

**“You Are the Salt of the Earth”**  
(Matthew 5:13 – Epiphany 5 – February 8, 2026)

Matthew 5:13 – *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”*

Dear Redeemed, you who are the salt of the earth through faith in Jesus Christ:

“Pass the salt please.” How many times have we said that? Salt brings out the flavor in food to make it more palatable. But there is more to it than just taste. We need salt for life. The elements in salt are essential for balance of fluid in the body, muscle and nerve function, healthy digestion and respiration, etc.

We use salt daily. Our Creator saw to it that salt is distributed everywhere in the world, on land and in water. So when Jesus said **“You Are the Salt of the Earth,”** He used a familiar image. Like salt, He distributes believers everywhere in the world for an important purpose. Our presence as the salt of the earth is essential for spiritual life, as we witness Jesus’ Gospel of salvation for sinners. Let us ask: **1) What does it mean to be salty?** and **2) How do we keep our saltiness?**

**1) What does it mean to be salty?**

When Jesus said, *“You are the salt of the earth,”* to understand what He meant one would immediately think of the purposes of salt. Today we usually think of salt in connection with seasoning our foods. But in the past, salt was used extensively to preserve food from spoiling; and to some extent it still is used as a preserving agent.

As believers in Christ, we live in this world with a definite flavor. As we are shaped by our Savior’s Gospel, people will see a difference as we live by His Word of truth.

Jesus has just been describing this difference in Matthew 5:1-12. In His Beatitudes, He referred to the *“Blessed”* as those who are *“poor in spirit... those who mourn... the meek... those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... the merciful... the pure in heart... the peacemakers.”* There is a different flavor about believers in the world, as we confess our spiritual poverty, mourn our sin, and hunger and thirst for righteousness. For we are filled by God’s forgiveness, and comforted as He counts us righteous in Christ. We rejoice in His gift of salvation and eternal life in Christ. This makes a difference in how we live. Above all, we seek first His Kingdom, and we see our place on earth as His witnesses. But as such, Jesus concluded His Beatitudes with these words: *“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.”*

As He indicated, people will not always appreciate our salty “flavor,” when they see that we stand up for Jesus and live by His truth. Yet as the salt of the earth, our faith and life have a vital purpose as a preserving influence. God has sprinkled believers through the world as a kind of seasoning. The effect is that, by our Christian witness, we are an influence to preserve the world from total corruption.

Consider the great preserving influence of believers in the world. Before the Flood, we read in Genesis 6:5-6: *“The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth.”* God planned to destroy the world. Yet for the sake of just one grain of salt in the person of Noah, God preserved the world from destruction for 120 years. Through this one man, whom God counted “righteous” by faith, God’s call for repentance continued to go out year after year, and the time of grace for mankind was extended until the Flood.

Later, the LORD told Abraham that *“Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grave”* (Genesis 18:20), He was going to destroy those cities. Yet Abraham interceded in prayer. There lived in the cities a grain of salt, in the person of Lot. 2 Peter 2:7 describes him as *“righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked.”* On account of Abraham’s intercession, and Lot and his family, God preserved the cities from destruction until they escaped. As the Lord told Abraham, if there had been just ten such grains of salt in Sodom and Gomorrah, these cities would have been preserved from destruction.

Later in the days of Elijah, when Israel had sunken into idolatry, 7000 believers did not bow to Baal (1 Kings 19:18). They were the salt of the earth. For the sake of this remnant, God kept His covenant and preserved the nation so He could send the Savior of the world through Israel.

To this day, believers have a preserving influence in the world. We are here to live our faith and share God’s covenant of grace in Christ, that many more may come to faith and be saved before the Day of Judgment and destruction. This is God’s time of grace (2 Corinthians 6:2), when He still has His believers sharing His Gospel to the ends of the earth. When this purpose is satisfied, the world will end. As Jesus said: *“This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come”* (Matthew 24:14).

So to be “salty” as Jesus’ followers means that we live in the world with a definite flavor and preserving influence, as we witness to His Gospel and live by His truth. Colossians 4:5-6 says: *“Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how*

*you ought to answer each one.*” This tells us that our “saltiness” involves both our words and actions.

Consider how our speech is “*seasoned with salt.*” Love for our Savior means we do not want to disgrace Him by filthy talk and gossip, joining improper conversation of the world. Rather, we want to honor our Savior by our speech. Most important is our testimony to the forgiveness and eternal life He has won for sinners. Salty speech is patterned after the gracious words of Christ Himself.

This does not mean saying what people like to hear. The world would prefer that we be sugar instead of salt. It would like us to speak sweetly of its false belief and evil behavior. But to speak in a way that is seasoned with salt means we must speak God’s Law that convicts the world of sin. The Holy Spirit helps us do this, as Jesus said: “*When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment*” (John 16:8-9). As we speak God’s truth in love, calling the erring to repentance, it may need to sting like salt and it will not always be appreciated. But it must be done before it is possible to season with the salt of the Gospel. Then, as we share God’s Word with penitent sinners, speaking “*with grace, seasoned with salt*” means sharing His Gospel of forgiveness and eternal life in Jesus.

Along with our words, our actions are important. People may not read the Bible, but they can read our lives. As we live salty lives in Christ, we pray that the result may be as Jesus says in Matthew 5:16: “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*” Our prayer is that many may be won over to Christ by the Gospel witness we bring. For then, they too will be preserved from destruction and become heirs of eternal life. By faith in Jesus, they too will become the salt of the earth, able to share His Gospel with others.

## **2) How do we keep our saltiness?**

Now that we see what it means to be salty, we ask: “How do we keep our saltiness?” For there is much temptation to join the world. When we tone down our witness of Christ or say and do things to make us more palatable to the world, we lose some of our saltiness. If we were to yield completely to temptation and try to be salt that has no bite to it, if we were to go along with the pattern of the unbelieving world, we would stop being members of Christ’s Kingdom. As Jesus warns: “*If the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.*”

When a Christian remains the salt Jesus made him to be, living his faith consistently in word and deed, at least worldly people may respect him for that. But saltless Christians, trying to be both followers of Jesus and pleasers of the world, earn the

contempt of unbelievers. The world will make an example of their inconsistent and immoral lives, and trample underfoot their teaching as meaningless.

So how do we keep our saltiness? It is not by trying to project a “holier than thou” image. It is not simply by trying harder to say and do good things. We are sinful. Despite our best efforts, we still fail. We remain the salt of the earth, not by being perfect, but by daily repenting of our sins and clinging to the forgiveness Jesus won for us on the cross. This is how He made us the salt of the earth in the first place, by right faith in Him. Then out of such living faith, the fruits of faith will grow.

We keep our saltiness by remaining in God’s pure Word and Sacraments, by which He brings Christ’s salvation to us and strengthens our faith. We turn to God’s Word to let the salt of His Law convict us and burn against the evil desires in our sinful nature. We turn to His Gospel, which declares that Jesus has paid for all our sins. For every way we have been weak in our Christian witness, joining the world in its words and actions, the Gospel works as a purifying and healing salt. God declares us fully forgiven, for Jesus has paid the great sacrifice of His life on the cross for our sins.

This Gospel inspires and empowers us to live holy lives to God, as the salt of the earth. The apostle Paul wrote in Romans 12:1-2: *“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

As we live in view of God’s mercies in Christ, we are here to make a difference as His witnesses to the world. Jesus says: *“You are the salt of the earth.”* The question is not whether we are salty as believers, or whether we can make any real difference. Salt always makes a difference. He has put His Holy Spirit in us to change our inward nature. Through our witness, He is bringing blessing for the world.

So let us pass the salt! Salt is essential to life. In our words and actions, may we be full of grace, seasoned with salt, that we may know how to answer everyone concerning the hope we have in Christ (1 Peter 3:16). We pray that by God’s Word and His Spirit’s work, many souls may be brought to faith in Jesus and preserved unto eternal life.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be. Amen.