

Puzzling Parables

Good and Salty

March 18, 2018

Welcome to where we're learning how to be the salt of the earth!

Ever start an exciting project and just never finish it? Maybe it cost more money, time, or patience than you expected. Or maybe you just lost your *oomph*.



4.5 years ago I began looking for a way to lock the Gospel stories together. Many times I hit-the-wall and wanted to quit. But, one verse, more than any other, kept me going:

Without faith it is **impossible** to please Him [God], for he who comes to God **must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.** – Hebrews 11:6 NKJ

And so I'd pray: "You're God. I'm blind. Open my eyes." And, **I'd get back in His Word, and diligently grope in the dark, to give Him an opportunity to answer my prayer.** And, He did. And, today I get to fit the last out-of-place piece into the story. Then I can share *everything* with you.



Jesus appoints His twelve and begins their apprenticeship training by explaining **who's blessed: the humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemakers.** Even persecution will bring them blessings.

Then He says: **You are the salt of the earth.** [lit. ground; land]



Who is? The humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemakers who hunger and thirst for righteousness. **They are the salt of the land. But, what's the salt of the land?** Salt lands and the Salt Sea (i.e. the Dead Sea) symbolize the insatiable hunger and unquenchable thirst of those who turn from the Lord.



Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. ... he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, **in a salt land** where no one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord ... **the spring of living water.** Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; save me and I will be saved ... – Jeremiah 17:5-7, 13-15 NIV

Now, there is also a prophetic example of how the Lord will heal this type of land in a completely unintuitive, unimaginable way.

The men of [Jericho] said to Elisha, “Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant ... but **the water is bad**, and **the ground barren**.” And he said, “Bring me a new bowl, and **put salt in it**.” ... Then he went out to **the source of the water**, and **cast in the salt there**, and said, “Thus says the Lord: ‘I have **healed this water**; from it there shall be no more **death or barrenness**.’” – 2 Kings 2:19-21 NKJ

In a surprising twist, the Lord (*the Spring of Living Water*), uses *salt* to bring life and growth to the barren earth. **You’re the salt. He’s the Spring of Living Water. So ...**

Let your conversation be always **full of grace, seasoned with salt**, so that you may know how to answer everyone **[without raising their blood pressure and coming across as pepper spray]**. – Colossians 4:6 NIV

Otherwise, you’ll trust in your *own* flesh and *poison the well*.

Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? – James 3:10-11 NIV

[Jesus warns ‘em] **But if the salt** [the humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemaker] **loses its saltiness**, [it’s humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemaker-ness] **how can it be made salty** [humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peace-makey] **again?** [He’s being *funny*. He’s saying, “People salt things to make them salty; but who’d salt salt?”] **It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men**. – Matthew 5:13 NIV



Nine months later, when Jesus conducts their Apprenticeship Training 2.0, to prepare the boys to go out on their own, Luke sets the scene by saying:

When a crowd of many thousands had gathered, so that they were **trampling on one another**, Jesus began to speak first to his disciples ... – Luke 12:1a NIV



But, He later turns His attention back to these **flavorless followers, who refuse to live out the attributes of the blessed**. And, this is where our last piece fits. And, it anchors to a perfect parallel in Matthew, where a fed-up Jesus declares:

Anyone who does not carry his cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. – Luke 14:27 NIV



It’s a call to join Him by sacrificing yourself with Him!



God commanded that every sacrifice be seasoned with salt.

Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your God out of your *grain* offerings; add salt to *all* your offerings. – Leviticus 2:13 NIV



That's probably why Jesus is about to tie salt to taking up *our* cross and following *Him*.

Salt has to accompany the sacrifice. You're the salt. He's the sacrifice. And, **we're in this together or not at all.** *Not* what you signed up for? Neither did those who were trampling one another scrambling for a blessing. So, Jesus said:

Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. [They were common in fields for protection] Will he not first sit down and estimate the cost to see if he has enough money to complete it? – Luke 14:28 NIV

Those who receive Jesus only out of emotion will soon reject Jesus out of emotion.

Shallow soil only produces short-lived enthusiasm.

And, the same fiery trials that drive 'em toward the Lord will later drive 'em from the Lord.

For if he lays the foundation and is not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule him, saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' – Luke 14:29-30 NIV

Half-built hypocrisy, and abandoned beliefs, slanders our Savior and calls into question the credibility and authority of Christ!

Salvation is free, but it does cost everything. To live for Christ is to die to self.

That is, to live a life of ongoing surrender motivated by grace and lived out as gratitude.

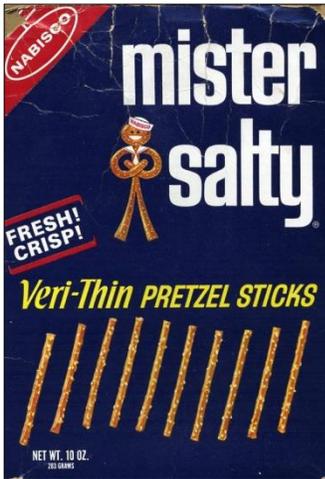
Or [maybe you've never *fully* surrendered; failing to realize that this puts you in a battle with Jesus, not a relationship] suppose **a king** [say, *you*] is about to go to war against **another king** [say, *Christ*]. Will he not first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose **the one coming against him with twenty thousand**? [Psalm 68:17 says, "The chariots of God are 20,000"] If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for **terms of peace**. – Luke 14:31-32 NIV

Any guesses what Jesus' terms are? **Unconditional surrender!**

Anything less and your losing-battle rages on.

In the **same way**, any of you who does not **give up everything he has** [that stands in opposition to the King of Kings] **cannot be my disciple** [My humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemaker]. **Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness**, [whether by giving up; or, by *refusing* to give up] how can it be made salty again? **It** [a flavorless follower] **is fit neither for the soil** [to speak life and healing into others] **nor for the manure pile**; [to show others the actual value of what we exchange for knowing Christ: *poop*] it is thrown out. **He who has ears to hear**, [how Scripture sheds light on Scripture] **let him hear**. – Luke 14:33-35 NIV

[As we've already read] Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who **depends on flesh** for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. ... *But* blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord ... – Jeremiah 17:5-7 NIV



[Paul writes] If anyone else thinks he has reasons **to put confidence in the flesh**, I have more ... But [having calculated the cost of completing a life in Christ, and finding it to only cost everything] whatever **was** to my profit I **now consider loss** for the sake of Christ. What is more, **I consider everything [that hinders] a loss** compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake **I have lost all things [having agreed to His terms of unconditional surrender; in fact]. I consider them rubbish, [lit. a pile of poo]** that I may gain Christ ... – Philippians 3:4b-8 NIV

How do you know if something is salty? Well, salt preserves, cures, and purifies. But mostly it makes great snacks!

Remember Mister Salty? Back when they put it right on *the package!*

You know something is good and salty when it makes people both hungry and thirsty, especially for righteousness, which is only found in Jesus Christ, our Bread of Life and Living Water.

Oh, one year later, just before Jesus leads His boys to Jerusalem to face the cross, He finally answers the riddle of how those who lose their saltiness will be made salty again.

Everyone will be salted with fire. [Fiery trials, tribulation, testing] Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how [else] can you make it salty again? [So, unless you want to be salted with fire] Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other. – Mark 9:49-50 NIV

True devotion brings unity and peace.

It's just what humble, heartbroken, meek, seeking, merciful, pure-hearted, peacemakers do.

One of Jesus' last commands before the cross was:

As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples ... – John 13:34b-35a NIV

Consider the cost.

Pick up your cross.

And add some salt to His Sacrifice.