

Slide 1

Being The Hands of Jesus

By Being The Salt Of The Earth

MATTHEW 5:13

Introduction

1. Many of us love our salt; we use on a regular basis to season our food.
 - a. To us, food just doesn't taste the same without it.

“Can something tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the white of an egg?” (**Job 6:6, NASB95**)
 - b. However, if the truth be told, we probably use more of it than we should.
2. Salt is essential for life in general.
 - a. Small amounts of salt are needed for certain types of plants.
 - b. Our bodies utilize the sodium in salt for . . .
 - 1) the generation of nerve impulses and
 - 2) the maintenance of electrolyte balance and fluid balance.
 - c. Those sodium ions are also necessary for heart activity and certain metabolic functions.
4. Salt was once a valuable commodity.
 - a. The Romans often paid their soldiers with salt. The expression “He is worth his salt” arose from this.
 - b. The scarcity and universal need for salt even led nations to go to war over it.
5. In Jesus' day, salt was used for a number of things:
 - a. As a preservative — Fish caught from the Sea of Galilee, were often cured with salt and before being transported to the markets to sell.
 - b. Medicinal purposes

- a) As a cleansing agent in medicine.
- b) To help with treating snake bites and wasp stings.
- c) As an ingredient in eye salve and for wrapping bruises.
- d) For preventing tooth decay and driving worms from the stomach.

(Pliny, *Natural History* 31.45)

- c. Payment
- d. Confirm a Covenant between two parties (Leviticus 2:13; 2 Chronicles 13:5)
 - 1) All the offerings for the altar were to include salt (Leviticus 2:13).
 - 2) God confirmed the rule of David and his sons over Israel with a covenant of salt (2 Chronicles 13:5).
- 6. Here in his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said that you and I are “the salt of the earth.”
- 7. Notice that He did not say we should “become the salt of the earth,” but that we “are the salt of the earth.”
- 8. As you have already seen, salt had a number of uses in Jesus’ day.
- 9. What did Jesus mean when He said that you and I are the salt of the earth?
- 10. What characteristics of salt does He intend for us to demonstrate in our lives?

Slide 2

I. As The Salt of the Earth . . .

A. WE PURIFY THE WORLD AROUND US

- 1. In 2 Kings 2:19, we find we find the newly appointed prophet of God, Elisha, in the city of Jericho.
- 2. The men of the city come to Elisha with a problem involving their water supply — “the water is bad and the land is unfruitful” (v. 19).
- 3. Elisha instructed the men to bring him “a new jar, and put salt in it” (v. 20).
- 4. Elisha took the jar with the salt, “went out to the spring of water and threw salt in it” (v. 20).

5. He said, “Thus says the Lord, ‘I have purified (healed) these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer’” (2 Kings 2:21).
6. The narrator then added this statement, “So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke” (v. 22).
7. As Christians, you and I continue to live in the world, but James said we are to keep ourselves “unstained by the world” (James 1:27) — we are to remain pure.
8. John said that our hope of seeing Jesus and being like him encourages us to purify ourselves, “just as He is pure” (1 John 1:3).
9. In 1 Timothy 4:12, Paul said that you who are young Christians are not to let anyone look down on you because you are young, but are to “show yourself an example to those who believe” in your “speech, conduct, love, faith and purity.”
10. One of the characteristics of the world in which we live is the lowering of standards — honesty, work ethic, conscientiousness, morality.
11. As Christians, we are to hold ourselves to absolute purity in our thought, speech and conduct.
12. By holding ourselves to these high standards, we challenge the world to even higher standards itself.

2a**B. WE ARE A PRESERVING INFLUENCE IN SOCIETY**

1. Time and again, we read in the Bible of what happens in this world when God’s influence is ignored or pushed aside:
 - a. Cain killed his brother Abel, though God had told him that sin was crouching at his door and that its desire was to have him (Genesis 4:7).
 - b. Man’s inhumanity to man reached a point where “the wickedness of man was great on the earth” (Genesis 6:5), and God eventually destroyed mankind with a flood.
 - c. In Genesis 19, we read of God’s destruction of the cities of Sodom and

Gomorrah because of what Jude called their “gross immorality” (Jude 7).

2. It is this last example that I want to draw to your minds:
 - a. The Lord visited Abraham and Sarah and promised them that they would have a son by this same time the following year.
 - b. As the Lord was leaving, He revealed to Abraham His concern for the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, the same place where Abraham’s nephew Lot, and his family, were living at the time.
 - c. The Lord said to Abraham, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave” (Genesis 18:20).
 - d. Abraham realized that God was about to destroy the two cities, so he asked Him, “Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” (Genesis 18:23).
 - e. He then began to bargain with God, “suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it?” (v. 24).
 - f. God promised that He would spare the city if 50 righteous individuals were found within it.
 - g. Abraham continues his bargaining — 45, 40, 30, 20, 10.
 - h. God promises, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten” (Genesis 18:32).
4. Jesus calls us to be salt — that preserving influence which slows decay and promotes righteousness.
5. Many of us have heard others who have said, “the world is going to hell in a handbasket.” Perhaps you have even said it yourself.
6. All around us we see evidence of this erosion:
 - a. Religion erodes when people no longer acknowledge the true God.
 - b. Families erode as people lack love and devotion to each other.
 - c. Businesses and governments erode as people lack ethics.
 - ❑ The result is that the world becomes full of evil, strife and murder.

7. It is easy to blame everyone else for the problem, but what are we doing to make a difference? Ask yourself . . .
 - a. Do I acknowledge God in my life and worship Him every time I have the opportunity?
 - b. Do I demonstrate godly behavior in my life?
 - c. Do I care for the weak and vulnerable?
 - d. Am I known for my honesty and integrity?
 - e. Do I speak up for what is right and condemn what is wrong?
 - ❑ Will God's wrath against our community/world be restrained or hastened because of our influence or lack thereof?

2b**C. WE ATTRACT PEOPLE TO CHRIST**

1. Salt brings out the taste in those foods which we might otherwise consider bland.
2. It takes the ordinary and makes it better.
3. Christianity is to life what salt is to food.
4. Our Christian faith brings flavor to life.
5. In Psalm 51:12, David, after confessing his sins involving Bathsheba and her husband, Uriah, asked God to "restore to me the joy of Your salvation."
6. In Psalm 100, we find these words, "Shout joyfully to the Lord, all the earth. Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with singing" (vv. 1-2).
7. To the Christians in Philippi, the apostle Paul wrote, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" (Philippians 4:4).
8. In Colossians 4:6, he wrote, "Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person."
9. We must each stop to ask ourselves, "Do I attract people to Christ by my life?"

Slide 3**II. The Danger Of Losing Our Saltiness**

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.” (Matthew 5:13, ESV)

A. WE LOSE OUR EFFECTIVENESS

“if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? ”

1. The whole purpose of salt is to act like salt.
2. The whole purpose of the church is to be the church.
3. In Ephesians 5:27, Paul wrote that Christ’s goal is to “present to Himself the church in all her glory, have no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless.”
4. The loss of our effectiveness is the result of compromise:
 - a. It begins with friendship with the world (James 4:4) — accepting that which is opposed to God.
 - b. We then become stained by the world (James 1:27).
 - c. Next, we find ourselves loving the world (1 John 2:15).
 - d. Finally, we become conformed to the world (Romans 12:1).
5. James said that “friendship with the world is hostility toward God” (James 4:4).
6. John said that if we love the world, “the love of the Father is not in [us] (1 John 2:15).
7. There are two opposing forces at work:
 - a. The world seeks to draw people away from God.
 - b. We as Christians seek to draw people out of the world.
8. The only way we can be successful is if we maintain our saltiness.

3a

B. WE ARE THROWN OUT

“It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.”

1. One of the most prominent congregations in the New Testament was the church at Ephesus.
2. Paul spent two full years there, preaching and teaching (Acts 19:10).
3. According to Luke, as a result of Paul’s work, “all who lived in Asia heard the word of the Lord” (v. 10).
4. However, by the time John writes the Book of Revelation, things have drastically changed.
5. Through John, our Lord told the Christians in Ephesus that they had left their first love and that if they didn’t repent, He was going to remove their lampstand.
6. The church of Ephesus no longer exists today.
7. Sadly, down through the centuries many churches have lost their saltiness and are no more.
8. We must be careful that the same does not happen here.

Conclusion

1. You are the salt of the earth.
2. But, as you know salt does no good when it stays in the saltshaker.
3. Our Lord does not call us to withdraw from the world and live an isolated lifestyle, but to engage the world.
4. We must use every opportunity to influence the lives of those around us.
5. We must also work at maintaining our saltiness if we are to make a lasting impression upon the world.
6. Have you lost your saltiness? If so, repent and return.
7. Are you a person who has yet to become salt. Jesus is waiting.