

SCOUT SUNDAY

Isaiah 58: 1-9a
Psalm 112: 1-9
I Corinthians 2: 1-12
Matthew 5: 13-30

MORE SALT, PLEASE

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I'd rather curry powder.
Sue would like oregano.
But salt?
We're told not to use salt.

[Now, this is for our Scouts here today.]

When I go back-packing, there are three flavors I bring with me:
I say that with cinnamon, curry powder and Tabasco sauce,
any MRE - Meal Ready to Eat - can be made enjoyable.
Of course, after you've hiked with a 40 pound back-pack for 12 miles,
any food tastes good.
There is a saying, "The journey is the destination."
My saying is "The sleeping bag is the destination."
Sometimes even the MRE doesn't matter.
Just give me my sleeping bag.
Jesus was a hiker, after all, and sort of an inspiration [for Scouts]
Jesus even climbed several mountains.
Doubt if he had MREs -
just bread and wine, maybe some fish, too.

Salt - preservative, cleanser, enhancer.
The Latin word is *salarium* - where we get saline, as in saline solution.
The things you find doing research:
To be 'worth one's salt' is a saying you may have heard,
referring to living up to your responsibilities,
worthy of one's pay as a soldier way back in Roman times -
Jesus' time.
Maybe that's why he used this imagery.
The word "salary" also comes from the Latin word *salarium*.
To be worth your salt, and responsible at your job.
Maybe that's what Jesus meant,
as he spoke to a Jewish crowd surrounded by Roman soldiers,
or was he just speaking over the shoulders of the faithful
to those soldiers, telling them to be responsible?

Roman soldiers, and even Pharisees and Sadducees were in the crowd.
Those Jewish leaders would have caught a reference
to salt being used with the sacrifices at the Temple in Jerusalem.
Is Jesus saying that those who follow him
are to flavor, to enhance, the sacrifices they offer
in the communal and individual praises of God?

That would be a hint to the reading from Isaiah we had today:
enhance your sacrifice by
'removing the chains of oppression, and the yoke of injustice,
Share your food with the hungry, open your homes to the poor,
Give clothes to those who have nothing to wear...'

Isaiah 58: 6-7

There is a traditional, sacramental use of salt, at Baptism.
Part of the old rite was to place a pinch of salt on the child's mouth,
while the priest says, "Receive the salt of wisdom"
referring to the OT reading which describes wisdom as a purifier
and the making of a "covenant of salt" to God.

And do you know how to make holy water?
No, you don't just boil the hell out of it (though hot water works best)
there is actually a 'recipe' of prayers and elements used.
It's not just water.
It includes salt as a purifying agent.

[read part of the prayer over salt]

So every time you bless yourself on your forehead,
you are actually inscribing salt - wisdom and purity - on yourself
In the OT 2nd Book of the Kings, the prophet Elisha comes to a town
where the water is contaminated.

According to the Bible, Elisha used salt to make it drinkable:

The people said to Elisha, "The location of this city is good, 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 the salt into it, and said, "Thus says the LORD, I have made this water wholesome; from now on neither death nor miscarriage shall come from it."

2 Kings 2:19-21

So, Jesus, why salt?

It's simple.

It purifies.

Salt also preserves - used with meats especially -
by dehydrating microbes and bacteria that would spoil the food.

So many things about salt, it's a rich research topic,
and leads down many rabbit holes.

So Jesus says, "You are like salt for the whole world,"
with many meanings hanging in the air.

But how are we to be like salt?

Jesus isn't just talking to the intimate circle of twelve insiders.
He's talking to those Jewish leaders, and those Roman soldiers.
Just before today's reading, Jesus gives us the Blessings -
the Beatitudes.

[In a few moments, we'll share a new version of Beatitudes for Scouts.]

Jesus had been talking peace, joy, blessings and pains
to all those who sat on a hillside one sunny afternoon.
This is his opening his first sermon to the masses in Matthew's Gospel.
He has just told all those who gathered
"that they may mourn, but will be comforted;
you who are down in the dumps who have the kingdom of heaven
those who hunger and thirst, will be filled.
those who are persecuted, you will be blessed."

"You, all you sitting here, listening to me, who have not walked away,
you are like salt for the whole world."

To enhance, to preserve, to purify, to be worth your salt.

So,

How are you to be a preservative?
What, who can you preserve?
How are you to enhance the flavor?
What, who can you enhance?
How are you to be a purifier?
For who or what can you act as a purifier,
or what can you purify in your own life?

Are you worth your salt?
Jesus thinks so.

For you have heard him say,
"You are salt for the whole world."
Go and flavor it.
AMEN.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Salt of the Earth

a slice of watermelon, if available, and a shaker of salt

I love watermelon. One of my favorite snacks in the summer.
Nice and cold out of the fridge.

For some reason, when I was a kid, I learned to sprinkle salt on it
before I ate it.

Then I'd take a spoon and dig tunnels through the fruit.
I never questioned why my family put salt on it; we just did.
Then in chemistry class at school, we were studying salt.
Salt has many qualities,
and with many foods, it enhances the flavor.
It doesn't add flavor, but it kind of like multiplies the taste.
Makes it taste even better.
Salt enhances -
a big word for making something better.

Jesus is calling us who believe in him the salt of the world.
What would that mean?
How can we enhance, or make the world better?

allow time for all sorts of answers.

Let's pray:

Jesus, help us to make the world sweeter, more juicy and more refreshing to everyone. Help us to be the salt to the world. Amen.