

“You are the salt of the earth.” (Matthew 5:13)



Have you ever balanced a salt shaker on a grain of salt? Try it some time. I guarantee it will provide hours of obsessive entertainment; or at least it did for me back in the days of my blissful youth. Believe it or not it can be done. I've done it. With uncharacteristic patience, I've successfully balanced a shaker of salt at a 45-degree angle using just a single grain of salt. I'm no scientist so I can't begin to explain the physics of it all, but it can be done. Imagine a lone grain of salt holding up a 4-inch container.

Imagine Jesus describing you and me as salt. Apparently, salt can do more than just hold up a salt shaker. In Jesus' day salt made life possible. It was both a spice and preservative. In the absence of refrigeration, it was salt that enabled families to keep food from spoiling for days on end. It was salt that kept families from going hungry. In fact, during Roman times, up to half a Roman soldier's salary was paid in – you guessed it – salt. So, I guess salt is kind of important.

“You are the salt of the earth” Jesus tells us. Are we spice or preservative? Either way, Jesus makes it clear that we have a job to do; that we are to have a transformative, life preserving effect on the world. The farmer, preacher, and advocate Clarence Jordan once said that these words of Jesus are a gift, a vision of the life Jesus promises his followers that they might become a “demonstration plot” for the reign of God. In other words, it is through the community called “church” that the world comes to see there is a better way of being human; that the way things are is not the way they have to be or always will be. Jordan puts it even better when he says,

“The crowning evidence that Jesus lives is not a vacant grave, but a spirit-filled fellowship. Not a rolled away stone, but a carried-away church.”

I wonder what a “carried away” church looks like? I imagine a carried away church is one that refuses to be grounded in race or nation or tribe or culture, but instead is unwavering in its love for God and the world God loves. I imagine a carried-away church is one that refuses to accept the loud voices of hatred and division, instead offering a vision of a lion and lamb lying down together. I imagine a carried-away church is one that refuses to stay silent in the face of

conflict, instead proclaiming a vision of swords beaten into plowshares. I imagine a carried-away church is one that refuses to cower in the face of public bullying, instead insisting that all are created in the image of God. I imagine a carried-away church is one that refuses to accept the rhetoric of vengeance instead reminding the world of Jesus' command to love your enemies. I imagine a carried-away church is one that refuses to look away from the hunger and poverty of the city around it, instead taking seriously Jesus' words, "Feed my sheep."

What kind of a church do you imagine Jesus calls us to be? What kind of "demonstration plot" does Jesus imagine for 597 East Avenue? Jesus doesn't tell us that someday we will be salt. He says "you are salt." You are that spice, that preservative that grounds the world in life. You are that single grain that can hold up mighty things. If these audacious claims of Jesus' are true, how can we be anything less than a salty, spirit-filled, carried-away church?

Peace and Love,
Pastor Doug