

‘Be careful,’

- my mother said,

- ‘when you put in the salt -

- a little salt, goes a long way.’

I was learning to cook.

- I had been watching her cook for years -

- helping her out with little steps,

- but now I was starting to cook on my own -

- without her close supervision -

- So she wanted to be sure that I understood -

- that with salt and other spices -

- often just a dash was all you needed. - -

- ‘You can always add more salt if you need it,’

- she said,

- ‘but you can’t take it back out once you put it in.’

- Looking back -

- I imagine she felt the need to share that advice -

- because she didn’t measure too much when she was cooking -

- oh - if she was baking,

- she was very precise,
- but if she was making spaghetti sauce
- or macaroni and cheese -
- she would pour and add,
- taste and add some more -
- until she got it right -
- Since I lacked her years of cooking experience,
- I think she wanted me to realize just how powerful -
- an ingredient like salt could be -
- wanted me to understand -
- that even adding just a dash of salt -
- could transform the other ingredients in the pot - -
- Now these days -
- I hardly use salt at all when I am cooking -
- but I've never forgotten her advice on the power of just a dash of salt -
- to transform the taste of a dish - -
- So when I heard Jesus says to his disciples -
- say to you and to me -
- in the portion of the Sermon on the Mount that we read this morning -
- "You are the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13) -
- I actually started to get a little excited - -
- as I began to spin out all the implications of what that statement -

- means for us and for the world - -
- “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13)
- as followers of Jesus,
- as children of God -
- you have the ability to season and change the world around you -
- you have the ability to preserve what is good -
- to give flavor to the bland -
- to be a vital ingredient
- in the world around you - -
- Just a little dash of God’s love reflected in your words and actions -
- Just a little dash of the mercy and compassion Jesus shows us -
- Just a little dash
- of the openness and welcome that Jesus shows the outcast
- Just a little dash of loving your neighbor -
- and treating others the way -
- you want to be treated -
- can make a huge difference -
- in your relationships,
- in your community,
- in your world - -
- “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13) -
- your presence,

- your attitude,

- your faithfulness

- impacts the whole -

- changes the taste of the dish -

- in powerful ways - -

- “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt 5:13) -

- and not only that,

- Jesus says,

- “You are the light of the world.” (Matt 5:14)

- Each of his followers - Each of us -

- is a beacon of light -

- who can help the world to see who Jesus is,-

-who can help the world to see

- what the kingdom of God

- looks like, -

-who can help the world to see

- how God’s love -

- can shape one’s life -

- a light meant not just for ourselves,

- but a light that is clearly meant to be shared -

- “Let your light shine before others,”

- Jesus says -

- “so that they may see your good works

- and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

-(Matt 5:16)

- “You are the light of the world.” (Matt 5:14)

- don’t hide God’s light under a bushel basket,

- share it -

- by your words,

- by your actions,

- by your love -

- share God’s light,

- share the presence of the Spirit, -

- share the love of Jesus -

- through your faithfulness in the world -

- help hope to shine through in times of darkness -

- help peace to shine through in times of conflict -

- help comfort to shine through in times of pain -

- Now I know -

- the problems of the world are big -

- I know the divisions in society seem as wide as the Grand Canyon at the moment

- I know it is easy to think -

- that one person -

- one group of people -

- in one place -

- can't make -

- won't make a substantial impact, -

- but remember -

- Jesus' followers -

- you and I "are the salt of the earth" (Matt 5:13)

- and as we know just a little salt -

- can change the taste of the entire dish

- So who's to say that -

- a dash of love,

- a pinch of compassion,

- a sprinkling of mercy -

- can't transform the stew of anger and distrust

- currently boiling in our country - -

- who's to say that -

- a flicker of generosity,

- a ray of kindness,

- a flash of gentleness -

- can't help us to see a way forward -

- in the midst of disagreements - -

- who's to say that

- a measure of joy,

- a pound of patience,
- an ounce of self-control - (Gal 5:22-23)
- can't produce a new set of relationships -
- and bring forth a new commitment -
- to using our gifts to build up
- the whole community

- Now maybe I'm crazy,

- And I have certainly been accused -
- of being overly optimistic on more than one occasion,
- but Jesus seems fairly certain
- that his followers can make a difference -
- that his children can light the way in the darkness - -
- so perhaps we should give it a try this week - -
- And as my mother suggested -
- a little salt goes a long way -
- so you don't necessarily need to start with anything dramatic -
- just a dash of patience, compassion or mercy -
- can have a big impact - -

- So for example,

- You might look for one positive characteristic to highlight
- in someone you disagree with.
- You don't have to suddenly change your opinion of the world,

- but simply taking a moment to see the good in another -
 - reminds you that they too are a child of God, -
 - begins to change the taste in your mouth a little -
 - and shines a little light in the darkness.
- or You might invest your attention more fully -
 - in someone you love -
 - put down the phone or the remote -
 - turn off the computer screen and block out the distractions
 - For 15 minutes,
 - listen to your child, grandchild,
 - spouse, significant other or friend -
 - make their needs your priority -
 - share in their joy or pain -
 - shine God's love in their life -
 - through your presence with them - -
- or You might invest your time in helping someone in need -
 - speak up in a constructive way -
 - for someone who has no voice -
 - for someone who is being pushed to the side -
 - Invest your time and resources -
 - in making a difference -
 - by volunteering and supporting a helping ministry

- Magnify the voices of those who can't be heard -
 - so that we can hear all perspectives,
 - not merely the loudest
- or You might try and chose your words more carefully. -
 - It's easy to forget how powerful words can be.
 - how easily the right words can bring people together
 - and he wrong words can tear people apart -
- Before you post,
 - before you hit send,
 - before you speak to a family member,
 - co-worker or friend,
 - stop and think -
 - "Do these words convey God's love to the world?"
 - "Are these words I'd like to hear spoken to me?"
 - "Do these words build up or tear down?"
 - If the answer is no -
 - then try saying what you need to say -
 - in a different, more Christ-like way
- So that your words will let God's light shine before others - -
- We are the salt of the earth.
 - We are the light of the world.
 - Jesus trusts us -

- as imperfect as we may be -

- to be his heart and hands and voices to our community - -

- So as you build your life of faith this week,

- I hope you will allow -

- God's presence to fill your heart with

- gentleness, kindness and self-control

- I hope you will look for ways -

- to sprinkle God's love, compassion and joy -

- into the world -

- and I hope you will take the opportunity -

- to let God's light of generosity, mercy and peace -

- shine through your words and your deeds.