

## Being salt and light

In our reading Jesus isn't just calling us to BE both salt and light in this passage he is saying we ARE salt and light. It's in the present tense. Our lives should be making a difference to those around us.

Salt and light were both precious commodities in Jesus' time.

Today salt is mainly used to enhance the flavour of our food. It would have been used for this in the 1<sup>st</sup> century too - but it had a much more significant role then – in a world without fridges or ice - salt was the primary way in which food was preserved as salt has natural antibacterial qualities.

It was also set out in Leviticus that all sacrifices had to be purified with salt - “Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.”

And ingesting salt was a way of making an agreement legally binding – when 2 parties entered into a contract they would eat salt in the presence of witnesses to bind the deal.

Did you know that the word salary comes from an ancient word meaning 'salt money' referring to a Roman soldier's allowance for the purchase of salt. And someone who works hard is still referred to as someone who is 'worth their salt'.

So - salt was highly valued and had a dual role in both preservation and taste.

But it's only effective when it comes into contact with the food – even a few grains can make a huge difference – so if we are to act as salt in the world we need to be out there interacting and having contact with people.

Let's now have look at light - today we take light very much for granted – everywhere we go we can flip a switch and have as much light as we want. In Jesus' time when it got dark - it stayed dark - unless you had a candle or an oil lamp.

In our passage he is not describing a light that is snuffed out or put out but a light that is lit and then covered up or hidden and thence useless. If you had a precious source of light in those days you certainly wouldn't cover it up intentionally.

Light is key to life itself - sunlight provides the energy to sustain life and build up our Vitamin D supplies and boost our immunity. And light draws people towards it.

Jesus describes himself as the Light of the World and his followers should shine that light for all to see. So our light is not our own – it is a reflection of Jesus' light. Just imagine if every Christian had their light turned on at the same time – whether small or large – all shining brightly what a difference that would make to our world!

We are the way in which God flavours and illuminates life and the world. We live our lives in such a way that reveals God at work in us. We help people see the love of God. We bring light to the dark places.

We speak kind words and live in such a way that our good works give glory to God.

- By being generous with our compassion, time and money, caring for and making a difference in other people's lives.
- By talking to those no one else wants to talk to, those we disagree with us or have hurt us or we have a particular difficulty with.

- By just being available – having the time to listen to and be there for someone.
- By doing these things we bring joy to others and show the love of Christ.

When someone asks us why we do these things we shouldn't be afraid to say because of Jesus. That is being light – that is living as Jesus commanded us to - “let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven”.

Only by remaining focused on Christ and being obedient to Him can we expect to remain salt and light in the world.

Salt can lose its saltiness and therefore its effectiveness if it gets mixed with other things and diluted – it's then useless.

It's all too easy for us to lose our saltiness too - to get into the habit of not attending church, drifting away, getting diluted.

Further on in Mark's Gospel (Chapter 9 verse 50) he suggests that saltiness can be lost specifically through a lack of peace with one another.

Maybe we are losing our saltiness quite slowly and we haven't noticed. The responsibilities we have to pay attention to or our faith is not as exciting to us as it once was. Maybe we are getting tired of the routine of it all and perhaps downcast that things haven't worked out the way we hoped.

We have to be sure we are caring for ourselves – refilling ourselves, experiencing renewal and refreshment. Different things work for each of us. It could be through bible study, or home groups, quiet days or a retreat, by fellowship with other Christians – by joining Terry's group looking at The Chosen and sharing reflection together. Like a battery on 5% - we need to be re-charged.

It's also tempting to hide our light under a bowl – to take the easy option, the comfortable route - to hide away. Who am I to shine the light of Christ? What will people think of me? I'm nobody special and I'm all too aware of my flaws and failures. I'll keep quiet – I'll let others be upfront and I'll support from the shadows.

But we are called to preserve and illuminate - to remain focused - to remain salt and light. Maybe like Eddie the Eagle – to have the courage to let go and fly confident that the Lord catches us if we fall.

So let us pray - Dear Lord

Thank you that we ARE salt and light in your world.

Help us to retain our saltiness and reflect your light for all to see.

May we selflessly care for those around us - even those we find more challenging  
And may we ensure we keep ourselves salty and well lit through fellowship with other Christians.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen

**Carol Elsasser, 5 February 2022**