have my picture on the screen, because, like I said, this is January. A lot of people are trying to stick true to their diets, trying to look good, and that would probably be the result of you having some cravings come back and maybe cheat on your diet or something.

We don't want to do that. So instead, we'll just talk about it a little bit and understand this very deep, very profound truth that maybe you were not aware of before.

But number one, you want to write it down, salt flavors. Salt flavors. Now, last week, we talked about salt as a preservative, right?

A lot of people knew that, but maybe some folks who were not aware that that is a function of salt it can preserve. But I think just about everybody knows that salt adds flavor, doesn't it?

That's primarily what we ordinary folks would use salt for today, although it has thousands of actual uses. But salt flavors.

[7 : 54] And interestingly enough, that's what Jesus references when he's talking right here in Matthew 5. Salt flavors. Now, there's a guy, and I don't have his picture, so y'all just stick with me.

There's a guy that was kind of one of the first chefs on TV. He wasn't the first, but he was one of the early chefs on TV to really make an impact and gather a wide following of viewers.

And he was from Louisiana, I believe. And he would get there in the kitchen, and he had his set up there, and he would always have a live studio audience in front of him, and he'd be making some delicious dish.

And it would look like he was about done, and it was about ready to be served. And then he would reach in this little dish of seasoning, his special blend, and he would take some of it, and he would go like this.

Let's take it up a notch. Bam! Anybody know who I'm talking about? Give me his name. What's that? Say it again.

[9 : 03] No, not Gordon Ramsay. Not Justin, was it? Emeril. Emeril Lagasse. That was the guy. Emeril. Emeril Lagasse. Emeril Lagasse. Now, maybe some others have kind of done something similar to that, but the guy I'm talking to was Emeril, and he would say, Bam!

And throw his seasoning on there, and everybody would love it, everybody would clap, and he became like as close to a household name in food TV as you could get at that time, kind of before the advent of how the Food Network became this big old thing if you happen to watch it.

But Emeril always kicked his dishes up a notch with his seasoning because he understood that no matter how fancy it looks or how expensive the ingredients are, what people really care about when it comes to food is does it taste good, right?

So often, you might go to a real fancy restaurant, and they serve a dish, and it's, you know, about that small, and you taste it like, Man, I'm not even sure I like this, you know?

It's an acquired taste. Well, I haven't acquired it. Maybe I'm not wealthy enough to acquire it. I don't know. But people really just want food to taste good, and seasoning, of course, the primary seasoning and the primary ingredient in any seasoning blend is salt.

[10:31] So when Jesus says, You are the salt of the earth, I feel like he's saying, You bring the bam.

You kick it up a notch. You are the people that make this life better. You know why? Because here's the second part of that profound, scintillating truth that you've never heard before, salt flavors, but the next part is, Flavor makes it better.

Am I wrong? No. Flavor makes it better, right? On the rare occasion that my wife makes something that I feel like just isn't quite there, I can't think of a time, okay, but I'm sure it's happened in our years of marriage, then I'll take a little salt and throw it in there, or what's more common for me, what do I usually add to my food?

Hot sauce. Take a little hot sauce, throw it in there. You know what's in hot sauce? Salt. I just like flavor, you know?

And I like the flavor of hot sauce, so I'm going to add it to just about everything. So flavor makes it better. Jesus is calling us to make the earth better, make it more flavorful.

[11:59] What do we mean by that? Well, let's go to Colossians chapter 4. Colossians chapter 4. Are you somebody who brings the flavor? Are you somebody who brings the bam?

Do you take it up a notch? Say, man, I'm not an emerald type guy, okay? I'm not that kind of personality. I don't walk into a room and everybody lights up. That's okay.

That's all right. We're not even talking about a personality thing here. We're talking much deeper than that. We're talking, do you bring the flavor?

Do you bring the salt of Jesus into the world around you? Your home, your thoughts, your decision making, your friends, your circle.

Do you bring the bam? Do you bring that which just makes it all better? That's the challenge. Colossians chapter 4 and verse 6.

[12:59] We read this last Sunday, but it applies still today. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with what? Salt. So that you may know how you should answer each person.

See, there's the little secret. We don't always know how to answer, but the Holy Spirit can provide us with the salt we need to make each situation better.

So if you've got a conflict that you can't seem to figure out how to resolve, if you've got a burden you can't seem to lay down, or things just aren't how you believe they should be, God brings the salt.

And he provides it to you so you can then bring it to the people who need it. See, God could just act without us, couldn't he?

He could just do whatever he wants on this earth and not even bother with the middle man. But he chose a middle man. He chose us to be his children, to build his kingdom, to act as his arms and feet, his hands, to do what he would do, to go where he would go, his mouth, to speak what he would say.

[14:18] And so he said, as you speak, as you share with other people, you walk through this life together, let your words, your speech be gracious, seasoned with salt, seasoned with the light of Jesus, seasoned with the truth of God's word, seasoned with the kind of relational attitudes that Jesus would have.

Well, that's hard, isn't it? Hard to be like Jesus, but that's what we're called to be like. Now, we've built this whole other thing. Jesus called us to himself.

He said, follow me. Walk in my footsteps. Go where I go. But then we've built this whole big Christian framework and world that often has veered a little bit away from where Jesus actually is and what he actually called us to do.

So when people think of Christianity or religion or church, they often don't always think immediately of people that act like Jesus, unfortunately.

maybe Satan's got in there and woven his web and drawn us away from the path that Jesus called us to walk.

[15 : 39] Maybe it's just our own weak flesh that has allowed us to justify different things that we've done in the name of Jesus. But the truth is, when we follow Jesus, we act like the salt of the earth and we make everything better.

So, Matthew 5.13 tells us again, and this time I put it down in the New Living Translation. It says, you are the salt of the earth, but what good is salt if it has lost its flavor?

Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless. Thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

Guys, it is terrifying to think of being thrown out and trampled under people's feet. Has anybody seen something like that happen?

Or maybe been at a concert or something where there was just a rush of people and somebody went down and got trampled? That's terrifying, isn't it? I know some of you have experience maybe on the ranches or something of getting, losing your feet and going to the ground and getting trampled by animals and that's no fun, is it?

[16 : 59] Let me share something about this passage. It's a hard thing to read that salt that's lost its flavor is no good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

Number one, if you want to mark this down, do it. Number one, God's image bearers hold the highest value in his eyes. Let me say it again. God's image bearers hold the highest value in his eyes.

Am I talking about Christians exclusively here? Who's an image bearer of God? Somebody tell me. All mankind, right?

We're all created in his image. doesn't mean we reflect his image well, but we're all made in the image of God and God's image bearers hold the highest value in his eyes.

Such high value that he sent his son to the cross to die as a sacrifice for our sin. And he raised him from the dead and he is alive today and he is who we can have our faith in.

[18 : 11] But, God's image bearers hold his highest value. Now, sin can ruin that, but he can redeem it.

Sin can ruin that, but he can redeem it. So God's image bearers hold this higher value than anything else in his creation.

But sin can ruin our effectiveness. But then God can redeem it. Notice what he said here. You are the salt of the earth.

What good is the salt if it's lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? Can it be made salty again? No. But God can.

God can redeem it. How do you add salt? How do you add the flavor back to salt? Well, truth is, salt can't lose its flavor.

[19 : 11] It's scientifically impossible for salt to lose its flavor. What you can do is dilute it. You can add something that can counteract the flavor of salt and that can go bad over time.

So, additives can go bad. You can counteract the flavor with something else. How many of you ever put too much salt into a dish that you were making? Anybody? One time, I was making chili.

And just so you know, I make the world's best chili. Now, I'm not going to enter your chili cook-off and have that put to the test. But just so you know, I make the world's best chili. Okay? It was handed down from generation to generation.

It's all about ranch-style beans. All right. But I put too much salt in the family chili one time. And that was not a good thing because it's the family chili. So, you don't mess it up.

I didn't tell anybody because I would have had my chili-making rights taken away. However, I'm Googling on the internet, what do you do to make something less salty?

[20 : 13] Well, truth is, you can't really take the salt out. Once it's there, it's there. You can try to counteract it with some vinegar.

You can try to add some sugar in. You can try to just add more of everything else to make the salt spread out a little more. But the truth is, if it's over-salted, I mean, you're going to have the dickens of a time trying to get that thing to be the right amount of salt.

But you can dilute it. And I think that's what happens with us sometimes. We're supposed to be the salt of the earth.

But we get diluted. Our saltiness becomes a little less salty because of everything else that comes in and swamps us.

Everything else, whether it's the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life. We've talked about there's all these warnings about the pitfalls of sin and errors and mistakes.

[21 : 22] And this life has so many distractions distractions. At night, we're reading Pilgrim's Progress with our boys at devotions time. And there's so many accurate, and let me say that there's certain things, that's not a one-for-one example of the Christian life with exact truth.

It's not the Bible. Never look at another book as a substitute or equal value to the Bible. So I'm not saying that everything in Pilgrim's Progress is exactly as Scripture teaches. but it can be effective, an effective illustration of the narrative of walking through this life with Jesus.

And you see all these distractions, all these dangers that try to pull little Christian off his path. We're reading the kid's version, so he's a little guy in our book. He's actually a rabbit.

Yeah, that's fun. Christian the rabbit. But it's fascinating to see and how it parallels with the distractions that you and I face, with the things that try to pull us off course.

And that's really the only way that our salt can be made less effective. It's when it's diluted with everything else around us. But let me say, tell you something else.

[22 : 40] First, God's image bearers hold the highest value in his eyes. Sin can ruin that, but he can redeem it. And number two, God does not throw anyone out to be trampled underfoot.

People do that. God does not throw anyone out to be trampled underfoot. People do that. We do that.

We hurt each other. We run over each other. We trample each other. That's not God. That's never been God. It never will be God. Unfortunately, many will die without Jesus and the Bible teaches us that they will have to go and suffer eternal torment in this terrible place called hell.

It was never created for them. It was created for Satan and his demons, the master of lies, the master of deceit, the architect of sin. God doesn't want to be God's sin.

But, if we die without being justified, being made right in our relationship with God, then we will be resigned to the fate of having to pay the punishment for our sin.

[23 : 46] God doesn't want that. He's not throwing us out. He invites us all to come into his family. He invites us all to become the salt of the earth.

Many reject. Many won't listen. So God will never throw us out. You know the interesting thing is? The only thing that can restore the effectiveness of diluted salt, you know what it is?

More salt. More salt. So if you find yourself realistically less effective than the salt that God intended you to be, get back into his word.

Spend more time with him. Immerse yourself with the gospel of Jesus. That's the salt that we need. That's how we regain our saltiness.

Add more salt back. Coat ourselves again with the salt and then see how effective we can be with God's power. So, salt flavors.

[24 : 58] Well, we knew that, right? And flavor makes it better. Secondly, salt makes a permanent difference. Salt makes a permanent difference. There's a quote I wanted to share with you from a pastor named John Piper.

He says, people don't enjoy salt. How many of you would beg to differ? Yeah, right? Well, give him a minute here. He's going to explain himself.

People don't enjoy salt. They enjoy what is salted. They enjoy how salt can improve something else. They like what salt does.

I don't know of anybody in here who just wants to take a salt shaker and shake it into their mouth.

Ah! Tasty lunch, right? Should I try it? No?

I mean, I've eaten a sardine up here on this stage before, last VBS. It can't be worse than that, right? That's disgusting. Nobody likes that.

[26 : 00] But you give me some tortilla chips and a bowl of salsa, I'm going to take that salt shaker and shake it on those chips. Give me a recipe, we're going to put some of that salt in there.

Man, that's really gross. That's why I brought water. Tastes like the ocean. Alright. Salt makes a permanent difference, but salt on its own, eesh, that's tough.

But when you add it to what needs salt, it makes it so much better. We don't exist for ourselves, we exist for our purpose on this earth.

And God told us what our purpose is. It's to act like salt. Now the truth is, when you add salt, you can't really take it away. So the truth is, you add salt, you can't get rid of it.

The salt will remain. The salt will be there. Turn to your Bibles again. I don't want you to fall asleep on me. Turn to your Bibles to 1 Peter 1. 1 Peter 1. Let's read this together.

[27 : 12] For sake of time, I'm going to go ahead and read while you're turning. 1 Peter 1, verse 18. Verse 18. Ready? For you know that you were redeemed from your empty way of life, inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things like silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of an unblemished and spotless lamb.

Do you see that? It wasn't perishable. We were redeemed from our empty way of life, not with things that perish like silver or gold, not with something that can waste away, but instead with something that cannot perish, the precious blood of Christ.

Verse 20. He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but he was revealed in these last times for you. Thank God he was revealed to us. Through him, you believe in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory so that your faith and hope are in God.

Man, just a side note. If you don't have faith in me, if you don't have faith in this church, you don't have faith in this community, you don't have faith in this country, you don't have faith in the political system, in the legal system, you don't have faith in your bank account or your retirement savings, or you don't have faith in anything else, maybe you don't even have faith in yourself.

You can have your faith and hope in God. It's the one safe place to put it. Your faith and hope are in God. Why?

[28 : 39] Because he raised his son from the dead. That's the power that we can't match. That's the thing that we can't do. And Jesus did it.

We can have our faith and hope in him. Verse 22, since you have purified yourselves by your obedience to the truth so that you show sincere brotherly love for each other from a pure heart, love one another constantly.

Well, that's a nice thing to say, but why should we love each other constantly? Because, verse 23, you have been born again not of perishable seed, but of imperishable.

Something that is permanent. Something that can't go away. What is it? It's the living and enduring word of God. Because all flesh is like grass.

You and I are like grass. What do you mean by that? All the glory of flesh is like the flower that grows in the grass. What do you mean?

[29 : 50] The grass withers. The grass will die. The flower will fall. There is a time span on all of this and there's a time span on you and me. There's a ticking clock.

There's an expiration date. At some point, our time is going to be over. But, verse 25, the word of the Lord endures forever. It will not expire.

It will not end. In verse 25, the end, it says, this word that it's talking about, the word of the Lord endures forever. This word is the gospel that was proclaimed or preached to you.

That's why we preach the gospel here. That's why we preach the word here. Because it will endure. It's the thing we can put our faith and hope in. That's why we keep going back to it time and time again.

It's what will last. One last passage, 2 Corinthians chapter 4. Flip back a few pages, probably not too many. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 18.

[30 : 50] We're just going to read one verse. 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 18. So we do not focus on what is seen, but on what is unseen.

For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. We do not focus on what is seen, because what is seen, what you can see with your eyes, that's going to fade away.

But what you can't see, God's power, God's word, the effectiveness of the gospel, how he moves and acts in this world, that will never end.

That is eternal. That is forever. So that's what we focus on. That's what he called us to be, to bring to this world. He didn't give us the job of fixing this world on our own.

Christians, you figure out a solution to world peace. You figure out a solution to poverty. You figure out a solution to all the injustice out there. Y'all figure it out. You made your mess, you cleaned it up.

[31 : 56] You made your bed, now lie in it. That's probably how we would handle the situation if we were God, right? Created these ungrateful people and they just messed it all up. Well, y'all figure out a solution to it.

No. Instead, he gave us a power source. He gave us an unseen spirit. There's an old hymn called the unseen hand.

And God is always moving through us. So he called us to be the solution, but he is providing the power. I need a volunteer.

Come on. Let's go, CJ. He shot his hand right up. You don't even know what you're volunteering for. You might regret it once you get up here, but come on, dude. All right, here we go, y'all.

He's already regretting his life choices. Come on, buddy. Here's what we're doing, all right? Here, you hold this for a second, would you? Thank you. I'm going to move this out of the way so everybody can see. Now, full disclosure, Karen Schaffner gave me this idea for a sermon illustration, okay?

[33 : 10] Where are you, Karen? There you are, over there. I'm probably going to do it wrong, but I'm going to try as best as I can to recreate what you told me here, okay?

All right, buddy. We can set this down. Now, take this glass of water. It's a clean cup. Do you want to take a sip from it, just make sure it's just water?

Just take a sip. Come on, you got it. Just water? Just regular water? Nothing weird about it? Okay, all right, face the crowd here. Okay, so dip your finger down in that water and see if the water changes.

Okay, pull it out. So there was just a little ripple that happened, right? The water kind of moved a little, but now it's back to how it was before, right? No real change happened? Right, so that's what we are like, right?

We dip our finger into the water of life and nothing really changes, right? We are just one of many, one of millions, billions in this world. Can't really make a difference, right?

[34 : 12] Okay, now, here, tell you what, I'll do this. Hold your other hand out, dip that same finger, roll it around in that salt right there.

Okay, get it real good and coated. There you go. Now stick it back in the water, swirl it around a little bit. Okay. Now it's your finger, hopefully it was clean.

I'm going to take a sip and see if anything's different. It's a little sour. A little sour, a little salty? Tastes a little different? Oh yeah. Buddy, that made a permanent change to this water.

The only way to get that salt taste out of this water is to dump it out and pour fresh water in. This water is now permanently changed. But the only difference was your finger was coated in salt.

Y'all give him a hand. He did great. You can throw that salt over your shoulder if you want to. Alright. Y'all, do you see the point that Karen was making when she gave me this illustration?

[35 : 20] And hopefully, I poorly made for you today. The point is, he did nothing different. He dipped his finger in the water both times.

But one time, it was coated in salt. That's what made the difference. If we coat ourselves in the salt of the gospel of Jesus Christ, if we coat ourselves in the word of God, in prayer, in real meaningful, deep relationship with Jesus, then we bring flavor.

We make a permanent impact. So our takeaway for today is this. Have we lost our flavor? Are we swirling our finger down in the water of life and trying to make an impact and nothing's really changing?

We're missing the salt. Would you pray with me right now? God, I pray that right now you would teach us how to coat ourselves in salt. You called us the salt, but God, until we get rid of this body, we still struggle to not be salt.

We still struggle with our old desires, our old passions, our old way of thinking, our old logic. We still want to go back to being like the world around us.

[36 : 40] But when we coat ourselves in this salt, God, we make an unchanging impact. We make a permanent difference in the relationships, in what we do, what we can accomplish through you.

Teach us that truth from your word today. We'll give you the glory. In Jesus' name we pray. ■ x bi x Achilles c S De Vi 2018A