

FRIDAY 29 April 2022 "Salty People" (Matt. 5:13)

Good Friday morning to you my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

As you and I walk the life paths we are each living, who are the people who bring 'spice' into your life? I mean those who enliven your life, brighten your day, awaken joy, bring a smile to your face just as you hear their name? Did you know that's the type of people you and I should be, everyday?

In the days following EASTER, I'm sure all the disciples did lots of reflecting on what they remembered about their time with Jesus. Because Matthew did not have his old job, tax collecting, to return to, I have a feeling Matthew may have begun writing his memories, especially after he returned to his home in Capernaum. Jesus had spent a great deal of time in that town. Look with me again today at Matthew's recollection of Jesus' first big 'message' given on a hillside outside Capernaum. Matthew gives us three full chapters of what Jesus said that day. *It was radical, and now Matthew, as he reflected on those words, was giving serious consideration to how those words needed to describe him, a disciple of Jesus!*

Jesus had said: ***"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."*** (Matt. 5:13) Of course we know TOO much salt can ruin almost anything, right? Have you ever been to the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth? It's a lake so salty nothing can live in it. But salt is also very powerful and helpful. Have you ever put salt on an icy driveway, or have you lived in a cold place where the roads are salted in the winter? Perhaps you've spent time in a fishing harbor and learned the value of salt brine for preserving fish or other meats for a long time? And, of course, a pinch of salt can bring out great flavor in food, right? When you think of all the various uses of salt in the daily human experience, it's quite amazing isn't it? Salt makes a difference, a big difference wherever it is used. How should that be true of you and me?

As Matthew thought about these words of Jesus, reflecting on the several months with Jesus, watching His impact on people and communities, *what do you think Matthew concluded about how Jesus was the salt this world needed? How do you see that Jesus encouraged the hopeless and befriended the outcast and spoke truth to the confused or skeptical, and even brought correction to a person who was wrong?* Can you think of examples of each of these and can you see the difference it made in people's lives?

As Matthew then reflected on Jesus' commission that he and the other disciples transition from being students to being teachers by going and helping others become disciples of Jesus, teaching them to live as Jesus lived, what do you think Matthew concluded was now his 'salty' role in our world? And what about you and me, my friends? Can you make the application to your real, everyday life?

Are you salty? *Are you able to discern how to be just the right amount of "salty" for every conversation or situation in which you find yourself? Do you make a helpful big difference in the lives of the people you touch every day with your 'saltiness'?* Are there times you are TOO Salty, to the point you irritate or even aggravate the people you touch? Is Jesus glorified and honored as you sprinkle your Holy Spirit anointed "saltiness" on the people you encounter, especially those with whom you have frequent contact? What can you imagine I mean by "Holy Spirit anointed saltiness"?

My friends, do you see how this is the practical application of Jesus teaching His disciples how it would be when the Holy Spirit would be alive in them leading them in wisdom, teaching them God's Truth, helping them remember Jesus' words and actions with clarity, and giving them discernment in what to say and do so that every conversation and situation is touched by Jesus? So, my 'salty friends', take a close look at yourself... *how effective are you as a living 'saltshaker', applying just the right amount of Godly salt to every conversation and situation in which you find yourself? Are you growing in your relationship with the Holy Spirit so the Holy Spirit can use you as a spiritual saltshaker to apply just the right amount of the touch of Jesus to every situation so the result is improvement, for God's glory!* This, my friends, is one of the things Jesus meant when He prayed **"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."** (Matt. 6:10) Can you see that when the Holy Spirit leads what you say and how you help in Jesus's name it is bringing the will and kingdom of God into the conversation or situation where you are?

But we can't leave this powerful statement of Jesus without also considering the last phrase: **"But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot."** How does a person lose their Holy Spirit anointed 'saltiness'? The Apostle Paul wrote this to the Christ followers in Ephesus: **"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God and do not give the devil a foothold."** (Eph. 4:27,30) So what attitudes might you have, what tone of voice might you use, what words might you speak into a situation, which would actually **'grieve the Holy Spirit' or 'give the devil a foothold'** in your life and that situation? That shouldn't be too difficult for us to recognize, should it?

Paul also wrote this, in that same letter: **"Let not any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs."** (Eph. 4:29) May I ask, do you taste your food before you add a pinch of salt, or are you one of those people who just reaches for the saltshaker even before your first bite? *Would you agree that being an effective "Holy Spirit anointed saltshaker" requires the ability to DISCERN the appropriate amount of salt that is needed in every situation we find ourselves?* But do you also see that when we open our mouths to speak, the tone of voice and attitude with which we speak our 'salty words' must also be Holy Spirit guided or else too easily our good intentions can actually become painful and wounding.

Have you heard the phrase *'be careful, don't say something that will be salt in the wound.'*? When living in Haiti years ago, my family learned ocean salt water can be very effective in cleaning wounds or disinfecting and cleansing. Sometimes when I have a sore throat, I'll gargle with salt water, and it's really helpful. DISCERNING the right amount of salt and proper application of salt in each unique situation is very important, isn't it? *Is the Holy Spirit teaching you such discernment as you bring God's truth to every situation?*

Here are two powerful verses in the Psalms that really challenge me as I think about being a *'Holy Spirit guided spiritual saltshaker'*: "**May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing in Your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer.**" (Psalm 19:14) "**Search me O God and know my heart, test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.**" (Psalm 139:23,24)

Finally, do you know anyone who used to be a vibrant follower of Jesus, who was learning to be an effective Holy Spirit anointed saltshaker in our world, but something happened, and they lost their saltiness, as Jesus described it? Perhaps they succumbed to a secret sin, and it consumed them from the inside. Perhaps they were beaten down with criticism and they stopped caring about how to help others. Perhaps, as with a man named Demas who once was a close associate of Paul's, (2 Tim. 4:9,10) the attractions of the world drew them away from Jesus? Jesus said a powerful thing about salt losing its saltiness: "**It is no longer good for anything except to be trampled underfoot.**" (Matt. 5:13) Oh my friends, *what are the spiritual disciplines you are using to be sure you don't lose your 'saltiness', your spiritual vibrancy? What are you doing to stimulate your spiritual growth and dynamic? How are you nurturing your relationship with Jesus?*

Oh, how our world needs millions and millions of Holy Spirit anointed human saltshakers... are you becoming one? Here's a song to help us consider this powerful statement from Jesus:

Today's Scripture is Matthew 5:13.