

***No 1 You are salt Matthew 5:13***

This is only one verse but one that most of us would be familiar with. Jesus loved to use images of everyday things familiar to ordinary people. The sheepfold for the sheep, or the light that’s put on a stand would be very familiar images to 1st century Palestinians. So, when we read about salt in the Bible and want to know its meaning for us today, we must first of all understand what it meant to the people Jesus spoke to.

With these two piercing metaphors of salt and light, Jesus focusses the minds of the disciples on what kind of impact they should make on the world. Jesus’ plan was that the disciples he initially teaches and trains should become people who help change the lives of people they meet.

1. Talk about the places salt is used in our 21st century lives. What is its function? How does it work? Flavouring, half of what covers fish and chips, de-icing roads in winter are three you might be familiar with.

Salt had a variety of qualities and uses in the ancient world. It was so important that it was used as a means of exchange in commercial ventures across the Mediterranean Sea. The variety of use leads to different interpretations of what Jesus meant when he said it.

A primary use of salt was as a preservative – it would be rubbed into meat or fish to prevent decay. This method was in use in the Navy until relatively recently.

1. If this is Jesus’ primary meaning, what is he saying about the society in which he lived?

How are we to be ‘preservative’ in our society?

Salt is also an essential part of the diet of human beings and animals – it would used as a seasoning. We need to take in salt – lack of it is said to be the cause of cramps.

1. In our diet, it is both crucial and gives our food better flavour. This suggests that Jesus meant us to be people who bring something essential to our society and give it the flavour of the kingdom.

Talk about ways we should all be doing this is our society. (Neighbourhood, workplace, friendships, public life, college, politics etc.)

Salt was also used in small quantities as a fertilizer when applied to certain types of earth. This suggests that Jesus’ disciples will enhance the growth of God’s work in this world. A widely held view suggests that salt had such a wide usage in the ancient world Jesus is not pointing to one specific application but is using it to say that Christians are vitally important to this world?

1. We have experienced a transformation in our lives. How can we help others to know this transformed life?

How important is it for Christians to be involved in public life? What is the role for such people. Should Christians speak out about public issues?

Is their a Christian view on war or poverty – if so where and when should Christians express that view?

Jesus’ next statement has caused great problems. Strictly speaking Sodium Chloride (salt) is a stable compound so cannot lose its saltiness. So, what did Jesus mean? He may be referring to rock formations that contain salt – meat and fish were sometimes packed into these formations. After a time, the salt leaked out and the rocks ceased to be useful.

Jesus could also be referring to the salt collected at the Dead Sea by evaporation. But this salt often contained other crystals so was useless.

1. The answer to Jesus’ question is ‘no’ – salt cannot lose its saltiness. A Christian in the world is always a Christian. True disciples will always make a difference in their world.

With the help of the Holy Spirit talk about ways each of us could bring God’s ‘flavour’ into our world.

The sober ending to the verse should be noted. Imposter disciples, who simply try to put on the flavour, will be shown to be what they truly are. They never had kingdom life in the first place.

1. The challenge for professing disciples is for them to examine their nature and to be honest as to whether they have been transformed by the life of the kingdom of God.

It would be good to pray that each of us try to live lives that make a difference in our networks.