

Matthew 5:13

The Salt of the Earth

Intro: [http://www.realclear.com/funny/2015/09/29/people\\_clearly\\_trying\\_to\\_win\\_the\\_not\\_my\\_job\\_award\\_12175.html](http://www.realclear.com/funny/2015/09/29/people_clearly_trying_to_win_the_not_my_job_award_12175.html)

I want to show you a picture this morning that I saw a while ago. As far as I know this picture has not been photo-shopped or edited in any way.

These pictures are funny to us, but could you imagine if you were the boss, or the client who returned to find these jobs “completed?” From this list, would you say that someone completed their job shirked their responsibility?

One of the ways that the world suffers is by good people who do nothing. Edmund Burke said, “The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.” You know what we say about good people who do nothing right, they are good for nothing.

What is the best good that can be done for the world? A good that has already been done and is being done. Christ has come to reform humanity, and the way that he has reformed humanity is through the self giving of himself for us on the Cross. His entire ministry is about this one thing - reforming the world so that we can enjoy fellowship with him. This is the message of the Sermon on the Mount, this is the message that Christ is proclaiming. Look at the Sermon. Notice these 8 statements of blessedness called the beatitudes.

These are amazing qualities of the twice born, qualities of the life that Christ forms through the Cross. Don't you agree that the world needs these characteristics? I hope that you agree. Here is the reason I hope you agree: God has come from heaven to seek and save us, to give us what we need, to restore us into fellowship with himself. These beatitudes are intended to permeate the whole world. How? You! At the end of the beatitudes, Jesus gives us two words about our responsibility. He calls us salt and light. We will look at the salt of the earth today.

READ TEXT

By calling us the Salt of the Earth, Jesus is calling us to be influential in our society.

Don't miss the importance of us having influence. There is no room for quiet Christianity, or personal religion. One of the biggest lies that we have bought into as a society of Christians is that your relationship with God is purely personal. Listen, each of us have a personal, intimate relationship with Jesus - he is your beloved and your beloved is yours - but, that does not mean that we get to keep quiet about it?

I love my wife. Let me declare it publicly and any way that I can. I love my wife. No way would I keep quiet about my love for her. This lady has rescued me in more ways than one! In the same way, this love that I have for my wife needs to be guided by others. Let me tell you a story. On our three month anniversary (I know, crazy in love) I decided to put a scavenger hunt together for her. All three locations were significant places, where we spent time talking on the front lawn at Truett-McConnell, where we had our first kiss at the cross at TMC, and the last stop was a spot where she and I would go hike on occasions. This last spot was a ways away. So my plan was to have the final rose with me when she finds me. I had a buddy take me to the spot to wait on her and he asked me what my plan was for after she found me. I looked at him confused and said, "What do you mean?" He said, what is the prize for finding you?" I said, "I am the prize." He glanced over at me and said, "Take the girl out to dinner." And so when she got there, I gave her the rose, embraced her and... took her out to dinner!

Don't stay quiet about what you love. Learn how to express that love in community. I needed dating tips, we all need to know how to tell the world about Jesus in the most effective way.

God has called us, equipped us, and is forming us to be His force for good in the world. He is calling us to live a life of influence. What kind of influence? Our lives bearing witness to the grace and love of Jesus. We are the salt of the earth.

Listen closely. Get a pen ready. Here are 4 ways from this one word - salt - that Jesus is calling us to be influential in our society.

By saying we are the Salt of the earth, Jesus is calling us to

## **1. Preserve our Society**

Salt is not only used here to describe the Christian, salt is a description of the world where the Christian is applied. Some teach and adhere to a philosophy that says this world is getting better. Most of those theories are seeded in evolutionary theory and not the teaching of Scripture. This world is fallen, sinful, and decaying. The Bible says the only thing that will make this world truly better is when Jesus comes back. Now don't go and take that to the extreme. Be very careful. We don't go out and burn down the forests and have no regard for the earth as some theologies of yesterday led us, but we also don't want to have a theory of engagement with the world that avoids evangelism. The world's greatest need is Jesus. And, until he comes, he has left us in the world as the salt of the earth.

Back in the days before refrigeration, salt served to keep meat from putrefying. In the same way, we show the world the way to blessedness. Pay close attention. This section comes after the beatitudes. We are the poor in spirit, the merciful, the meek; we are the ones thirsting after righteousness; all so our Lord can use us as the salt of the earth. The Lord uses our witness, our testimony, our lives lived

out before the world to see, to remind them of a day that is drawing near when the Lord will soon judge the living and the dead.

I hope that you can hear the concern for the world from our Lord in this passage. God cares for the world, even in its rottenness and decay, so much that he has put in it an agent of restraint. This is what we call common grace. Let me explain it to you. When a farmer who is a Christian needs rain and his neighbor a Muslim need rain, and they both pray for rain. The Muslim prays to Allah and the Christian to Yahweh, rain comes on both fields. Who sent the rain? Why did he send it? Yahweh sent it because of the Christians prayer. Did both fields need rain? Did both fields receive rain? God sends rain on the just and the unjust - this is common grace. The kindness of the Lord is meant to lead people to repentance. How will they discern the difference? Someone has to tell them who gives every good and perfect gift.

God has put other restrains in our society to preserve it. These institutions are ordained of God and under attack today. Two institutions that come to my mind are the state and the home. But listen closely and loudly. There is one ordained institution that God uses most powerfully to serve as the restrain in society - the blood bought, Spirit-filled, people called the Church.

As citizens who are part of the church we have a responsibility (individually) to be salt in our society. We have to understand this difference. The Church doesn't play politics. The Church shouldn't care if you are a democrat or a republican, a communist or a capitalist. The primary function of the Church is to proclaim the gospel for the salvation of souls. We share this message of salvation with everyone - republican, democrat, libertarian, tea party, whomever else. The Church cares about sin and will speak to sin in all its manifestations - republic and democrat alike, rich and poor alike.

(I see much confusion here from our own convention over the controversy with Russell Moore. Let's be honest, when a political party makes certain sin issues like homosexuality and abortion, we who have been declared righteous need to pay attention and speak out. But equally so, when a political party gives little regard to the poor or underserved, we Christians ought to speak out. I hope that you have such a focus on the kingdom that you won't fully align with either party. I hope that your allegiances will be with Jesus and his coming Kingdom first, and everything and everyone else second.)

Listen to Robert Louis Wilken in the *Spirit of Early Christian Thought*:

*The church is not an instrument to achieve any other ends than fellowship with God. It serves society by being unapologetically itself and by bearing witness to the justice that alone makes human community possible, the justice due God. The greatest gift the church can give society is a glimpse, however fleeting, of another city, where the angels keep 'eternal festival' before the face of God....<sup>1</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> Wilken,

Understand this delicate balance. You and I, as members of the Church, are called to have a great and powerful impact on our society. Some fundamentalism teaches a pull back from society, but the command of our Lord is to engage society. But, if we are going to have influence on our society we have to come at it from the right angle. Look at the text. Jesus calls us be the salt of the earth. Salt is unlike anything else in the earth. How can we have influence in our world? From the top down, inside out, or outside in? Listen. Jesus, who came from above, who came from the outside in, calls us who are in the world to be the salt of the earth. We who are inside the world have been and are being transformed into an image of one outside the world. We pour the life that we have received out into whoever we are. No matter where we are, as long as we are not with him (physically), everywhere needs salt - we are the salt of the earth.

We are the salt of the earth not the sugar or the honey, but the salt. Pour salt in a wound and there is a stinging effect. This is part of our calling. Number 2 this morning. As the salt of the earth we:

## **2. Purify our Society**

When Mark records this saying of our Lord he records it by mentioning fire. He says, *For everyone will be salted with fire. (Mark 9:49)*. When Christians are serving the world through being salt, there will inevitably be occasions where our message stings. We will be an aroma of life to those who are being saved, and an aroma of death to those who are perishing (2 Cor 2:15-16). When we speak the living Word of God into a dead and decaying world, there will inevitably be an effect of stinging, but our faithful charge is to do what is best for our world no matter the consequences. The situation that our world is in is so dire that we have to do whatever it takes to win some.

I agree with John Stott who said, "Probably the greatest tragedy throughout its long and checkered history has been its constant tendency to conform to the prevailing culture instead of developing a Christian counter-culture."<sup>2</sup> There are many who try to take the sting out of the gospel. There is even some denominations who decided to remove the idea of propitiation from their hymnbooks. One of my favorite hymns, speaks of the wrath of God being satisfied. The ecclesiastical leaders of this certain denomination wrote the authors of that hymn and asked if they could remove or rewrite that line. Thankfully the hymn writers said, no. So, the particular denomination responded by leaving the hymn out of their new hymnbook. Jesus has called us to be the salt of the earth, and sometimes salt stings. But, as Adrian Rogers used to say, "No offense means no effect."

The world may not know how to define gender, but we do. The world may not know how to define marriage, but we do. The world may not know how to care for the orphan or the widow, but we do. The world may not know how to care for the unborn, but we do.

The world may not know how to care for the elderly, but we do. The world may not know how to welcome the refugee, but we do. The world may not know how to care for the poor, the sick, the

---

<sup>2</sup> Stott, *Sermon on the Mount*, 63.

dying, but we do. How do we know? We know because he has taught us and called us to be the salt of the earth.

I love the story of Elisha. Here this man is the protégé of Elijah, a great prophet, had asked for a double portion of what Elijah had. After Elijah is taken to heaven, Elisha receives a double portion and is sent to his first place of ministry - Jericho, where the land was unfruitful and the water was bitter. God used him to heal the land. You know how? He poured salt into the polluted waters and out of the barren and bitter land came blessedness, all because salt was added. This is our charge before the Lord - to be the salt of the earth and purify our society.

Since being the salt of the earth is so good, we should understand this next point. Number 3. As the salt of the earth, we:

### **3. Season our Society**

Some people have the wrong idea about the Christian message. They think that Christians are joyless people. Some of us don't help, we walk around with our lips poked out, sullen, like we have no satisfaction or joy. Don't live a bland and flavorless life when Jesus says you are the salt of the earth. Salt preserves, purifies, but it also brings flavor. The message of Christianity is not that there is no satisfaction, but that there is every satisfaction in Jesus. Only Jesus satisfies.

Everyone in the world is desperately grasping for satisfaction. Filling their lives with so many things that will never bring satisfaction. We aren't talking about bad things, we are talking about good things. But, as my old football coach used to say, good is the enemy of great. I hope that nothing thrills your soul like Jesus. I hope that you are living a life that makes men thirsty. I hope that, when you interact with the outside world, your speech is always seasoned with grace, seasoned with salt (Colossians 4:6)

This world is flavorless. We are the salt of the earth. If what our Lord says is true, don't you think we ought to get the salt out of the shaker? Fourthly and finally this morning as the salt of the earth, Jesus is calling us to:

### **4. Permeate our Society**

I hope that you take the word of our Lord seriously. He says that salt that has lost its flavor is useless. When we look at the world our first reaction when we see decay displaying itself shouldn't be to scoff and blame the dead world for being purifying. Our first response should be to ask, "Where is the salt?" Where are the saints that God has called the salt of the earth? We are called to influence, called to impact. We are called to permeate every square inch of our society with the message of Jesus saves!

Abraham Kuyper was right, there is not one square inch from which our Lord does not declare - Mine! We as his ambassadors are sent into the world, in some cases as sheep among wolves, declaring that a King has come who is ordering all things to himself.

We go to Hollywood; we go to the school board; we go to the courthouse; we go to the White House; We go to congress; we go to our homes as the Saints of God and declare Jesus is Lord! He is risen from the dead and he is Lord, and one day every knee will bow and every tongue confess that he is Lord, why not go ahead and start now, go ahead and order every affair under his Lordship.

If we permeate the world with our message, it will mean that we are being poured out. Listen to me, this is why our Lord added a word about persecution. Salt has to be dispensed to be effective. Salt has to dissolve for the flavor to be released. Sometimes God allows persecution so that we will be effective. As James Boice said, "Sometimes it will mean that we shall dissolve to our own interests that we shall have to extend ourselves in areas of the world where we do not see many Christians. We shall feel lonely and even depressed, but that is where the salt is active."<sup>3</sup> We do all that we do for the glory of God and the good of others, no matter the consequences to our lives. It is better to pour our lives out for the glory of Christ than to worthlessly be cast out and trampled under the foot of men. Salt is not worthless, but salt-less saints are worthless.

You are the salt of the earth - no room for inferiority complex. Get it together, this is our call. Did you know that in some cases salt was more valuable than gold? Our word *salary* literally means "salt-money", hence the expression, "That man is worth his salt." What about you? Are you fulfilling the calling of our Lord? Are you the salt of the earth?

This is only available from a life that is submitting themselves to Jesus. A life that is wholly his, is a life that he will wholly use for his glory. And a life that is used by him is a life of greatest effect. Let's influence our society in Jesus name, let's be the salt of the earth!

Listen, you are either salt and light or your death and darkness. If your dead this morning, in sin separated from God, there is away to be restored to God. The way is through Christ Jesus. Jesus has called us life. From death he has called us to walk with him. You must receive him by faith. How many are ready to receive him?

---

<sup>3</sup> Boice, 64.