

Matthew 5:13

Jesus does not say, “You should be the salt of the earth,” or “You can be.” He says that this is what we are. “*You are the salt of the earth.*” Well how did this happen? In Bible times the people went to the Dead Sea for their salt. The salt they used came from that water. How fitting. For you and I became the salt of the earth in the water of Holy Baptism. God did this. He joined you to Christ Jesus in your baptism, and thus the salt of the earth you are.

God knows, even though the people at the time of our text did not, that salt is a bond, a union. Sodium and chloride together are salt. And since we know this, let’s apply it here. Your union with Jesus makes you who you are. “*Apart from Me, you can do nothing.*” Apart from Jesus we are nothing. But united to Him you are the salt of the earth.

With great privilege comes great responsibility. It is our task as the salt of the earth to preserve it. That’s what salt does. It preserves. What is your purpose in life? To be salt for others. Salt is not salt for its own sake. It’s salt for the benefit of that which it touches.

Who do you touch in life? Your family. Let’s begin there. It’s quite rare these days for an entire family to be united in the faith. Look at your family. Not to judge them. Look with love. Is your spouse, child, grandchild, sibling, living apart from Christ? You are salt for them. With you touching their heart, their life with Christ, God can and does work in love to keep them from spoiling, from perishing.

Look at your church family. We touch each other here. Is everyone in this family living as they should? Of course not. No church family walks together perfectly in Christ. Is there someone who needs to be brought back? You and I are the salt in that person’s life. God may preserve them in the end through you; through your love in Christ towards them.

Look at the community where you live. Your friends and neighbors; those whom you touch. You are salt for them too. God loves them just as He loves you. Jesus died for them just as He died for you. By living your faith, God may well preserve them in the end. He can bring Christ to them through you.

My grandpa was a pastor up in Iowa for many years. There was a farmer in the area who was not a church member, but he would go and visit him every now and then. Sometimes, though, salt can be very irritating; like salt in a wound. And this is exactly what my grandpa was to this man. He wanted nothing to do with his visits. Once he even drove him off his farm with a pitchfork. Still, my grandpa went back. After my grandpa died, this farmer began going to church. He told them, “I began thinking that if your pastor cared that much about me, I guess I should too.” And that man became a faithful member of the congregation.

In the Old Testament, Lot was salt in a wound for the people of Sodom. He lived righteously; they did not. Now God did not preserve Sodom because of Lot. But He did preserve Lot because of Abraham. He pulled him out of that city before He destroyed it.

Who do you know that needs to be pulled out of Sodom? They need to know of God’s love for them. They need to know His forgiveness for them in Christ Jesus. I think we can get so worried

about becoming salt in their wounds that we leave them alone. But if we are not salt for them, how will they be salted?

That's what Jesus says here. The English translation says, "*If salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?*" But the Greek says, "*If salt has lost its taste, how will it (the earth) be salted?*" If we Christians do not salt the earth, it won't be salted, and people will not be preserved from judgment.

And if we are not being salt for others, being Christ to them, are we, as Jesus says, "*no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet?*" When I look at my failings, I ask this of myself. What am I good for if I'm not living up to my calling as a Christian? Maybe you ask yourself the same thing.

But look at Jesus. He was willing to go to the cross for you. He became good for nothing in the eyes of the leaders of His day. Jesus was tossed out of the city and trampled underfoot. He was thrown onto the garbage dump of Golgotha like one who is worthless and left to die.

Because Jesus endured this, God preserves you from it. He forgives you for all your failings, all your sins. This is pure mercy. And God delights in being so merciful to you.

Remember who you are in your baptism. You are not salt because of what you do. You are the salt of the earth because of Jesus. Your baptism unites you with Him. And no matter how often you have failed, that bond you can never break. In Christ you always are who you are – one who is forgiven by God, and one who is the salt of the earth. Amen.