

PASS the SALT 2 - LV 9th June, 2013, Helen Harray

Jesus said:

*"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its savour, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."
Matthew 5:13*

In this verse Jesus is telling us who we are. Jesus says: **you are**, not you will be or could be, but **you are**. It's your identity. Let's meditate on the enormity of these words.

YOU are the salt of the earth

You **ARE** the salt of the earth

You are the **SALT** of the earth

You are the salt **OF THE EARTH**

SUMMARY from Part 1.

Last week we considered that God has always reached out and revealed Godself to humans in **covenant. Unlike a contract this also carries with it the promise of relationship and friendship like a marriage.**

When God covenanted He expected things from us and He made promises forever.

Last week we read that God made a covenant of salt first with Aaron and his descendants and then with the house of David, and it passed right through the generations until Jesus (see Hebrews 7). In 2 Chronicles 13, the King Abijah knew that he lived and fought in the favour of YHWH's salt covenant. He knew that the rebellious king had forsaken that covenant with YHWH and so he knew despite the odds that Yahweh's commitment was to him in this covenant. He knew on whom he relied.

I've come to see that the Salt Covenant of the OT is a covenant of salvation, God's promise of eternal life to humankind.

It is also the sign of Gods **eternal hospitality and welcome and affirmation and favour**, made to Israel in the covenant of salt and confirmed through the New Covenant in Jesus' blood to all human kind. That confirmation is that the God of all is on our side. He welcomes us to share bread with Him and by implication, life with Him forever. Salt implies life and permanency. Salt preserves life. Covenants were Yahweh's indissoluble commitment to guaranteeing salvation to his creation.

SALT USES

Salt was held to be incredibly sacred. Way more than we ever consider our

common table salt. It was more highly valued than gold to the ancient and people fought over it. People's wages were paid in salt. Salt is ubiquitous...in everything. Without salt you will die. Salt and blood were considered interchangeable...you can't have one without the other. So together and separately they symbolize life. Salt and bread go together.

BREAD and SALT = HOSPITALITY

Those who share bread together are sharers in a common growth. Bread represents sustenance.

We celebrate covenant by food sharing. It's pretty hard to eat together and not break down barriers.

When you share salt and bread together you are in a life sharing covenant. Together they symbolize the sacredness and obligations of hospitality, of treating your guest honourably and of treating your host respectfully.

In sacred and secular records and traditions bread is a recognised representative of flesh.

Jesus spoke of the bread as his flesh and as his body and of the fruit of the vine as his blood in terms that were understood as representing the basis of the covenant by which two became one in a merged common life..

When we share communion we are accepting this covenant...this is my body and my blood of the New Covenant, my promise to you and with that comes obligations on my part.

BETRAYAL

Salt lays an obligation. Any person stepping over a salted threshold was brought into covenant with the giver. The gift required something in return – a commitment of honour.

When shared together it had the same implications as a blood covenant. To an Arab if you shared salt with your enemy no matter how much you hated him you would not violate the salt covenant by harming him in any way. This was treachery of the highest degree.

In Russia the word for hospitality is translated bread/salt.

When an official guest goes into a Slavic country, he or she is offered to partake of bread ("hleb") and salt ("sol") with the host nation. The word "hleb-sol", pronounced with a hard guttural "h", like a Scotsman clearing his throat for "hleb" meaning bread, and ending with a soft labial "l" for the ending of "sol" stands for an ancient formal ceremony by which ancient tribes would signify their brotherhood, or households would unite, or family members would testify to their being at one with each other. "Hleb-sol" thus stands for the most traditional, yet seriously covenanted relationship, and although there

are more, although far less significant current words for hospitality, "hleb-sol" is still used and offered on kinship occasions and to important guests. It stands for "hospitality" in the deepest and most heart-felt sense, and once taken, daren't be lightly broken on either side. From Nigel Jamieson

Anecdote of the Glencoe Massacre in 1692. The memory of treachery is still alive today.



One of the greatest treacheries of all time was after Jesus offered the bread to Judas who took it and then went out and betrayed his host.

It is interesting how things change over time when people forget why things were done and superstitious behaviour arises in cultural habits.

Some information from Wikipedia:

'The Last Supper has given us two common superstitions: the first is that you should never seat 13 at dinner, and the second is that spilling salt brings bad luck. If you look closely at Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the Last Supper, you can see that Judas has knocked the salt cellar over with his elbow. This may be related to the near-Eastern expression to "betray the salt" meaning to betray one's Master. Spilled salt is associated with treachery and lies. If you do spill salt, a pinch thrown over your left shoulder is supposed to blind the devil waiting there.

It was such a rare and valuable commodity that salt was literally worth its weight in gold and often used as legitimate currency. Spilling something so precious could be seen as nothing less than ominous.

The spilling of salt was, in fact, considered nearly blasphemous. Leaving the hapless offender exposed to temptation, bad luck and other such bad things.



People believed that the good spirits lived on the right side and the bad spirits lived on the left side; perhaps because the devil sits at the left hand of God or maybe that he is to the left of the straight and narrow path. Picture the classic image of a devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other. The bad guy is most often portrayed sitting on the left side.

In any case, tossing the salt over the left shoulder is throwing the salt into the face of the demon that lurks there . . . and this should be done with the right or "good" hand.

Throughout history, the association of right with good and left with bad caused a number of perfectly respectable left-handed people to be burned at the stake.'

Jesus offered the bread to Judas knowing he would betray him, and in fact he consistently broke all the conventions by eating with the wrong sorts of people, those who were considered unclean, sinners and outcasts.

By this he dignified them and he covenanted with them. He obligated himself to them. He made himself responsible for them, entering into covenant relationship with them.

He does the same for each of us:

Rev 3: Behold I stand at the door and knock, if you let me come in I will eat with you. Let me be obligated to you. I want this relationship with you.

Have you ever wondered why Jews did not eat with Gentiles? Acts 10: 28. To eat salt with someone meant you were entering into a covenant relationship with them. You partook of their hospitality, therefore you became obligated to them. Or you partook of whatever spirit they were of, you were like the company you kept.

A practicing Jew would never eat with a Gentile because they did not want to be obligated to look after their best interests. Or be contaminated by eating non kosher foods or foods sacrificed to idols.

True today? We don't invite others around maybe because we don't want to take any responsibility for the time it takes to plan prepare, cook, follow up.

What happens when we eat together- we grow bonds, community, fellowship. It's pretty hard to stay mad at someone when you eat together.

SALT on the OFFERINGS

Lev 2:13 "And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt.

Even the Holy ingredients used for the incense offering were to have salt added. "You shall make of these an incense, a compound according to the art of the perfumer, salted, pure and holy"

(Ex. 30:34-35).

Mark 9:⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. And every sacrifice shall be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ "Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."

DISCUSSION

Why was salt to be added to every offering?

Spiritually/metaphorically it stands for something.

1. Salt represents life. A picture of life in the face of death.

Salt preserved or gave life to something that would otherwise be dead and putrid. In the OT image...the salt was the live part. Salt represented life.

Salt representing life was to accompany every offering in the Jewish world. Not death, but life was an acceptable offering to God. A sacrifice without salt is deemed a dead sacrifice. God doesn't want a dead offering.

2. it's kinesthetic. It requires the offerer to do something...an attention to detail. In this way it's a perpetual reminder of a deeper meaning.

It's a picture of attitude...commitment and responsibility to the covenant given.

The attitude of the person is revealed by the kind of sacrifice brought.

If you brought an unclean offering or one like Abel whose offering revealed the poverty of his heart attitude, then you betrayed your commitment and attitude to YHWH by your offering. If you left out the salt perhaps it revealed signs of carelessness which eventually lead to distance and life without God.

Salting the sacrifices was a perpetual reminder to the offerer of their solemn Covenant responsibility to YHWH (Num.18:19). Of a call to personal holiness and purity in your worship.

To give a sacrifice to God with salt in it was to be committed to him forever. Perhaps it underlies the paradox of the

LIVING SACRIFICE

In Romans 12:1. I beseech you brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...

How can you be a living sacrifice?

It's a paradox...something given or surrendered over to death, yet still alive.

Daily it's a recommitment to Christ's covenant with us to faithfulness, with all of life...body, heart soul, mind and being.

Salt in my sacrifice is like a sweet savour to God...it represents something of us and the attitude with which we bring ourselves to God and to others.

Metaphorically it represents our heart, our purity, or capacity to influence the world because we are holy, set apart.

This is another paradox

SWEET SAVOUR. How does salt, which isn't sweet, become a sweet savour in the offering?

God can smell attitude.

The Greek for salt that has lost its savour is moros --- dull or stupid, as if

shut up.

It is moranthe...insipid, lost its ability to preserve, it is shut down...we could say moronic. In fact the term "moron" was coined in 1910 by [psychologist Henry H. Goddard^{\[3\]}](#) from the [Ancient Greek](#) word [μωρός](#) (*moros*), which meant "dull" – mentally retarded (as opposed to *oxy*, which meant "sharp).

Salt that has lost its distinctive qualities is here said to lack its proper mind or sense.

Just hold that thought.

Generally savour has the meaning of "smell," "odor":

In the Old Testament, it is always accompanied by the adjective "sweet." It stands for the smell of sacrifices and oblations, and assumes that God smells and is pleased with the fragrance of sacrifices (e.g. "Yahweh smelled the sweet savor," [Genesis 8:21](#)

In the New Testament, "savour" in the sense of smell is used metaphorically:

(a) God is said to make manifest through His apostles "the savor of his knowledge in every place" [2 Corinthians 2:14](#);

(b) Elsewhere the metaphor is borrowed from the fragrant smell of the sacrifices. The apostles "are a sweet savor of Christ unto God" ([2 Corinthians 2:15](#)), i.e. they are, as it were, a sweet odor for God. By the same sacrificial metaphor, Christ's offering of Himself to God is said to be "for a sweet smelling savor" ([Ephesians 5:2](#) "for an odor of a sweet smell"; the same phrase is used in [Philippians 4:18](#) of acts of kindness to Paul, which were "a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God").

So when we finally come to consider this verse in Matt 5

We have the two background meanings:

If the salt has lost its savour it's become insipid...so not being what it's supposed to be that it's like being mentally retarded. It's not a terribly affirmative statement of the Jewish nation and potentially not of the church either.

But if the salt of the earth does what its supposed to do...allows all its properties to be expressed... it is a sweet smell to God and to all around it.

In light of all the background what did Jesus mean when he said: You are the salt of the earth? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring revelation to you.

You are the salt of the earth—to preserve it from corruption, to season its insipidity, to freshen and sweeten it. The way we talk...the way we are with one another... the way we live must be with Christ-likeness.

Humankind without God is base and animal-like. We may not see that because our western society is still under the influence of Christendom ...but there are signs of lawlessness and depravity in NZ and all around the world. A society without God is in great trouble.

The remedy for this, Jesus says is the **active presence** of His disciples among their fellows. **The character and principles of Christians, brought into close contact with it, are designed to arrest the festering corruption of humanity and season its insipidity.** We are needed, do not think that you lack the power to influence and change big things.

You **are** the salt. You **know** the Bread of Life.

We mediate the seasoning of God's covenant in the earth.

And we are bearers of the covenant, of God's hospitality. We are ones who contaminate the world with hospitality, with love and welcome and life.

The implication is that whatever we touch will live, will be healed, disinfected, preserved.

Knowledge is power. If you know what you believe and why and who you are, you will stand up with authority. The King Abijah knew he stood in the power of a salt covenant and that he was going to win against all odds. He declared it.

I am going to take the meaning of the salt covenant fulfilled in the New covenant Jesus made in his blood, to be that God is eternally on my side and by my side and in Him I both have life and I have the power to help others find life. This is well expressed in the contemporary song of Chris Tomlin:

God of Angel Armies

I know who goes before me

I know who stands behind

The God of angel armies is always by my side

The One who reigns forever

He is a friend of mine

The God of angel armies

is always by my side

- We can be salt by having a pure life by being a living sacrifice
- We can be salt by digging into God's word and knowing our covenant capabilities.
- We can be salt by sharing bread with others...our neighbours, our work colleagues, our church family.

If the salt stays in the salt shaker it will not be on anything.

Its properties are only released in connection with another substance.

You have to shake the salt and pass it on!!

You don't have to be anything else except rely on the salt in you and through you to do its work.

How many barriers does a meal or a coffee break down?

HEAPS

Your simple act of hospitality will open up lives and conversations and opportunities.

It softens and sweetens. Hospitality without obligations... Just start there, see where it leads.

If Peter's shadow could heal,

If praying over a handkerchief or an apron could heal a sick person who touched them... if salt could heal polluted waters,

If a king could defeat an army by declaring the covenant of salt to be what he stood in.

Then you can stand in the Name of the One who covenants with you and declare an assault on the enemy of this world who has entered by the back door and is out to kill, destroy and steal from anyone and everyone the true life they ought to have in Jesus Christ.

In a kinesthetic way, you walk up and down your street and declare it off limits and spread some salt to symbolize a cleansing and a ploughing up of the spiritual landscape. Salt cleanses against the demonic. Watch what happens. It's about the power of God behind that not you having to do anything.

Both take up your authority to be the salt

And pass the salt out into your community.

The "Covenant of Salt," is indicative of the everlasting nature of the Covenant relationship between the children of salt, and their CREATOR YAHWEH.

Isaiah 49

⁸ This is what the LORD says: "In the time of my favor I will answer you,
and in the day of salvation I will help you;

I will keep you and will make you
to be a covenant for the people,
to restore the land

and to reassign its desolate inheritances,

⁹ to say to the captives, 'Come out,'
and to those in darkness, 'Be free!'