

You are the salt of the earth!

(Mt 5. 13)

SPRINGLINE PARISH DIOCESE OF LINCOLN

Nine Churches, One Parish, Following Jesus

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Introduction

Tell the powerful story of Johny Shahwan and the Christian Palestinian youth work in Beit Jala, Bethlehem.

In the gospel (Matthew 5:13-20) today, Jesus tells us:

¹³ 'You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

It is interesting that these verses should follow the teachings of Jesus on the Beatitudes that proclaim the qualities that mark out a true Christian and every citizen in the Kingdom. When we are possessed of these qualities, we will be a positive influence and make a difference in the world around us.

In other words, when we live out the standards of the Lord Jesus in our lives, we shall be like salt and like light and *those around us will see our testimony and be touched by it.*

So what does Jesus mean when he tells us: 'You are the salt of the earth'? (Mt 5.13)

We don't always realize the importance of salt in maintaining the life and health of our bodies. An exact percentage of it is always present in our bloodstream, and any great deviation from this amount can result in sickness

and even death. That said, people are more conscious of their health now more than ever before.

We all know what is salt and what it does. But let us turn our attention first to **how the Bible refers to 'salt'**:

Salt in the Scriptures is said to be:

1. A symbol of a binding covenant (Lev. 2:13)
2. A healing and cleansing aid (2 Ki. 2:20-21)
3. A stimulant to the appetite (Job 6:6)
4. A preventive of decay (Luke 14:34-35)
5. A promoter of peace (Mark 9:50)
6. A stimulant to our testimony (Mt. 5:13)
7. An evidence of grace (Col. 4:6)

Salt was a very valuable **in the ancient world**. So valuable, in fact, that the Roman Legions were often paid their wages in salt. This payment was called the "*salarium*." (This where the expression, "Not worth his salt." comes from!)

Jesus calls us 'salt of the earth' because :

Firstly, just like salt preserves food, good Christians can preserve a community or nation. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah - Gen. 19. They could have been saved by the preserving influence of just 10 righteous men. It is the same in this country today! I am convinced that the presence and the prayers of "salty" Christians do more to preserve this nation than anything else we could name. It is the righteousness of God's children that makes a nation great!

Secondly, just as salt penetrates what it touches, we have been called by the Lord to be an active force in the world around us. The church is called to be an army of saints! The early church - Acts 8:1, 4; Acts 17:6 - was like that!

Thirdly, just as salt purifies and cleanses, Christians, genuine Christians, have a purifying effect on the world around them. Elisha cleansed the waters of Jericho with salt. New born babies were washed in salt in ancient times. Salt in a wound cleanses the area.

Fourthly, just as salt pleases as it brings out the best and adds flavour to food, Christians should flavour the world around them, bringing out the out the best in those around us.

Fifthly, just as salt also poisons and kills, you know what happens to slugs in our vegetable gardens, I don't need to explain, good Christians can impact on the world like salt as an antidote to sin, to evil.

Finally, just as salt promotes, causes, thirst, Christians who are full of Jesus cause a thirst for Jesus in others. Unfortunately, often the world sees us and says, "Why should I be a Christian? I live just as good as that crowd down at the church!" We must never give anyone cause to say, "If that is a Christian, then I never want to be one." Instead, our lives actually ought to motivate people to say, "That is what I want my life to be."

Salt has the proven ability to change nearly everything it touches. It goes against the modern mentality is "We have to be like the world to win the world." Instead, *we'll win the world more if we are like Jesus!*

The danger

It is possible for Christians to lose their saltiness as well. This happens to us when we, just like salt in ancient times, come into too close contact with the world. As Thomas Hardy wrote, "The world is too much with us!" When get to be more like the world than we are like Jesus, then we really become like salt that has lost its flavour.

As authentic followers of Jesus, people may not like us, but they often respect us when we take a stand for God. When we allow our testimony to become tainted by sin and the world, then people laugh at us and we become absolutely useless to the Lord as a vessel of witness.

The challenge

Let us ask ourselves today: can I honestly say that my life is like salt in the world? There is a tremendous need for good disciples of Christ, authentic and holy Christians today. There is too much falsehood and hypocrisy.

Have we as a people lost our saltiness? Have we lost our Christian character? Have we lost our spiritual centre? Have we lost our spiritual compass? Jesus reminds us and inspires us to be the 'salt of the earth' and the 'light of the world'. Let us pray. [ST Mattapally]