

Matthew 5:13-20  
 Sermon on the Mount  
 MT1011

May 23, 2010 am  
 The Beatitudes

## “THE SALT OF THE EARTH”

**INTRODUCTION:** Most churches have new members’ orientation classes...

1. Here at Christ Covenant Church, we have the *Discovery Class*.
  - a. 13-week overview of Christ Covenant Church
    - i. History and vision (philosophy)
    - ii. Theology: doctrinal beliefs
    - iii. Values: standards for the Christian life
    - iv. Organization: How we do ministry & mission
    - v. Vows: standards for membership
  - b. At Trinity Church, Jackson, MS, we called this class *The Inquirers’ Class*.
  - c. At Surfside Presbyterian Church, Myrtle Beach, SC, we called this class *The New Members’ Class*.
  - d. All three were (1) **mandatory** for membership, (2) taught personally by the **Senior Pastor**, and (3) greatly **enjoyed** by most people.
2. **Purpose:** *To communicate to people who we are as a church and a denomination, what we intend to do for members and their families, and what we expect members to do for us.*
3. The **three goals** of this class are clearly set forth:
  - a. **Understanding:** Honest information. *No surprises.*
  - b. **Consensus:** Buy-in to our beliefs and practices.
  - c. **Commitment:** Cooperation and support for our mission.
4. The **last thing** we want to hear are comments like these...
  - a. *“What’s all this stuff about predestination and the elect?”*
  - b. *“You mean you **don’t** believe in a mid-trib rapture, the literal reign of Christ on earth for a thousand years, the reconstitution of Israel as a nation and that Barak Obama is the antichrist?”*
  - c. *“Why does the pastor have to flaunt infant baptism in our faces every month? Harry Reeder had the decency to hide this thing on Sunday evenings when no one was at church!”*
  - d. *“When does the congregation get to vote on the budget?”*
  - e. *“Who put the elders in charge of this? Why, you act as if the elders were in authority over everything at church!”*

5. **We want to be real clear about who we are as a church and why we do things the way we do them...**
  - a. *Christ Covenant Church is a reformed congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America, committed to making disciples who worship God, grow in community, love others and serve the world.*
  - b. *Presbyterian:* both our form of government and denomination
  - c. *Reformed:* both our theological stance and doctrinal standards
  - d. *Disciple-making:* both our purpose in ministry and our lifestyle
  - e. Four goals for each member: *Worship God, grow in community, love other members, serve the world (outreach)*
6. **Clear Understanding. No surprises. Consensus. Commitment:** No one should be sold a bill of false goods. No one has to join us.
7. **I would put before you today this truth:** *The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus Christ's "discovery class," "inquirers' class," or "new members' orientation" into the Kingdom of God.*
8. This great sermon includes all the **primary elements** of any Discovery Class:
  - a. An introduction: *The Beatitudes* (Kingdom Joy)
    - i. Welcoming all kinds of people to salvation
    - ii. Introducing the theme of the class: *The Gospel of the Kingdom*
    - iii. Setting forth the advantages of membership in this Kingdom of Heaven: the "blessings" of salvation in Christ.
  - b. Kingdom Ethics: *Matthew 5:17-48* (law)
    - i. How Kingdom citizens are to live
    - ii. The *Gospel Law* of Jesus Christ
    - iii. "You have heard that it was said...but I say..."
    - iv. *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:1-2)*
    - v. Centerpiece: *Truly I say to you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)*
  - c. Kingdom Piety: *Matthew 6:1-18* (worship)
    - i. How we approach God in His Kingdom
    - ii. Prayer, fasting, worship, forgiveness, etc.
    - iii. Centerpiece: *The Lord's Prayer*
  - d. Kingdom Values: *Matthew 6:19-7:29* (principles)
    - i. Priorities of life

- ii. Money, salvation, foundations for life
- iii. Centerpiece: *The Golden Rule*

9. **Four sections** to this Divine Discovery Class, each with a “centerpiece”

- a. Kingdom Joy: *The Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-16)*
- b. Kingdom Ethics: *Christ's radical demands (Matthew 5:20)*
- c. Kingdom Piety: *The Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13)*
- d. Kingdom Values: *The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)*

10. Jesus wants four things from those of us who would join Him in the Kingdom of God: *Clear Understanding. No surprise. Consensus. Commitment.*

11. **Jesus gives you the freedom not to join Him in the Kingdom of God.**

- a. *“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.”* (Mark 1:15)
- b. Repent. Believe. Surrender to Christ's rule. Follow Jesus.
- c. *The choice is yours.*
- d. Read the story of the scribe and Jesus...(Mark 12:28-34)

*And one of the scribes came up and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, asked him, “Which commandment is the most important of all?” Jesus answered, “The most important is, ‘Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” And the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher. You have truly said that he is one, and there is no other besides him. And to love him with all the heart and with all the understanding and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is much more than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” And when Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.” And after that no one dared to ask him any more questions.* (Mark 12:28-34)

e. **The choice is yours!**

12. True, Jesus is offering you *tremendous benefits* and *divine blessings* if you will repent, believe in Christ, surrender to His kingly rules, and follow Him in a life of discipleship...

- a. *From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”* (Matthew 4:17)
- b. *And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”* (Matthew 4:19)
- c. *And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.* (Mt. 4:23)
- d. *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*  
*“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.*

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:3-10)*

13. But Jesus **also** wants you to *fully understand just what you're getting into when you enter the Kingdom of God, when you become a Christian, when you are saved...*
  - a. What blessings He gives to you...
  - b. What demands He makes upon you...
  - c. **No Surprises. Consensus. Commitment!**
14. And so...between each of the four sections of this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has *transition passages*:
  - a. They *summarize* the section just ended
  - b. They *introduce* the next section to come
  - c. **They are for clarification and full understanding**
15. Matthew 5:13-20 is one of those passages...
  - a. Jesus has just invited *all kinds of people* into His redemptive Kingdom/salvation/the Christian life.
  - b. So, He tells them *what kind of person* He intends to make of each one of them: *Salt and Light*

*“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

*“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)*
  - c. Then, He introduces the next section of His Discovery Class. His Kingdom Ethics: *Jesus' New Laws for Life*

*“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes 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. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:17-20)*

16. We will take the next three Sundays to *orient ourselves* to what sort of people Jesus wants us to become and what sort of people the Holy Spirit will produce.
- a. May 23: *The Salt of the Earth* (5:13)
  - b. May 30: *The Light of the World* (5:14-16)
  - c. June 6: *The Righteous in Christ* (5:17-20)

**17. Clear understanding. No surprises. Consensus. Commitment.**

18. Let's begin with *The Salt of the Earth*...

*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. (Matthew 5:13)*

**I. WHO ARE "THE SALT OF THE EARTH?"**

1. The answer is obvious: *The people whom Jesus just invited into the Kingdom of Heaven. The ones to whom Jesus offers salvation, and those who take Him up on His offer.*
2. **CHRISTIANS ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH**
3. **Please notice** the pronouns in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. (5:3-12)
  - a. Christ begins with the third person pronoun: *"those who...the..."*
  - b. Meaning: the types of people ("those people")
  - c. Then Christ changes to the second person pronoun for the rest of the Sermon: *"...you."*
  - d. *"You who have accepted My offer, repented of sin, put your faith solely in Me, surrendered to My rule, and are following Me in My Kingdom."*
    - i. *Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. (Matthew 5:11)*
    - ii. *"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*  
  
*"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. (Matthew 5:13-14)*
    - iii. *Truly I say to you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)*
  - e. *"you...your..."* – Christ is speaking to us!
4. And, His message, again, surprises us: *"I will take you broken people – messed up and mixed up – and do such a work of grace in your lives that you will become the 'salt of the earth'!"*
5. What kind of people does Jesus use as His *"salt of the earth"*?
  - a. Well, certainly not the ones most of us would use.

- b. And definitely not the type of people the world loves.
- c. **Dallas Willard:** *The Divine Conspiracy*, pp. 122-125

*The Beatitudes are lists of human “lasts” who at the individualized touch of the heavens become divine “firsts.” The Gospel of the kingdom is that no one is beyond Beatitude, because the rule of God from the heavens is available to all. Everyone can reach it, and it can reach everyone. Who would be on your list of “hopeless blessables” as found in today’s world? There is, first of all, a silly side to this question—which turns suddenly somber. If you look at advertising and current events in the print and other media—for example, as you encounter them in supermarket checkouts, newsstands, and bookstores or on television and radio—you might think that the most unfortunate people in the world today are the fat, the misshapen, the bald, the ugly, the old, and those not relentlessly engaged in romance, sex, and fashionably equipped physical activities. The sad truth is that many people around us, and especially people in their teens and young adulthood, drift into a life in which being thin and correctly shaped, having “glorious” hair, appearing youthful, and so forth, are the only terms of blessedness or woe for their existence. It is all they know. Instead, Jesus took time in His teaching to point out the natural beauty of every human being. This is the Gospel for a silly world, all the more needed because the silly is made a matter of life and death for many. Sin, for that matter, is silly. If the kingdom did not reach us in our silliness who would be saved? Lostness does not have to wear a stuffed shirt to find redemption. So we must see from our heart that:*

*Blessed are the physically repulsive,  
Blessed are those who smell bad,  
The twisted, misshapen, deformed,  
The too big, too little, too loud,  
The bald, the fat, and the old—*

*For they are all riotously celebrated in the party of Jesus. The condition of life sought for by human beings through the ages is attained in the quietly transforming friendship of Jesus.*

- 6. This is *why* Jesus calls His people “the salt of the earth.”
  - a. Because salt is...well...so...**common!**
  - b. Note carefully: “*You **are** the salt of the earth.*”
  - c. Salt is cheap, common, light, little and limited in its usefulness.
  - d. **Sinclair B. Ferguson:** *The Sermon on the Mount*; pp. 56-58

*Jesus is not urging His disciples to become something they are not; He is telling them what they are as kingdom people. Like salt, Christians may seem small and insignificant, powerless in a power-mad society. Yet they have the ability to influence every segment of it and to permeate the whole. Salt is cheap; its value is minimal. But salt has unusual properties that far exceed its ‘value.’ So it is with the members of God’s kingdom. Like salt, there will be times when their usefulness will become very clear. It is all too easy for us to despair as Christians because of our frailty and insignificance, personally or numerically. However, we must never give in to Satan’s lie that we can be effective only when we have large numbers and a show of strength. Jesus’ illustration of salt is an encouraging reminder*

*that the apparently cheap and insignificant can influence its environment out of all proportion to our expectation.*

- e. *For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)*
7. **Here is what Jesus is pointing at:** *God takes who we are and sanctifies it by the indwelling Holy Spirit. He refines it (as all salt needs refining) through the process of sanctification. Then He pours us back into our little worlds to do what only salt can do – season, preserve, keep healthy, and enhance.*
  8. Here is how it works –
    - a. The woman *poor in spirit* and bankrupt of moral goodness is filled with the Spirit, and then she goes back to the party and invites her “trashy” friends to come meet King Jesus. And they do! (*Woman at the well; Levi*)
    - b. The fellow who is *mourning* and saddened by life is filled with God’s joy, and his change of countenance and inexplicable smile brings his family and friends to church with him.
    - c. The *meek* little “nobody” suddenly possesses a confidence and courage in Christ. Those who once bullied him and put him down now respect him. They listen to his Gospel words.
    - d. The social activist *hungering and thirsting for righteousness* stops being politically correct, angry and disruptive because Jesus lives inside her. She begins to gain respect and a hearing from others.
    - e. The *merciful* man is perceived no longer as “a nice guy who finished last,” but as a godly man of moral courage and compassionate conservatism. Others are inspired by him to forgive, reconcile and show mercy.
    - f. The girl who is *pure in heart* now also possesses the humility of Christ. Self-righteousness is gone, and her life speaks for itself. She draws people to Christ because they now want what she has: *she sees God!*
    - g. The young man working at the NGO, that *peacemaker* in search of Utopia now possesses the Kingdom. His change of priorities, values and methods opens up invitations to speak here “and there. About what? *“The Kingdom of heaven at hand.”*
    - h. The old guy who marched in the Civil Rights movement in the 60’s, and was *persecuted for righteousness’ sake*, now finds a new “cause”: The Spirit in him moves him to invest in a new generation of young people concerned about global warming, AIDS, economic meltdown, third world poverty and terrorism. He is able to give them direction from the perspective of *the only lasting kingdom on earth.*
  9. Here is another **divine reversal**, another surprise of grace, in the Kingdom of God.

- a. When we brought our own agendas to Jesus Christ, and offered them to Him as a way into His kingdom, He slapped them out of our hands.
  - b. He gave us something better: *Something larger than life, greater than self and lasting forever: the Kingdom of God.*
  - c. Then He said to us, “Now, pick up what you were before and bring it to Me, and I will make it useful for the Kingdom of God and My missions in life.”
  - d. He then turned us into *“the salt of the earth.”*
10. **Know this:** *What you were before you were saved was not a mistake. It means something. And God can and will use it, but only after you have repented, believed and surrendered. Then Jesus will transform who you are into salt for His Kingdom.*

## II. HOW “THE SALT OF THE EARTH” WORKS

1. Salt has staying power. In truth, salt cannot *“lose its saltiness”* unless it is diluted or contaminated.
  - a. *Sodium chloride* is a very stable chemical and as a compound is resistant against nearly every attack. But...
  - b. *Salt can be diluted.* Water dissolves salt to some extent.
  - c. *Salt can be contaminated.* It needs refinement that can be lost if it is mixed too much with other pollutants.
2. Jesus had in mind the *desalted salt* of the Dead Sea shoreline: The sandy mixture of sodium chloride and dirt, which rain washed away into a white, powdery dust. No doubt, still called “salt”, it had ceased to be so. It was just road dust that looked like salt.
 

*You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. (Matthew 5:13)*
3. If we Christians forget our kingdom calling, the kingdom way of life, and the kingdom values, vision and mission, then we become just religious powder, “Christianized” dust.
  - a. Watered down and washed bland by worldly compromise
  - b. Polluted by worldly thinking and living until “tasteless”
4. **W. Phillip Keller:** *Salt for Society, p. 89-91.*

*For most of us in the Western world salt is a very common condiment used in cooking. We generally have a shaker of it set on our tables with which to spice up our food. We also use it in enormous quantities on our highways in winter to help melt the ice and snow—which of course also accelerates the rate at which our automobiles rust out. And lastly, for those who live near the sea, the presence of salt in ocean water and ocean air is a prominent part of life. But in our Lord's Day, salt was, without a doubt, the most important element in the culture of His contemporaries. Salt was so special, so unique, so sought after in some societies that it was actually regarded as more valuable than gold. It was used in some countries as the medium of exchange, the basis of barter. There were in ancient times famous “salt routes” which traversed all of the Middle East. Caravans*

*of camels, donkeys and mules transported tons of salt across hundreds of miles of torturous terrain. Both men and beasts were considered utterly expendable in the ruthless, competitive salt trade. Enormous prices would be paid for “pure” salt, not contaminated by other mineral elements. Salt of intense pungency was so highly esteemed that men thought nothing of risking their very lives to obtain it. In Christ's society, and in the context of the culture in which He lived, salt had at least seven main functions peculiar to His people.*

5. Here are the **seven purposes** of Jesus Christ's “*salt of the earth.*”

a. **First:** Salt was the primary *preservative* of life.

- i. The preservation of food from putrefaction
- ii. Meat, fish, canning vegetables, bottling clean water
- iii. Example: beef jerky
- iv. **Sinclair B. Ferguson:** *The Sermon on the Mount, p. 57*

*Christians whose lives exhibit the qualities of the ‘blessed’ will have a preserving impact upon a society that, if left to itself, will rot and deteriorate. Without the influence of the Gospel, society will suffer moral decay and become putrid, unfit for the consumption of good men and women.*

- v. *Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person. (Colossians. 4:5-6)*

b. **Second:** Salt was the primary *source of health* – especially for people in an arid land

- i. The Hebrews needed salt to survive and stay healthy
- ii. Maintain chemical balances in the body
- iii. **W. Phillip Keller:** *Salt for Society, p. 90*

*Even as a young man, growing up among the primitive tribespeople of East Africa, I was always deeply impressed by the insatiable appetite of Africans for salt. It was something they sought with single-minded determination. They would have it at any cost. To obtain it they would trek great distances through the bush, across the plains and over the hills. Salt was an absolute necessity for survival. It was utterly essential to life itself.*

- iv. *And whatever is needed—bulls, rams, or sheep for burnt offerings to the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, or oil, as the priests at Jerusalem require—let that be given to them day by day without fail... (Ezra 6:9)*
- v. Without vital Christianity in a nation, the culture becomes sin-sick and the DNA of society becomes fatally imbalanced.

c. **Third:** Salt is a universal *agent of healing* (a medicine).

- i. The ancient Hebrews rubbed newborn babies in salt to eliminate bacterial infections.

- ii. *And as for your birth, on the day you were born your cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water to cleanse you, nor rubbed with salt, nor wrapped in swaddling cloths. (Ezekiel 16:4)*
  - iii. Bathing in sea water remains a medicinal exercise.
  - iv. **Illustrations:** Navy doctors in WWII often used sea water to treat bruises, wounds and burns.
  - v. Christians are agents of spiritual healing in the lives of those broken, bruised, burned by sin.
- d. **Fourth:** Salt is the *essential seasoning* in the world.
- i. Salt is the #1 food enhancer throughout the world.
  - ii. Salt brings out true flavor without altering or masking it.
  - iii. Diets without salt are both bland and unbearable.
  - iv. *Can that which is tasteless be eaten without salt, or is there any taste in the juice of the mallow? (Job 6:6)*
  - v. Salt can even make *grits* taste delightful!
  - vi. Christians add “taste” to life: *they infuse grace, joy, hope and truth into every arena of life. Without Christians and Gospel salt, life becomes bland and unbearable. Christians should be the most “tasty” people of all!*
- e. **Fifth:** Salt benefits even the *lower creation* (animals).
- i. All animals need salt. They love *salt licks/pars*.
  - ii. Keeps them healthy, heals their wounds, strengthens both bones and antlers/horns, and energizes them
  - iii. Christians bring redemptive vision and common grace to the creation: animals, environment, resources and the land.
  - iv. *Now the men of the city said to Elisha, “Behold, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees, but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful.” He said, “Bring me a new bowl, and put salt in it.” So they brought it to him. Then he went to the spring of water and threw salt in it and said, “Thus says the Lord, I have healed this water; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it.” So the water has been healed to this day, according to the word that Elisha spoke. (2 Kings 2:19-22)*
- f. **Sixth:** Salt is a *sign of covenant* love and loyalty (friendship).
- i. The Phrase “*the King’s salt*” pointed to the invitation of a Lord to become his friend/subject.
  - ii. How? By tasting a pinch of salt from the Lord.
  - iii. **W. Phillip Keller:** *Salt for Society; p. 132*

*A small, ornamental saucer, containing a spoonful of salt, would be placed before the new acquaintance. That person would then be invited to take a pinch of the salt with*

*his fingers and place it on his tongue. By partaking of the host's salt in this way, the guest indicated in unmistakable language that he/she reciprocated the friendship and accord between the two people. But beyond this, taking and tasting "the king's salt" had the profound symbolism of binding the two people into an unbreakable pact of loyalty and fidelity.*

- iv. Christ calls us to be **both** the loyal friends of Jesus and the loving friends of sinners in the world.
  - v. We are in *covenant* with one another in Christ's Church and in *ministry* to the lost of this world.
  - vi. *Ought you not to know that the Lord God of Israel gave the kingship over Israel forever to David and his sons by a covenant of salt? (2 Chron. 13:5)*
  - vii. We have partaken of "the King's salt."
- g. **Seventh:** Salt was a part of *sacrifices of worship* to God.
- i. Prescribed by Moses to reflect our covenant of grace with God and our friendship with King Jesus
  - ii. *You shall season all your grain offerings with salt. You shall not let the salt of the covenant with your God be missing from your grain offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt. (Lev. 2:13)*
  - iii. Christians are living sacrifices in the service of God.
  - iv. *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2)*
6. This is how God's kingdom people "salt society": They preserve moral decency; they bring spiritual health to society, they heal those broken by sin; they add the seasoning of grace to all of life bringing out the divine flavors of joy, peace, love, hope and purpose in life; they strengthen and benefit the creation; they live by covenant with God and one another; they sacrifice their lives to serve Christ and save other men.

CONCLUSION: So...why isn't this happening in our society today?

1. Why does the world say, "*These Christians have lost their saltiness! Who needs them anymore? They're just the white powder of a once-vibrant faith and a once-tasteful way of life.*"
2. I would answer that three things were done **wrongly...**
3. **First:** *We have purposely tried not to be different from the world.*
  - a. But if salt is not salty it accomplishes nothing!
  - b. We've tried to pretend to be what we're not, and the flavor tastes like a "cheap substitute."

- c. We've become worldly (polluted) and so we have no distinct flavor-enhancing ability to our lives.
  - d. We've watered down Gospel truth, and our seasoning has become diluted.
  - e. *When once again Christians are **divinely different** from the world, our saltiness will return in full flavor!*
  - f. *Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another. (Mark 9:50)*
4. **Second:** *We've remained in the salt shaker and so we season nothing and no one.*
- a. We've lived in our Christian ghettos long enough, and as we left other places sickness and decay set in.
  - b. Public schools, community sports leagues, halls of the university, arts and media, courts of law and government
  - c. To season means: "give zest to" (*Oxford English Dictionary*)
  - d. American life lacks spiritual zest because Evangelical and Reformed Christians have withdrawn to their own suburban worlds.
  - e. **Sinclair B. Ferguson** is correct: "Jesus told us to be fishers of men, not frogmen! We are not to be out of sight beneath the surface. If we have no moral 'bite' in the different quality of our lifestyles, then we are no longer the salt in the world." (pp. 61-62)
  - f. "Salt is good, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is of no use either for the soil or for the manure pile. It is thrown away. He who has ears to hear, let him hear." (Luke 14:34-35)
5. **Third:** *We've gone about salting society the wrong way.*
- a. If too much salt is used, it ruins the taste of everything.
  - b. You *sprinkle* salt and *mix it in* to other things; you don't *rub* salt forcibly into food.
  - c. It's not **quantity** that counts but **quality**.
  - d. It's not **force** that helps and heals but **service**.
  - e. **James Davidson Hunter** is the Professor of Religion, Culture and Social Theory at the University of Virginia.
    - i. Author of *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America* and *The Death of Character: On the Moral Education of American Children*.
    - ii. Now a third book: *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World. (2010)*
  - f. Dr. Hunter makes the point: 85 million "Christians" in America haven't changed our culture for Christ. Why?
  - g. Answer: *Because we've chosen to be political activists rather than be the salt of the earth!*
  - h. Please listen to **Dr. James Davison Hunter's** reasoning (*Christianity Today: "Faithful Presence"; May 2010; pp. 33-36*)

*If there are benevolent consequences of our engagement with the world, it is precisely because it is not rooted in a desire to change the world for the better but rather because it is an expression of a desire to honor the creator of all goodness, beauty, and truth, a manifestation of our loving obedience to God, and a fulfillment of God’s command to love our neighbor. How is it that American public life is so profoundly secular when 85 percent of the population professes to be Christian? If a culture were simply the sum total of beliefs, values, and ideas that ordinary individuals hold, then the United States would be a far more religious society. Looking at our entertainment, politics, economics, media, and education, we are forced to conclude that the cultural influence of Christians is negligible. Changes in political systems and economic conditions can occur relatively quickly. The most profound changes in culture typically take place over the course of multiple generations, often in ways we’re not even aware of. They penetrate the ways we speak, the ways we imagine the world. They penetrate the structures that organize social life—structures of reward, privilege, and punishment. So the deepest kinds of changes don’t happen simply by willing them into being. Powerful changes happen implicitly rather than explicitly. We cannot control history—God alone is its author. We’re accountable for our actions as individual believers and as a body of believers. The nature of that accountability is clear from Scripture, theology, and history. The point is not to change the world but to serve faithfully in our relationships, tasks, and spheres of social influence. When Christians turn to law, public policy, and politics as the last resort, they have essentially given up on a desire to persuade their opponents. They want the patronage of the state and its coercive power to rule the day. What makes this problematic, in my view, is that the dominant public witness of the church is political, rooted in narratives of injury and discourses of negation. And here’s the tragic irony: Whenever Christian churches and organizations partake in the will to power, they partake in the very thing they decry in society. If there is a possibility for human flourishing in our world, it does not begin when we win the culture wars but when God’s Word of love becomes flesh in us, reaching every sphere of social life. When faithful presence existed in church history, it manifested itself in the creation of hospitals and the flourishing of art, the best scholarship, the most profound and world-changing kind of service and care—again, not only for the household of faith but for everyone. Faithful presence isn’t new; it’s just the something we need to recover.*

6. This is what Jesus demands from us: “*Faithful Presence*” as salt for society: Preserving, Healing, Helping, Energizing, Seasoning, Caring and Serving sacrificially the people of the world.
7. How? *Just by living out your common life that is now under Kingdom grace; by becoming the blessing to others that Christ has made you to be.*
8. And about redeeming the culture, advancing the kingdom, and changing the world – we leave **that** to King Jesus as He works through His “salty” people!
9. Where do I start? The way Jesus did...**Hospitality:**
  - a. Inviting people into your life because Jesus invited you into His life
  - b. A Life with God
  - c. The **Beatitudes** invite “left out” people into the Kingdom of God.
  - d. Salt for society invite others into their lives, their church, and their faith

10. **James Bryan Smith:** *The Good and Beautiful Life* (p. 66)

*The Beatitudes invite marginalized people into the Kingdom of God, and hospitality can help us practice this essential aspect of the kingdom: God cares deeply about those who are left out. The kingdom is inclusive, but the world we live in is exclusive. And if we are honest, we likely are more exclusive than inclusive in our own lives. Living in the kingdom involves loving others, because our King is a God of Love. Living in the Kingdom of God involves forgiving others, because our King is a God of forgiveness. In the same manner, living in the Kingdom of God involves hospitality—inviting and including others—because our King is a God of hospitality.*

11. And this is the **final purpose** of salt: *It makes people thirsty!*

- a. Every bartender and movie box office knows this
- b. Salted pretzels, salted peanuts and salted popcorn sell more beers and soft drinks than anything else.
- c. And hanging around the salty people of God will help “sell” the Gospel better than anything else.
- d. *It will give people an insatiable thirst for Jesus Christ and the Kingdom of God.*