

September 26th, 2021

Mark 9: 50 – “Pass the Salt... Peace”

Pastor Arndt

⁵⁰ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves and be at peace with each other.”

In Christ Jesus,

Salt! The History channel... That article in Readers Digest... The blurb you saw on the internet about how valuable salt was... they're all true. The word “*salary*” comes from the fact that Roman soldiers were at times paid with salt. They were happy to receive it because it had so many uses.

As a preservative salt was used to prevent fish and meat from rotting. It was desirable for flavor. The word salad comes from the practice of Romans who put salt on leafy vegetables to make them taste less like... leafy vegetables. But there is one characteristic of salt that is key to unlocking the point of our lesson today. Salt (a mixture of *sodium* and *chlorine*) purifies and cleans.

Before wrapping babies in swaddling clothes, mothers rubbed their infants with salt to cleanse and keep their skin healthy. Across the ancient world, from salt baths in Europe to Sumo wrestlers in Japan, salt was used ceremonially as an agent of purification. When covenants and contracts were made, they were “*purified*” with salt. This includes offerings that the Children of Israel made to the Lord. In Leviticus we read that grain offerings were to be “*salted*” to make them pure.

In our lesson for today, the Lord puts before us the work of the Church and says, “*Have salt among yourselves*”. God calls us to be pure and honest about our work as preachers, pupils, and people.

I. I meant to do that (*yeah sure*)?... Rejoice!

As our lesson begins, John reports to Jesus, “*we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.*” John seems to be boasting as if he did something commendable. But if he expects a pat on the back, he is in for a surprise. Jesus points out the facts of the situation. In the name of Christ, a soul had been freed from the power of Satan. The name of Jesus was glorified. John, it seems, felt a little left out.

The issue at hand seems to be what Paul is describing when he says, “*...whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.*” Someone had shared the good news of Jesus. John wasn't sure if he should rejoice.

Scripture is filled with examples of bad prophets and preachers. Jonah detested the fact that God called him to preach to the city of Nineveh. As the words came from Jonah's lips, in his heart he was praying that no one would listen. Despite this, Jonah's ministry was an incredible success. Compare Jonah with the dozens of prophets who were his opposite. They dedicated their lives to preaching God's Word and faced horrible persecution. Despite their faithfulness, they saw none of Jonah's results.

God is not teaching us to be like Jonah. He is however warning us to not be jealous of Jonah or fail to acknowledge that God's name was proclaimed from his lips. In the Holy Christian Church there is no room for arguments about “*who is the greatest*” or “*who preaches Christ the best*”.

Many a basketball game has been won by an incompetent player who aimed for the rim but missed by three feet... only to see the ball bank off the backboard and *ricochet* into the hoop at the buzzer. The losing team will protest and say, *“but he didn’t mean to do that!”*

Satan surely protested at the preaching of Jonah. He didn’t mean to do that! No matter how much he howled and complained, an entire city was brought to repentance compliments of a horribly motivated preacher. Christian Church, have salt among yourselves. Let us purify ourselves of ego. When Christ is preached... *“Rejoice!”*

II. Let’s be adults

The next words of Jesus are difficult for us to hear. He says, *“If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck, and they were thrown into the sea.”*

When children misbehave, we often say things like *“grow up”* or *“act like an adult”*. But as we look at the world around us, we might want to rethink that one. Consider for a moment what the word *“adult”* has come to typify. *“Adult movie”*. *“Adult beverage”*. *“Adult language”*.

There is a song that I remember learning as a child that says, *“Be careful little eyes what you see. Be careful little ears what you hear. For the father up above is looking down in love. Be careful little eyes what you see.”* It is not only little ones that need to be careful.

There are numerous laws in our land that prohibit kids from activities and substances until they reach a certain age. Remember why we do this. It is not because something is a sin for a 17-year-old, but not a sin for an 18-year-old. It is our job to train young people in discretion, moderation, and sanctified living. Let’s talk about the way we model behavior for the next generation. As we do so, let’s use a healthy dose of purifying salt.

III. Salt... for you

Finally, Jesus turns his attention to you. He says, *“If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell... if your foot causes you to stumble...if your eye causes you to stumble...etc.”*

We have to appreciate the way that Jesus identifies us as the individuals that we are. Satan leads us into sin in different ways. Some are tempted by our hands. Some are tempted by our eyes. Some by the places that we are carried by our feet. It is important for you to examine your own life... and to do so with an honest helping of salt.

In each instance, notice what is the object of Jesus’ concern. Hands, eyes, and feet... these are all part of your body which is dust. God’s concern is for my soul.

Jesus knew the sinful places that his disciples had gone. But what does he do with their feet? He washes them. Instead of cutting off their hands, he holds out his hands to them and says, *“touch the places where the nails crucified me. As you touch me, believe! Finally, the eyes which are so focused on*

yourselves... turn those eyes to me on the cross, as well as to the heavens from which I will someday return."

This is Jesus' promise of the Gospel. He seasons his promises with salt.

-Amen.