

Sermon on the Mount

Flavoring the World Matthew 5:13

Now that we have reflected on the virtues of the Beatitudes which have shown us how we are to be, we turn to the question of how to bring these qualities into our world.

You are the salt of the earth;
(Matthew 5:13)

For most of us, salt is something that makes food tasty. While we may not always sense it in a dish, we definitely notice when salt is missing and may instinctively reach for the shaker. Add too much salt, and the meal is ruined. As disciples, Jesus tells us *we are salt in this world; we live out our spirituality in everything we say and do.* Our thoughts, words, and actions are never neutral. Rather, they either positively or negatively impact what is around us, just like salt does to food. Practicing the habits of discipleship and cultivating the virtues of the Beatitudes enables us to bring Christ's presence ever so subtly into our surroundings, positively impacting all around us. In small ways – smiling at a frazzled cashier, opening the door for a parent struggling with small children, greeting a stranger, or spending a quiet afternoon with a homebound senior – we flavor the world with Christ as we live out our calling as disciples.

...but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled underfoot.
(Matthew 5:13)

But we have to be careful. Just as we influence the people and events around us, we, too, are influenced by those same people and events. Jesus cautions us about the risk of contamination. In addition to flavoring a dish, salt, in Jesus' time, was also used as a preservative. If salt is a metaphor for our spirituality, we must be careful to preserve and protect it from becoming contaminated. Cynicism, fear, and anger color much of the predominant culture today and sometimes it is very easy to slip into that negativity, even with our best intentions. The discipleship characteristics spelled out in the Beatitudes help keep our hearts pure. We must be on guard, "keep alert, stand firm in your faith, be courageous, be strong" (1 Corinthians 6:13) to be diligent about protecting and preserving the virtues of the Beatitudes within our hearts.

How can we tell that our salt has remained pure? With one simple question: In what way does our life reflect our relationship with Jesus?

Does that relationship bring about what St. Paul describes as the “fruits” of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, trustfulness, gentleness, and self-control” (Galatians 5:22)?

How much goodness would come about in the world if we flavored our lives with these fruits?