

Sermon on the Mount – You are the Salt of the Earth

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MAIN VERSES

[Matthew 5:11](#) • [Matthew 5:13](#) • [Luke 14:34](#) • [Zechariah 9:9](#) • [Ezekiel 36:26](#)

B'at Shalom, everybody. Always a joy to see the children so excited to not only be together, but to go dive into the Word. I'm selfishly very thankful for that because I have kids that go back there too.

So, I know last week we spoke about blessed are those, the flourishing life. How good are those that have it? When they're persecuted, when they have evil spoken against them, when they have all of this calamity that just comes upon them in Yeshua's name because of Yeshua. And we spoke about how during the Roman time, during the first century, no one really cared about the God that you worshipped. You know, yeah, I worship Jesus. No one cared. No one's going to persecute you. I mean, it's fine. Cool. I don't know who that is, but that's great. You were persecuted for following Yeshua. You were persecuted for following the teachings of Yeshua. You were persecuted because you were not conforming to the way that everybody else needed you to conform so that they felt secure and safe in however they were doing things. And so they got persecuted. They got killed. They had evil spoken against them. And this is where we left off in Matthew chapter 5, verse 11, and we're going to read on through Matthew, which is where we're going to camp out today. And it says: But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty again? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You who are blessed because people insult you. You who are blessed because people persecute you. Because people falsely conjure up something evil to say at you as a weapon to try to harm you or your reputation or take value away from you, so that you can stop standing up for the things of the kingdom. You are the salt of the earth. That's who he's talking to. You are the salt of the earth. You, my followers, Yeshua is saying.

You Are the Salt of the Earth

And again, Yeshua is here, and he's speaking to his inner circle of disciples who had just been chosen. I mean, right before this sermon took place, he chose—what, the four? The first round coming in. And this is what they're being told right off the bat. This is the foundation. This is the onboarding process for being a follower or disciple. And they haven't even got to the part about carrying the cross yet, right? We take that for granted as far as the graduation of the disciples throughout Yeshua's ministry. They haven't even gotten there yet. Follow me, carry your cross, die so that you can reflect the real power in the world. No, this is the basic stuff that Yeshua tells them. Everything else moving forward in Matthew's account is going to build on top of this foundation. And, of course, if you consider yourself a follower of Yeshua as well and the teachings of Yeshua, then this is your kind of employee handbook as well.

And I want to talk today about being the salt of the earth as Yeshua calls us to be. But also what it means. Because this is not just a simple decree to follow. Be the salt of the earth. Okay, I can figure that out. It's also a warning. There's a warning wrapped in it. Right off the bat, Yeshua says we need to be careful that we don't lose our flavor or lose our saltiness. Because if you do, you're worthless to the kingdom. Like, you're worth what? What good are you? Maybe to be a makeshift rug on the streets outside that people can walk on?

The Warning Wrapped Inside

And this is part of, of course, Yeshua's sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. Yeshua's preaching the greatest sermon ever preached, and he says things that are so hard. He audaciously says that the people who will find a state of living that can only be described as blessed are those who are poor in spirit, those who are broken in spirit, the meek, the humble, persecuted, those who have been forced to be humbled, and those who pursue justice and righteousness as if it was water in the desert. And he says hard things, like if someone hits you, you don't respond in violence. It's a tough one.

But the early believers understood the weight of that simple command inside of the Roman Empire. The Romans began to persecute them early on, and they could have organized a militia super easy. The Judeans, the Jews in the first century, had already done this multiple times. They already had their own little secret club called the Zealots, who would be assassins that would attack the Romans. We're going to establish the kingdom of God with our knives and cloaks. And whenever we can get them, we'll get them. The Judeans attempted to bring forth the kingdom to come many times through militias. They could have organized, got all their guns together. They could have fought back for their own protection. And from what we know,

they didn't. They didn't. Because they were so committed to the way of Yeshua. Instead, they prayed that his will be done. His will be done.

Praying Instead of Fighting

I glance at social media nowadays. As I've matured, I just don't like it anymore. But there was a post someone made a month or two ago. And you ever wonder—maybe I shouldn't comment for a multitude of reasons. And it's not even that you're going to start something big. It's just that sometimes people say things that are so far out that you're not even sure a dialogue can take place. And it was a fellow believer who posted something about how when you're done praying, you should go ahead and do something. When you're done praying, you should get up and just do something about it. And I forget the context of it, but it was essentially just diminishing the command to fight the battles that are affecting the cosmos on your knees in prayer and to get up and actually do something about it. And I didn't comment because it was just so disheartening. How do we come to a place where we, as believers, almost mock prayer as ineffective? Because it's not working the way that we want it to work. I mean, I tried rubbing it the right way and God didn't come out of the lamp—and that's not how it works. But that doesn't mean it's any less effective.

And the earliest believers understood this before Christianity became an establishment after a few hundred years. They understood this and they prayed that God's will be done no matter what they face. And they forgave the Romans that came in and killed them. Why? Because they were taught to love the very people that were coming to kill them. And when you love someone, you don't want to kill them. You don't want to harm them. And I know that's a complex issue, but that's what it says. It's tough. It's tough.

The Way of Love

The stuff in the Sermon on the Mount is hard. But for the people that it's actually speaking to, the ones that are considered blessed, the ones that have the good life, it's hope. It's blessing. It's joy. And it tends to be harder for those who find themselves farthest away from those people. And it's something that looks completely upside down to the world. It doesn't make sense. And the reason why is this: in the declaration of the kingdom of God, you have had the most diabolical lies told to you. That Satan has sold you a lie that power comes through force and manipulation and exploitation and violence. And it's measured by how many people you stepped on to climb the ladder for your faux success. Real power comes in actually trusting in God. But it looks weak to the world. It does not come by a sword, but by trusting in a

shepherd's staff of our king that we believe is actually in charge and is actually powerful and isn't going to lose no matter what we see or think.

Real Power in Vulnerability

And it's hard because sometimes we like to make God fragile so that we can be the ones to nurture and defend and protect him, right? Because it makes us feel in control. And if we're in control, then we can feel safe despite what's going on in the world. And if we feel safe under the illusion that we have control over everything, then we don't have to do the hard thing to trust God. We'll just make God fragile so that we can be the one to defend him, as opposed to submitting to God and trusting God, which doesn't feel good, if I can be honest. Not when the test actually comes. And when we take our eyes off Yeshua, we look for something else to fill that void of security and safety.

Yeshua seemed quite content to be in such a position of vulnerability and such a humble position throughout his ministry. What's Zechariah say? Chapter 9. Do not be afraid, daughter of Zion. Your king is coming, mounted on a colt of a donkey. And we know what this is. This is referencing the future king Yeshua as he rides into the imperial city from a place of powerlessness on a donkey. And we're encouraged here to follow the same path.

What Does Salt Mean?

Now, hopefully, the message can get happier because this is a neat section. And this is all wrapped up in the Sermon on the Mount. But the very next verse, you are the salt of the earth, is not just an isolated verse. It's part of it. What does that even mean, salt of the earth? Well, salt was used for a few things in the ancient world in the first century during the time of Yeshua. And we always think of—oh, it makes food taste good. Yeah. If you like that other stuff, that MSG, that's the good stuff, right? It's a joke. Jeff and I had some conversations about MSG. It's neat. Salt. It was used as a flavor enhancer in the first century, obviously, just like it is today. But it was also used as a preservative. It was also used as medicine. It was also used for covenant. Remember, all of the offerings of God had to be salted on the altar.

Two Options

covenant. And it was also used to make flowers grow when it was mixed with manure, which was a thing. I was so excited. But Yeshua does not specify which of these purposes he's intending to convey to his first disciples and the later generations. And so we have two options

at this point. We can pick one and move on with that one, or we can explore the vast usage of salt a little bit more to see if maybe he meant to be general for a reason.

The Flavor of God

Obviously salt is and was used as a flavor enhancer. I mean, something doesn't taste quite right, toss some salt on it, bam, and so on. And Yeshua's calling those who make the commitment to follow him and show the world what true power looks like to go into the world. And many would suggest that we're to go to the places that are stagnant, the places that are sinful, the places that are dark and evil in the world, and we bring the flavor of God to those places. I like it. But we're not meant to bring flavor to sinful places. You're trying to bring flavor to the earth, to the land, which is where we dwell.

And so if Yeshua is speaking of being a flavor enhancer, then what he's calling us to do is much harder. Because you're still supposed to go to those places, but also to the people in those places. And you're to recognize that these people are likely there in those places because the world around them put them there. The people that do not look like you. They don't look like what the world would consider successful. They look like the type of people that were pushed through the safety net. And you're called to show them a world that has flavor because their world has none. But they may be steeped in sin. Show them a world where they can exist without leaning on that. Don't just introduce them to Yeshua. Show them what Yeshua is actually like. Show them what peace looks like. Show them what safety looks like. Show them what healing looks like. Show them what forgiveness looks like. Show them a world where their category and status is not among the judged any longer.

Salt from the Dead Sea

Flavor enhancer. See, salt in Judea was harvested from the Dead Sea. The entire area is salt. People talk about, oh yeah, the Dead Sea is really salty. It's like, no, the land is salt. Like the mountains, salt. Anyone ever been to Israel and looked out in the Dead Sea? And it kind of looked like something you'd see on National Geographic of the Arctic or Antarctica? Because there's these huge white floaties of ice, just massive things of ice floating around. They're not ice. Big as this room, bigger than this room. It's whole—just floating salt. It's huge, and it's amazing.

And of course, over time, this is because of a process of evaporation, because of where that lowest point in the earth is. But also, you have rock deposits that go in, and lots of sodium

chloride. There's a traditional mountain that if you ever go there, they'll point to and say, that's the mountain where Sodom was, right? That's where it happened, because it was in that area, right? Where the whole Sodom and Gomorrah thing took place. And I find it so interesting that it's not like the people back then didn't realize this whole area is salt. And so it just makes the whole story of Lot's wife that much more significant because she turned back and she turned into what she didn't want to give up. She wants to stay. So you will. It's just neat. I don't know. I love it.

Over time though, the salt may leach out of the chunks of the material that it's found in. It may not be good anymore. You also have this process where it gets mixed with gypsum in the rock, and it's not really useful anymore. But that's where they used to go. This is what they were thinking of.

A Preservative

And salt was also a preservative. It preserves food in a time that didn't have refrigerators. Salt draws water out of meat, right? Not just that, it draws it out of the actual cells through osmosis. I mean, you strip meat of water and moisture and now there's no water activity. The bacteria can't grow. Really neat process. I mean, who thought of that? We're going to stick this in salt. But it preserves food. And maybe Yeshua was also thinking of this property concerning salt when he spoke to his disciples. You're called to be the same. You're called to be a preservative. But with people. People.

Value Stripped Away

How many of you have experienced going from a place of value in your life but then something happened and you lost that? You lost it because a circumstance happened. You lost it because something occurred. Maybe trauma that was completely unexpected took place in your life and it became the new scale of how you value yourself and maybe even how other people look at you and kind of size you up.

Most of the time, something will take your value, how you see yourself, how society sees you. And the thing about value is that it never changes in God's eyes because the moment that you were born and came into this world was the moment that you had and still have and will always continue to have insurmountable value and worth in the eyes of God. Do people see you that way? No. Do you see other people that way? No. Especially when something happens that affects their identity.

In this world, value is something that gets taken from you. It's stolen from you. And people seek to take it from you. Someone may have done something wrong in your life, or maybe you felt shame about something, you felt judgments, and maybe you've been walking around ever since then with a constant depletion of value that you once held in society or in your family or in your life. And that's not fair. And I hope you're hearing me on this because I feel like as we go through life, some of us have more value stripped away from them than others.

And this could have been early on in childhood when a bully bullied you for the first time. I remember it distinctly. Do you? Never felt pain like that. It was confusing. What is happening? Why this shame for a little six, seven, eight-year-old? Or maybe it was an attack on you when you were an adult and it should never have happened. Maybe you did something in your life and it looms over your head always because that one thing, that one mistake, that one accident that happened so long ago has now redefined who you are and how you see yourself and your identity and how the world values you.

Value Thieves Ourselves

And what's worse than all of that is that, as people, we tend to be value thieves ourselves. That's what indiscriminate judgments are. When we find ourselves judging another person based off glimpses of their life, little itty bitty glimpses of their life, we have no idea who they really are. We're looking for a way to steal their value so that we can increase ours. That's what happens.

Think about the last time you judged someone. I know there's not a lot. But think about the last time you made a judgment or a critique about someone that was totally off. Like, why did I even think that about that person? Or someone who doesn't even cut you off—they just didn't use a blinker or something. And they were still three cars ahead of you. Right? And that's a funny thing because I know we can go much worse with it. But we take that opportunity to tell the narrative about this person's life and who they are and why they're so evil and why they're just such a little thing. Because it makes us feel better about ourselves when we can cut down others. We can steal value and increase ours, right? It's a facade, but that's what we do.

What was your judgment on someone the last time you thought something critical about another person? They're probably not very smart. If they did that, if they were smart, they wouldn't have done that. They probably didn't finish school. Probably didn't go to college like they were supposed to. But at least they didn't go to college, so now they're not being brainwashed. That person was a jerk. That kid over there is so out of control. It's got to be a bad kid, and they have to have bad parents. That person was rude. That person probably has a bad

husband at home or a bad wife at home. That person is a sinner. What type of names do we call them? The things that we encounter every single day, and maybe don't even realize that we're on the hunt to be a value sucker.

Maybe it's an entire demographic problem—of people that you make judgments toward. Demographics of race or culture or politics. When we make those types of judgments about people we really don't know, and that can include acquaintances, we always do it to lift ourselves up, directly or indirectly. We steal their value as a human being so that we can feel like we have more of it than them. We're better.

Preserve Their Value

The things kind of sound like everyone described in the Beatitudes, right? And here's the hard thing. Here Yeshua calls us to stop. Stop it. But not only that, to be a power equal in strength but opposing that behavior. Be the people of the world that will not take the value from others, but seek to preserve the value that they already have as a human being. Be the place where they know they have value as just a human being, an image of God. Be the place where they are reminded that they are strong, that they are beautiful, and that no sin can shackle them away from the Savior, and that they have insurmountable wealth in the eyes of God Almighty Himself.

You Are Not What Happened to You

I believe that's what we're called to do as part of being the salt of the world. You are not what happened to you. You are not what they said you were. You are not what you did. You are not worthless. Because you are the one that God calls mine. Are we the cheerleaders of that message when we go outside to the people? And the truth is, probably not always, because we're one of them, and we're still dealing with the reality check that there really is a God that loves us to that level.

Because the world teaches us that no one can, and we believe it. So when you meet people in the world, people that the world says, and even Christians say, have no value, look at them. Look at how they dress. Look at how they talk. Look at how they sin. They have, in this type of theology, the fragile God that they have created in their image—and that fragile God cannot save that person. But mine can. Yeshua HaMashiach can. Jesus Christ can. Yahweh, the God of creation, is not a fragile God. This is a father that loves his children.

See people through his eyes, and you will see another human being that's created in the image of God. And meet them there. Show them that they have value. Show them what it feels like to be loved by a God who gave it to them.

Observing Our Judgments

But I know that's not an overnight process. I certainly have not reached the level where the criticisms don't come in my head about other people. I'm trying to stop them when they get there. But I want to challenge you, those of you who have that issue.

The next time you see another person and you catch yourself making a judgment about them, I want you to observe the judgment that you just made. Just observe it. The next time you paint a narrative about another person to make yourself feel a little bit better, I want you to ask yourself something. No one's going to see it. No one's going to hear this conversation. I want you to ask yourself one question: Does this person have value? I don't care who it is. And then I want you to be honest with yourself and answer it.

Preserve Their Value

Because I believe we're called to preserve the value that is being taken away from people. And that looks exactly like what Yeshua did when he walked into every single town and reached out to the people there.

Salt as Fertilizer

Now, another use for salt in the ancient world was, of course, fertilizer. There's a great article by Dr. Anthony Bradley at the King's College in New York City if you want to read more in depth about it. He wrote it about 15 years ago, and the title is "You Are the Manure of the Earth." Jesus' famous metaphor of salt is actually about fertilizer. I just couldn't be clever with it at all, so I'm going to go out and say it plainly. But yes, it turns out salt was part of fertilizer in Judea in the first century.

And not only was salt used in Judea as fertilizer, it was also used as fertilizer by the Romans and the Chinese, and even today in some places in the world. And I thought salt was supposed to make fields barren, right? Kills everything. You salted the fields. Sure, if you dump too much, yes, of course. But when applied properly, it's very different. Salt was used in more arid places to help soil retain moisture when it's sprinkled in. It would inherently destroy weeds, and it would make soils that were deemed more stubborn easier to work with.

And in researching this, it was neat because salt in some soils will keep disease off of certain plants like wheat and potatoes. Sounds like some GMO stuff, I know, but it's just salt—you don't even need anything fancy. Get the right soil. And when applied properly, salt will kill weeds without harming deeper rooted plants. And when it rains, the salt breaks down and vital minerals can go into the plants. It's really neat. And so they would mix it with manure, mix it in.

Salt of the Earth

Luke actually mentions this or infers this in his account of the gospel. In Luke chapter 14, verse 34, it says: "It is thrown out. It's fit for neither the soil or even the manure pile." You are like the salt of the soil. Now Matthew says "the salt of the earth," which could also refer to land—really neat theological stuff that you can explore with the salt of the earth and the light of the world, the light of the cosmos. Salt was used to give the nutrients they needed to bring back life.

Who Jesus Called

And it's baffling to me because the people who hung out with Yeshua—we're talking about the prostitutes. How about the traitor that exploited his own people for profit? It was the handsome disciple, Matthew. But that's what he did. He gained a place of power and exploited his own people and leveraged that and destroyed people.

What do you think happens if you don't pay? The IRS is going to come and freeze your accounts? No, this is Rome. Matthew was the face of Roman taxation. He knew that if he could get money from someone, he's going to get it. That's how he gets paid. It's the commission. It's whatever he can take. And this is his family. This is his community. How much worse of a person could Jesus call? Come on.

The Tax Collector and the Zealot

How about the would-be assassin? The zealot. This was a person who had weapons stockpiled and fantasized about the day he could use them against the government. This is like down in the South. This is our type of people, right? That was him.

And what's funny is they had dinner together many times. I'm talking about the zealot and the traitor who's been working for the side that the zealot wanted to overthrow. You see the dynamics, right? How did they get along? And the neat, poetic, beautiful thing would be to say

that whenever Jesus is around, we all get along, right? And I love that. And that's wonderful, and I don't disagree at all, but can you imagine that?

And I like to think that's what makes this community I value so much—we have a lot of different backgrounds, a lot of different opinions, a lot of different experiences. And yet for some reason, we're able to put all that aside when we come together, because we're all focused on one thing: who Yeshua is. So I'm very proud to be a part of this community.

They Felt Safe Around Him

The people who wanted to be around Yeshua knew he wouldn't condone everything they were doing in their lives. Come on. But for some reason, they felt safe around him because for once, the sin in their life did not reinforce who the world told them they were. For once, the struggles they faced were not weaponized against them. For once, they met someone who preserved their God-given value in God's world, and they saw a new type of flavor that they had never experienced in their life. And they saw life blooming forth from dead soil.

Why Would They Change?

Why would people change for a world that will never give them an identity as a person? And I know it's my struggle too. Jesus allowed them to come around him so they would repent, right? That's the thing—if they weren't going to repent, they wouldn't have been called. That's what I'd like to believe. I want to believe that. But I don't. Yeshua calls everyone to look at their heart and yearn to have it replaced with a new one, just as Ezekiel says.

And what's funny is when we look at other people and we make these judgments that they're too far gone—what evil have you instigated in your heart and your mind? Are you just privileged enough to pretend you have it all together so people believe you? Is that what we do? And then other people don't have that ability anymore because they've been exposed as sinners. We're not that bad as people.

But if what you have done does not define you, then what they have done does not define them. And so why don't we try to show them what options they have? And Yeshua is always an option. And that's the point. That's the point.

Go to Where the Nutrients Are Lacking

Yeshua called us to go to places that were uncomfortable. He called us to go to people that were uncomfortable. He calls us to go to places where things are not already bright and full of life, no matter how much people want to pretend otherwise. Go to the places where the proper nutrients are lacking.

And that could look like foreign missions, or it could look like stepping into the life of a child by becoming a foster parent. That could be talking to that person in your own fellowship who may be a bit awkward and genuinely pouring into their life.

Be Salt

It would just be so much easier if Yeshua could draw a line and detail a checklist of what he actually wants. Where do I have to stop? Salt. Be salt. For which attribute? Do I have to exceed the mark just to make sure I covered all of it? Do it all. Do it all. Because that's the kind of people he imagines as citizens of his kingdom.

We are called to step out in the areas that need Yeshua the most. And that's you. That's your job. The call of the salty. We're called to move toward the broken so that they can meet God. And nothing should get in the way of that.

See Past the Mask

So they are a human being beyond that mask, beyond that jersey they're wearing, beyond what's been painted above their head. Go meet another human being that God loves so much—a person who can be set free to thrive in a new creation that calls them to live into.

And maybe that's you today. I don't know. Maybe you have been carrying around an identity that the world ruled by Satan and all those who worship him have given you. God says, you're mine. God says, I've given you a new name. God says, you're loved. You are loved by God and you are loved by true followers of Yeshua.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, speaking about this verse, when Jesus calls his disciples the salt instead of himself, this transfers everything his vocation on earth to them. He brings them into his work.

And so let us together, united, be involved in the work of God, whether it's big, profound, explosive circumstances, or whether it's giving dignity to a person that you bump into at the grocery store. All of it is part of the force working in this world.

Let us be the people of healing that tend to the wounds of those so afflicted. Let us be that which preserves the value that God has given people. And let us make the flowers grow in the places where everybody else said they can't.

Called as Salt

Alvina Malkinu, our Father, our King, we thank you for the opportunity to once again dive into your world and word. To dive into the foundation, the launching pad of a follower of Yeshua.

God, we are broken beings, but you are the healer. We are drawn to death, but you bring us into life. We are drawn to darkness, but you say, follow my voice. We are exiled, but you say, return.

Allow us to speak these words to those who need to hear them most, whether that's in our ears or in others. Make us the ambassadors of your kingdom. And through the power of the Ruach HaKadosh, allow us to embody what it means to be the salt of the soil.

We thank you, Father. In the name of Yeshua, we pray. Amen.

Blessing and Peace

Guys, I invite you to stand as we conclude services with worship. You can spend this time praying or meditating on the word. You can spend this time worshiping God. If you need prayer today, we have a prayer team off to the side of the stage. I encourage you. These are prayer warriors. They cannot wait to lift you up.

In the name of the Father. Sing Shema with me. Shema Yisrael Adonai Echabal Hear, O Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is one.

Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom for all eternity. May the Lord also cause you to increase and overflow in the love for one another and for all people in order to strengthen your hearts as blameless in holiness before our God. And Father, at the coming of our Lord Yeshua with all his Kedoshim, all his holy ones. And may the Lord bless you and keep you. May the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance towards you and give you peace so that you may be those who give peace. Amen. Shabbat Shalom, family.

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