

## Salt – Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> May 2014

***“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how <sup>[a]</sup>can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men”Matthew 5:13).***

Beloved in The Lord,

Today, on this the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our Congregation, may these words of Jesus from His Sermon on The Mount speak to us afresh, and remind us of our purpose. May these words inspire us to strive to grow in Him, and to do even more for His Kingdom. May our latter works be greater than our first.

Our text today is a continuation of Jesus Sermon on The Mount. He has just delivered the Beatitudes – The words of blessing which describe the Christian life and now He states that those who believe on Him are the salt of the earth. These words refer to those who believe in Jesus, who are His children. Jesus is saying that all true Christians are the salt of the earth.

Jesus always used very simple language when teaching and He used examples and illustrations from common everyday life. In Jesus time, His reference to salt was very clear to His listeners. In those days salt was very precious and very important. Salt was so valuable that many Roman soldiers asked to be paid in salt instead of money.

Salt has two main functions, to preserve, or slow decay and to give flavour. Most commentators and theologians believe that Jesus had both these purposes in mind when He said that His followers were the salt of the earth. Let us consider these two purposes of salt and see how they apply to us today.

Firstly salt as a preservative. Before modern refrigeration, salt was widely used to preserve food, especially meat. The only real way to effectively preserve meat was to salt it.

One of the main functions of the Christian Church is to preserve. Preserve the Truth, maintain ethics and good moral standards. The world that we live in is decaying. It is becoming more and more corrupt with every day. It seems to me that the process of corruption has dramatically accelerated in the last 30-40 years. I believe that one major factor is that the Church has lost its saltiness. The Church is no longer fulfilling its God given purpose, but I will return to this a little later.

It was not long after the fall of Adam and Eve, that man had become totally corrupt, and there was only one righteous man on the face of the earth and that was Noah. We read in Genesis 6:11: ***“Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence.”***

It was sin, man’s rebellion against Almighty God that caused this corruption. That is why God decided to wipe out every living thing with a flood, with the exception of Noah and his wife and their three sons and their wives.

It did not take long, however, before the next generations were again corrupted. The process of corruption continued. The problem was and still is today is called original sin. Everyone is born

with this and every man by nature is a rebel. Man's natural inclination, is away from God – the natural man rebels against God. The natural man has a bent toward sin.

God says: ***“the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth;” Gen.8:21.***

Again we read: ***“The heart is more deceitful than all else  
And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:9)***

I could quote numerous passages that state this truth that natural man is evil and not good. This is why man cannot save himself. This is why secular humanism is a failure. A person left to his own devices cannot halt corruption.

God, being a God of mercy and grace and love gave us a solution, He gave us His Son Jesus Christ. The Good News is stated by Jesus Himself:

***“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup> For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. <sup>18</sup> He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God” (John 3:16-18).***

God so loved us that He forgives us through Jesus shed blood. Jesus took our punishment, He died in our place, He died a substitutionary death, so that we may be a new creature.

Paul writes: ***“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come” (2 Cor.5:17).***

When we believe on Jesus, when we confess our sin, and acknowledge Jesus as Lord and Saviour, then from that moment onwards we are a new creature. To use Jesus words – we are born again. We are born from above. From that moment on we are the salt of the earth. Our mission in life is to share this Good News of Jesus with all people.

Shortly before His Ascension, Jesus said these words which are also our commission:

***“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age”(Matthew 28:18-20).***

Our Congregation was founded 65 years ago to fulfill this command of our Lord. By His grace and with His blessing we have been preaching the Good News for 65 years and we will continue to do so as long as He wills us too. Without the Church, without our congregation, we would be lost. The congregations function has been and continues to be to preach Christ Jesus as Lord.

When we preach Christ, when we share His love with others we are sprinkling salt in the community. This salt acts as a preservative against corruption. We see where the salt is not sprinkled the rate of corruption increases. Take away God, take away His Holy Word from a society and corruption escalates. Please understand the vital role of the Church in society, in our society. So then salt preserves against corruption.

The second function of salt is to give flavour, to add taste. We know for example that an egg white is fairly tasteless. Add a little salt and it is a different story altogether.

Life without Jesus is tasteless. It is empty and fruitless and meaningless. It can be best described as vain. Solomon wrote: ***“Vanity of vanities,” says the Preacher, “Vanity of vanities! All is vanity”. (Eccles.1:2)***

Solomon dedicates 12 chapters to describing his life and experience and he comes to the conclusion that without faith in God, life is vain. Without the fear of God, there is no purpose to life. It is indeed totally vain and empty. He comes to this conclusion:

The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: ***fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person” (Eccles.12:13).***

Fear God and keep His commandments, that is live according to God’s Holy Word. When you do your life has salt, your life is salt. Your life has a meaning and purpose, and you never have to say : ***“Vanity of vanities, it is all vanity!”***

Jesus put it this way: ***“I am the door; if anyone enters through Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture. <sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly”(John 10:9-10).***

When we are in Christ we have life and we have it abundantly. If we are not in Christ then our life is subject to Satan and he is a thief who steals, kills and destroys.

As Latvians, we know only too well, how this thief works. Communism denies God and the results were and are devastating. There is stealing, killing and destroying. This is just one example. Life without Christ is a life that is headed for total destruction here and eternally.

This is why it is so important that our salt does not lose its saltiness. Jesus said: ***“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how <sup>[a]</sup> can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men”Matthew 5:13).***

This is a warning to us as a congregation to always be aware, and to ensure that our salt does not lose its flavour. We must never water down God’s Word. We must never compromise the truth. We must never back down from upholding the authority of God’s Word in all things. If we ever do we will lose our saltiness.

Sadly, this is what had happened to so many Churches and why corruption is on the rise. Many Churches no longer confess “Sola Scriptura” God’s Word alone and so their salt has lost its effectiveness.

Today on our 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we thank God for 65 years of serving Him. May we resolve in our hearts to remain wholly faithful to Him through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us constantly remind ourselves that apart from Him we can do nothing. We shall remain in Him as a branch is attached to the vine and may we bear much fruit for His Kingdom.

May we be salt that preserves and that gives flavour to life.

May God help us to bring Him glory in all things and in all places.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.