

“SETTING THE TABLE”
“Salt Covenant of God”

We have begun our sermon series “Setting the Table.” In our culture and society food has in some ways become an issue. We have gotten used to eating so fast (most school children must eat in 20 minutes or less), or we are so concerned because of whatever diet we may be on that food is seen as problem, rather than a gift or a blessing. From the beginning, the Bible has shown how God is interested in food and providing for the basic needs of God’s beloved children. Beginning in the garden of Eden, God gives food for human beings to delight in and enjoy. The commandment to keep the Sabbath holy was so that human beings would worship God, give thanks for the gifts of the earth in bread and wine and to feast as a family together. The focus for this week is salt. Of course, for Christians, we immediately remember how Jesus said, “*you are the salt of the earth.*” What we may miss is that salt has a deep biblically history. In the Hebrew scriptures, salt was a reminder of the covenant between God and the Hebrew people. Offerings were to be seasoned with salt before they were burned. Salt is a seasoning, a preservative, and a flavor profile. If we are called to be salt....then perhaps we are multitasking in our faith: we are flavoring the world, seasoning the community around us and preserving the covenant to which we are called: a covenant of grace and love. May this week our saltiness make a difference in the world.

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Salt Covenant of God”**

Daily prayer: *O God, as salt poured from its shaker flavors our food, by your Spirit, set us free from our attachments to the safe containers, at times confinements, of our existence. Send us out to season your world with your love. In our loving, let us be as light that dispels the darkness of injustice. As salted light, may all whose lives we touch know that you create us holy and call us to become whole. Amen. (by Polly Moore, St. Mark’s Episcopal Church, Washington, D.C.)*

Study Guide

Monday, August 12, 2019 Matthew 5: 13

This is a verse that is very familiar. Jesus notes that those gathered to hear his sermon are the “*salt of the earth.*” The tendency is to hear this as the down-home folk, people that are everyday kind of people. Salt was certainly important in Jesus’ day for seasoning and for preserving food. Jesus notes that if it loses its flavor it is useless. Eugene Peterson in his biblical translation *The Message*, translates this passage this way “*You’re here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness?*” This way of re-stating this verse reminds followers of Jesus of their task to do good in world, by bringing their faith, their “god”-liness into their everyday lives, that others will know God. *How do you flavor the world with your faith in God and love of God?*

Tuesday, August 13, 2019 Matthew 5:14-16

Jesus goes into the next image which is just as “common” as his first. You are the “*light of the world.*” Light is meant to be seen. Jesus encourages people’s light to be “seen” so that the good things his listeners and believers do will point to their faith in God. Light shines on everything and everyone. It is hard to hide. Jesus wants his followers to shine light in everything they say and do in order that their lives might praise God in heaven. “*Doing good*” is one way to witness God’s love and grace, not only in the life of the believer, but in the world. *Where do you shine your light? How do your words and actions point to the God who loves us?*

Wednesday August 14, 2019 Leviticus 2: 4-10

It may seem odd to have a reading from Leviticus. If you have not read the whole book, you might not know that this book of Moses is basically one regulation or rule after another. It is tedious and boring for most people. However, these laws also give us a window into understanding Jesus and the early followers of Jesus. The regulations around offerings and sacrifices give us a picture into what was valuable and how this reveals a whole different understanding around the parables and stories of Jesus. I started with the grain offering because it provides an understanding into why some of the offering is reserved. The priests’ food source is dependent on the offerings to God. This dual purpose, honoring one’s relationship with God and offering part of one’s labor and taking care of the priests and their families is important. The priests had no land in which to grow their own food. Their very survival depended on the offerings and sacrifices of the people of God. The grain offering is the basic gift of the people to say thank you to God for all the good gifts they received. *How do you find ways to honor and give thanks to God? While we don’t burn offerings anymore, we still find ways to offer ourselves and our gifts. What do you do to offer yourself and your gifts to God?*

Thursday August 15, 2019 Leviticus 2: 13

Here is where the salt comes in. In her book *Taste and See*, Margaret Feinberg notes: “Salt symbolizes new beginnings and a separation from the past....Moses tells the Israelites to add salt to their offerings, and in the process, the people agree to a ‘covenant of salt forever before the LORD.’” (pg. 109-110) God and the Hebrew people exchange salt as a symbol of loyalty, friendship and to show the permanent nature of their agreement (pg. 110) Salt is symbolic of God’s love and faithfulness. If we are called to be the salt of the earth, then our words and actions are signs of God’s love and grace as well. *Today perhaps you can salt something...a tomato, an ear of corn or just take a small taste of some salt. Then say a prayer asking God to continue to remind you of your covenant with him and your call to salt and season the world.*

Friday August 16, 2019 Matthew 5: 13, 16

The salt that Jesus’ and his disciples would have is unique because it came from that area of the world. Salt, like sourdough, reflects the area of the world from which it comes. We do not need to be like all salt, we are only required to be the salt of the earth where we are. A little bit of your unique and unrepeatable self-shared, can make a world of difference to someone else. In Eugene Peterson’s *The Message*, he states, “*You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world....Now that I’ve put you there on a hilltop, one light stand—shine!! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you’ll prompt people to open up with God.*” Our light and salt are to change the world into the reign that Christ has promised. Our works and words are to point to God. *So, as you prepare for the weekend, think of how you can flavor and color the world with goodness and grace and all the love of God.*