

King of Glory Lutheran Church
Pastor Ruth Ann Loughry
Epiphany 5: Year A: Mt 5:13-20 “We are Salt!”
February 7-8, 2026

[Jesus said:] ¹³ “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Salt in the ancient world and in the Old Testament had many uses; primarily as a covenant with God. Jesus calls us to be salt and light so that others are drawn, not to ourselves, but to God. Jesus says we already are salt and light.

Alright, informal survey, raise your hands please! If you were offered a sweet snack or a salty one; which would you choose. Sweet? Salty? Sweet wins. Well, if I had a sermon prepared all about candy and chocolates, you’d get to hear it. But since that’s not the case, here comes the sermon about salt.

Yet, before we go any farther, I want to get that sticky verse 20, out of the way first. Jesus says, ‘unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you’ll never enter the kingdom of heaven.’

Most of us usually think about ‘righteousness’ as moral purity; living up to God’s standards. In the Old Testament and Hebrew language, ‘righteousness’ is God’s work. Righteousness is an expression of who God is and what God offers. Salvation. Vindication. Divine aid.

In the New Testament, the term has to do with proper relationship with God. Think about 'righteousness' as our alignment with God. How we are drawn into the reality of God's intentions and God's kingdom. It's how we sense what God might be about in the world and supporting those purposes.

The Laws and Pharisees have their own idea about what righteousness looks like. Yet, remember that these verses come directly after the Sermon on the Mount in which Jesus is describing what God's Kingdom actually looks like. It is as if Jesus is saying, "I'm inviting you to participate in what God is doing that even exceeds how the Pharisees see and understand it." Use your Jewish imagination.

Superior righteous looks like what God's intentions and purposes are in the greatest fulfillment of the Law. Remember, the Law was designed by God to bring life, care of neighbor, and love of God. One doesn't steal from a neighbor because it breaks relationships. One upholds the Law by protecting neighbors' belongings. That brings life to everyone.

Jesus is pro-Torah. He isn't against the Law. He is inviting us to dream big! What are God's intentions? (Matt Skinner, NT Prof. Luther Seminary) Jesus is calling us to dream bigger about how life can be when we love God and neighbor. Hear that difference between being in alignment with God and bringing life to others; rather than working towards our moral purity.

The Old Testament Law is our perfect starting place for talking about salt. You already know salt in ancient days was a precious commodity. It preserved food. It was used as money. Cities were built around salt mines. But it also was a sign of God's Law and Covenant with God's people. Sacrifices to God of meat and grain included salt and sealed any covenant promise with God. These sacrifices were an ongoing and integral part of Israel's expression of commitment to God and the relationship.

Jesus, in our passage, makes a declaration again about relationship...that we already are salt and light in the world, witnessing to God. You might have recalled the connection between being light and our baptismal liturgy; 'let your light so shine...' But there is a salt connection as well. Pre-Vatican II in the fourth century, salt was placed in the newly baptized's mouth to protect the soul from evil, and to give them a taste for the wisdom of God. In this convenantal rite of relationship through water and Word, we are claimed God's children forever.

Notice he doesn't say, 'try to be salt'. He makes a pronouncement about us. That we are salt and light. Think about that. Salt by its very chemical make-up changes things. Throw it on the ice and water melts. Put it on food and it enhances flavor. Light a candle and darkness is pushed back. Light more candles and a whole room is bright with the absence of darkness. You are I are salt and light through God's covenantal claim upon our lives in baptism. Through our actions, thoughts, words and generosity, we change lives by being salt and light.

Remember there are any number of kinds of salt: iodized, kosher, Himalayan pink salt, smoked and ocean salt, mineral and sea salts. Therefore, we can all – with our various personalities be a kind of salt that brings new taste to God's kingdom. In a moment, I'm going to ask us to dream – a big, audacious dream about how God's world could be different. It must include how we could participate with God in making it a reality. Such as: People have enough drinking water or food wherever they live! That kind of big dream. It's not too big for God!

In order to do this, reflect upon how you or we as a congregation could fulfill God's Law of bringing life to God's children through the various functions of salt.

1. Would you or we like to preserve someone or something?
2. Enhance or bring newness, or bring out the flavor in someone or something?
3. Literally change the reaction like salt when it melts? Here's a quick example. Mahatma Gandhi

The 1930 Salt March, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was a pivotal 24-day, 240-mile nonviolent protest against the British salt monopoly in India. Starting on March 12, Gandhi and followers marched from Ahmedabad to Dandi, defying the Salt Act of 1882 by producing salt, which triggered widespread civil disobedience and international attention. The protest aimed to break the unjust British law that prohibited Indians from collecting or selling salt, which was a vital staple in their diet, and to advance the cause of India's independence.

Now there are small cups of salt at the end of each row. Please pass them down and if you wish take some grains in your hand. You can either feel them and commit your salty action to God, or you can watch it melt in the water bowl that comes afterwards as the chemical reaction of salt with water.

Salty people...may we be in righteous alignment with God to bring God's Kingdom on earth. Can you please pass the salt?! *Amen.*