

Salt of the Earth
Matthew 5:13-20
January 23, 2011

Eating in the dining hall of my college was always an adventure. It was a place for deceit and treachery. The girls though they were deceiving us guys into thinking they ate like birds as they went up to the salad bar instead of getting an entrée in the serving line. Those same women would later return to their dorm and fill in the empty spots in their stomachs with pizza (as witnessed to by the large pile of empty pizza boxes piled behind the girls' dorms).

It was also a place of treachery...not only because of the occasional food fight that would break out (as evidenced by the wad of mashed potatoes that still clung to the ceiling as I graduated)...but because of what was evidently going on back in the kitchen. I shuddered at what was falling into the pots of cooking food back there.

When the unidentifiable substances outweighed the identifiable ones, some of the guys and I would head into Richmond to the Wisconsin Texas Border Café. They had a Widow-Maker Chili that made my bald spot sweat even before it was a bald spot. Steve would never order the really hot stuff and we used to give him a lot of guff about it. Well, one evening he decided to show us and order his chili extra-hot. Soon after the waitress left Steve went to the restroom. I noticed that on the way he stopped to talk to our waitress. So, after he went on into the Men's Room I asked our waitress what he had said to her. She said that he wanted to change his chili from extra-hot to mild. So, I gave her a bribe sufficient for her to reverse his request.

Needless to say...Steve's wire-rimmed glasses fogged up after the first couple of bites, and we all got a good laugh. And don't worry...Steve got me back later.

However, I will say that after that incident, Steve approached Border Café chili with a bit of apprehension. Sadly, many unchurched people regard Christians with a similar apprehension. If you turn the conversation with someone outside the church toward Christianity, you are likely to hear how this person has been scalded by the Tabasco-like actions of supposed Christians.

They had expected to find the sweet love of Christ in His followers, but instead encountered the same acid they find in the people of the world. Now, we all know Christians aren't perfect, and some use their imperfections as an excuse; but, the Sermon on the Mount indicates that Christ expects more of us than excuses. He expects us to be the salt of the earth. But what does that mean?

In Jesus' culture, salt had several purposes:

- As with today, salt seasoned food to bring out flavor.
- Since they didn't have refrigeration, salt preserved meat.

- If used too much, salt had destructive properties. Armies would salt the land to make sure that no crops could be grown.
- Finally, salt creates thirst. Just eat a lot of potato chips and see if you aren't looking for something to drink!

Salt is an impact substance. It's not passive. It changes whatever it touches. It can either create or destroy. Jesus expects us to impact the world for Him.

You and I can impact the world and improve its flavor by living lives that are distinctly different. Why would anyone want to be in a relationship with our Lord if our lives look just like theirs? Rather than blend in with sin, we must stand out in holiness. We must be a set-apart people. Until we stop being two-faced Christians, like the folks who bow their heads in reverence for the Benediction and then curse out the waitress in the restaurant, we won't be able to bring people to Christ. Let's try bringing a little joy and hope into the lives of the people we meet.

As salt preserves, Christians must preserve the world by acting in righteousness. It's not enough to just reject sin; we must also work for justice and social holiness. Our baptismal vows ask the following question of candidates for baptism:

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves?

Folks, the word *resist* isn't meant to be a passive activity in that context. To resist evil, injustice and oppression we must actively work against it. For instance, welfare was never intended to be the responsibility of the government. It has always been the responsibility of Christ's followers. We cannot neglect the God-given responsibilities to feed the hungry and help the hurting.

When we stand for righteousness, we help destroy evil and establish holiness in our society.

Finally, as Christians we can create a thirst for Christ by embodying Christ in the world. Dan Kimball's book, [They Like Jesus but Not the Church](#), provides a sad commentary on the state of Christianity world-wide. What if we replaced hypocrisy and snarky comments, with grace and peace-seeking? What if we offered forgiveness before it is even asked for? What if we worshipped out of a sense of joy instead of obligation?

When the people of the world are impacted by Christ-centered Christians, they will be drawn to the One who can give them living water.

Remember folks, salt is an impact substance. If salt loses its saltiness, it is not good to anyone. If you and I aren't making an impact for the Kingdom then we are of no use to Christ.

Will you make the decision to do one salty thing for Jesus this week? What will it be? I would love to hear about it.