

February 8th, 2026
Matthew 5:13-20

St. John North Vancouver

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be always acceptable in your sight O God our rock and our strength.

I had a very interesting discussion while enjoying a coffee get together with a group of friends Friday. I posed the question “What is your favourite salt.” Answers ranged of course – Himalayan Pink Salt, regular table salt, sea salt, salt flakes, no salt, seasoned salt.” I imagine if I asked the same question here this morning the answers might follow a similar pattern.

When my friends asked why I wanted to know I told them it was part of my research for my sermon – which was about salt and light! Some interesting conversation came out of a seemingly simple question.

While prepping for this morning I posed the question to Google how many kinds of Salt are there and the answer was either 12 or 13. Google mentioned Celtic salt, Smoked salt, Fleur De Sal, Black Salt, Red & Black Hawaiian Salt, Pickling Salt, and Rock Salt.

I grew up with plain old white table salt, but have shifted to using other kinds of salt. Depending on where you might live in the world might also dictate the kind of salt you are accustomed to.

Salt has been and is more than a simple flavouring agent. During the late Roman Era and throughout the Middle Ages salt was a precious commodity. In Chinese History salt was a driver of technological development and a stable source of revenue for the Imperial Government. In Ethiopia Salt Blocks were traded as currency. Salt has played a prominent role in determining the power and locations of great cities. Salt taxes were sources of income. Salt has also been a major factor in the outcomes of wars. Salt preserved meats and fish allowed armies and explorers to move outward into new and uncharted places.

In our Gospel this morning there are 2 phrases that stand out aren't there? "You are the salt of the earth, and you are the light of the world," and our reading is only a bite size piece of Jesus sermon on the mount. Yes, he's preaching about salt and light but that's not really what he's talking about, is it? Jesus is talking to and about those who were there that day, and he's talking about you and me. Salt and light are the metaphors he uses to talk about us and our lives.

In these few verses we are being invited to examine our lives, their quality, character, and impact, what's working and what's not in and for the wider world.

"You are the salt of the earth"? What does that mean for us today?

Friday, the same group of women from coffee went out for dinner. We chose a nice place to eat and made our selections from the Dine Out Vancouver Menu. When the meals came the server asked if we wished salt and pepper. Of Course! What is interesting is several of our group hadn't even tasted their meal to see if it needed extra seasoning. Salt seasons and flavors food. But it must be the right amount. If there's not enough salt the food is tasteless and bland. And if there is too much you can barely swallow it.

What parts of our life are well seasoned and flavorful? What parts are bland, tasteless, and in need of salt? What's the salt you need? Remember different salts give different flavours. Are there parts of our life today that might need some adjustment to the seasoning?

Think about salt in our relationships. In what ways are we flavoring and enhancing the lives of others? What difference are we making in the world? What relationships need some extra salt? Don't forget, salt can also dry out things. In what ways have we become salty and difficult to be with? Have we left another dry and thirsty? What parts of our life are dry and parched? What adjustments need to be made?

Salt is a preservative. What are we preserving these days? Is it worth preserving and keeping? What in our life today needs salting and preserving? And what needs to be let go of? Remember, salt is also corrosive. What has become corrosive in our life? In what ways have we become corrosive to ourselves or even others?

Some challenging questions to be sure.

The other piece of our reading this morning are the words “you are the light of the world.”

What does it mean and look like for us to be “the light of the world”? If we’re going to consider the light, we also must consider the darkness. Think about this; when the first fire was discovered what impact did that have on succeeding generations and what became the many different cultures with varied beliefs and practices. Both are realities in our lives.

I am one of those people who does much better mentally and physically when there is an abundance of light. It is one of the reasons I have a “Happy Light.” My energy increases as does my sense of well-being. Jesus of course is not speaking specifically of daylight but the statement he uses ask us to consider for ourselves where and what is the light in our life? Where and what is the darkness in our life?

Think about how light makes a difference. After a few cold and gray days, we long for light and warmth. Plants turn toward the light. Has there been a time when you’ve watched the sun’s light rise over the horizon and felt something new rise within you. We turn on a night light to push back the dark and shed some light. We speak of new insights and awarenesses as the light having come on. “Those lightbulb moments” Who among us hasn’t spent a long night waiting and praying for the morning light? What difference is light making in our life today and what difference is our light making in the life of another? In what ways are we shining the light of love, peace, mercy, forgiveness, hope, healing, compassion?

In John's account of the gospel Jesus says, "I am the light of the world". Today he says, "You are the light of the world." Maybe we're more like Jesus than we know or believe. Maybe light is how Jesus shares his life with us. Maybe there is only one light but many lamps.

Salt & Light are necessary for our physical well-being. If we see ourselves as both salt and light in a world that is suffering, are we sharing the light with the world and are we being the flavouring that invites others to participate in the meal we have been gifted.

Roman soldiers were often paid with salt. It held value. Maybe Jesus is saying that you and I are of value. Do we recognize that about ourselves and one another? Are we living in ways that are worth our salt? What does that look like in each of our lives today? Are we being true to ourselves, authentic? Or are we betraying ourselves?

The right mixture of salt and water can clean wounds, prevent infection, and promote healing. What needs healing in our life today and what might that look like? In what ways are we tending to and healing the wounds of others? What would it be like to hold the pain of another and taste the salt in their / our tears?

Not only are "you the salt of the earth," "you are the light of the world."

Taste and see. What does life taste like today? What does life look like?

Taste and see that the Lord is good, Happy are they who trust in him.

There have been a lot of questions to consider this morning. Perhaps as a Lenten Discipline we might use some of these questions to reflect on during those 6 weeks.

Be the salt. Be the Light.

Amen