

Salt: Christ Flavor  
Mark 9:38-41, 50  
September 15, 2019

Once upon a time, a king asked his three daughters how much they loved him. The oldest daughter said she loved him more than all the gold in the world. The king was pleased with her answer.

The second daughter said she loved him more than all the silver in the world. Again, the king was pleased with her answer.

The youngest daughter said she loved him more than salt. Salt was good and even had monetary value in those days but still the king wished her love for him to be compared to something more precious than salt - something like diamonds or rubies or some precious stones. So, the king was not pleased with her answer.

The cook overheard the conversation, and noticed that the king was not pleased with his youngest daughter. So, the next day, he prepared a wonderful meal for the king. It was beautifully presented, but he left out the salt. The food was so insipid that the king could not eat it. The food was beautifully presented but was absolutely tasteless.

So, the king summoned the cook and asked him, “Why does the food taste like this? What is the meaning of this?” The cook responded that it was salt that brought out the flavor and pleasure. Without it, the food, no matter how beautiful it may be, it would not taste good. It would not bring you pleasure. Then he explained that the meaning of the king’s youngest daughter’s answer was that she loved him more than all the pleasures of the world. Hearing that, the king understood the depth of his daughter’s love.

In the ancient world, salt was a valuable and scarce commodity. It even had monetary value. It was used as currency in some countries, even into modern times. When Italian soldiers invaded Ethiopia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they found blocks of salt stored in bank vaults along with other familiar forms of currency. So, when Jesus said to his disciples, “You are the salt of the earth,” he meant that they were very valuable individuals.

But then he said, “If salt loses its saltiness what good is it?” The value of the salt is not in its crystal form; but in its salty taste.

Jesus was literally saying that if your life does not make a real contribution to this world or to the people around you, calling yourself followers of Christ means nothing.

In other words, we need to have Christ flavor in our lives. We are called to bring pleasure, joy, gladness, peace, hope, and satisfaction in people's lives. We ought to be a blessing to the people around us.

Our passage this morning is about a turf war. John, one of Jesus' disciples was known as "Son of Thunder" because of his temper. He said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out an evil spirit. Since he is not one of us, we stopped him." How dare he use your name! That is the right and privilege that belong to us!

Non-Christians look at us Christians and the Church and have legitimate criticism against us. They say Christians preach humbleness, love, tolerance, acceptance, and forgiveness. Yet in reality, they practice arrogance and backstabbing based on self-righteousness.

Before Martin Luther and the reformation, the church did not have divisions like we do. We did have divisions but not like the denominations we have now. One of the main slogans for the reformation was "the priesthood of all believers." The interpretation of the Scripture was no longer limited to the clergy. The reformation encouraged the lay people to interpret the Scripture as well. And the Church made the Bible available to all people in their own language. The Bible began to be translated into people's vernacular languages. It was a good thing.

The down side of it was that people began to assert their interpretation to be better than that of others, and the Church started to be divided into many denominations. Now we have approximately 41,000 Christians denominations around the world.<sup>1</sup> In the year 2005, the statistics show there were about 20,000 denominations, but now we have well over 40,000 denominations.

Jesus says, "Leave the people, who think differently from you, alone." Self-righteousness brings division into the community. Jesus says, "For truly I tell you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will not lose the reward." Correct understanding, correct theology is not as important as the compassion we have toward each other.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.learnreligions.com/christianity-statistics-700533>

We need to have Christ flavor in our lives. We need to have a salt-like character in our love. Salt melts itself to give its taste. The salt-like character is a sacrificial quality. Our love needs to have a sacrificial quality.

Dr. E.V. Hill was a beloved pastor serving Mt. Zion Baptist Church in Los Angeles. He served there for over 40 years. He died in 2003. He was a powerful preacher.

In 1965, there was a riot in South-Central Los Angeles known as the Watt's Riot, people burned buildings and looted stores. The community was in total chaos. At that time, Dr. Hill denounced his neighbors who were destroying properties and stealing from stores. As the riot was getting worse, he publicly condemned the rioters and looters. The people did not appreciate that.

One night he received a death-threat. Someone called him and said that they would blow up his car when he got in it. Dr. Hill and his wife knew they could not protect the car from wire bombing 24 hours a day.

Next morning, Dr. Hill couldn't find his wife. She was not at home and his car was not missing as well. A few minutes later, he saw his wife driving the car into the drive way. She had driven the car around the block to make sure it would be safe for her husband to drive it later that morning. She literally risked her own life to save her husband's. That is amazing. Sacrificial love is what Christ flavor is.

I am sure you have heard about Dr. David Livingston, a Scottish missionary who served in Africa in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. He went to Africa when he was 28 and died there when he was 60. He had 32 years of fruitful ministry. His ministry was a sacrificial ministry. He spent most of his adult life in Africa and he eventually died there. When he died, he died alone in his hut. No one was around. When people discovered that he died, he was in the posture of prayer. Evidently, he died while he was praying. He had a genuine passion for Africans. The day before he died, he had written these words in his journal:

“I am a missionary, heart and soul. God had just one Son, and he, too, was a missionary. I have tried to be an imitation of him, though, I fear, a poor one. Looking back, I see few results for my labors, but God called me here, and I place no value on anything I have done except in relation to his kingdom which he is

building and in which I am thankful to have been an apprentice. One day, Africa will belong to God's kingdom."<sup>2</sup>

Since the time of Livingston, we have seen a tremendous growth in African churches. Livingston died in 1873. The statistics show that in 1900 there were fewer than 9 million Christians in Africa. Now there are 631 million Christians in Africa. By continent, Africa has the highest Christian population.<sup>3</sup> Of course, this is not the result of just one person's ministry. There have been countless missionaries who worked tirelessly and sacrificially. They trained the natives and the natives spread the Gospel in an amazing way.

The amazing thing about their growth is that it took place in the midst of extreme persecutions. In the 20th century alone, there have been approximately 1.8 million Christian martyrs in Africa. This figure does not include the Christians who have been killed in the genocidal conflicts in Rwanda and Burundi. About 600,000 Christians have been killed in those conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Then there were hundreds of thousands of people killed, most of whom were Christians, in the First Sudanese Civil War, which was started by the militant Islamic government against a predominantly Christian population. Yet through all these persecutions the Church continued to grow in Africa.

So, the question is how did the Church grow at this amazing pace in the midst of the persecutions? It was because of the love the Christians shared with each other. The love they had for each other had amazing impacts, not only for the Christians but also for the non-Christians. They saw how Christians loved each other so sacrificially that others who saw them also wanted to be Christians.

Did you know that the body of David Livingstone was buried in England where he was born, but his heart was buried in Africa he loved? At the foot of a tall tree in a small African village the natives dug a hole and placed Livingston's heart in it. The Africans loved and respected him, because he first loved them. If your heart were to be buried in the place where you invested most of your energy, heart and time, where would it be? Will it be in your pocketbook? Will it be in your office? Or will it be in the hearts of people? If we meld ourselves, sacrifice ourselves and share the Christ flavor with people, we will remain in hearts of people, and the people will have the Christ flavor in their lives as well.

---

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Robert Beringer in his sermon "*Rejoice in the Lord*", [www.esermons.com](http://www.esermons.com)

<sup>3</sup> <https://aleteia.org/2018/07/24/africa-overtakes-latin-america-for-the-highest-christian-population/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.christianity.com/church/church-history/timeline/2001-now/the-explosion-of-christianity-in-africa-11630859.html>