

Summary:

Jesus wants us to be salt in the world, and his answer about the greatest commandment tells us how and why.

Call to Worship:

But I, by your great love, can come into your house. Psalm 5:7

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, it is such a joy to come into your presence today, and I can do that because you love me and because of what Jesus did on the cross for me.

I pray that you will lead me today as I sing praises to you, as I pray to you, and as I read your word.

Thank you, and I praise your holy Name. Amen

Song: *(by Graham Kendrick)*

1. Lord the light of your love is shining. In the midst of the darkness shining.
Jesus the light of the world shine upon us. Set us free by the truth you now bring us.
Shine on me. Shine on me.

Shine Jesus shine, Fill this land with the Father's glory.

Blaze, Spirit blaze, set our hearts on fire.

Flow, river flow, flood the nation with grace and mercy.

Send forth your word, Lord, and let there be light.

2. Lord I come to your awesome presence from the shadows into your radiance,
By your blood I may enter your brightness,
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness. Shine on me. Shine on me.
3. As we gaze on your Kingly brightness so our faces display your likeness,
Ever changing from glory to glory.
Nearer here may our lives tell your story. Shine on me. Shine on me.

© 1987 Make Way Music, Used by permission CCLI 509237

Prayer of Intercession:

Listen to my words Lord, consider my lament. Hear my cry for help my King and my God, for to you I pray (Psalm 5).

Father, I name those of my family, my friends and my church who face pain and illness and for whom I cry out to you.....

I pray for a healing touch on their bodies, minds and souls and I pray for wholeness in their lives. For those struggling with age related issues I pray for an affirmed hope in the Saviour Jesus which takes away fear.

Needs Salt

Father, I name and pray for those friends and acquaintances who don't know you.....
I pray that they may find you, and that they might see you in me.

I pray for the critical situation in the Middle East. I particularly pray for the Christians in Lebanon caught in the military crossfire and fighting for survival. And I pray that their faith will be strong in the face of Islamists who seek to destroy their churches, homes and livelihoods. I pray for Barnabas Aid as they deliver crucial aid and support.

Surely Lord you bless the righteous, you surround them with your favour as with a shield
(Psalm 5). I pray Lord knowing that you listen to me. In Jesus name. Amen

Song: *(by C Buchanan, J Robinson, R Thompson)*

1. God, You hold the world in hand, mountains move at Your command.
Yet my needs You will provide, as a father loves his child.

God is over all, God is over all.

I will sing for it is well, my God is over all.

2. God, You saw the sin in me, for You reign in majesty.
Jesus died to make me clean, Jesus rose to set me free.
3. God above all time and space, You are never far away,
For in Jesus I can see, how You are a friend to me.

© 2023 CityAlight Music (Admin. by Integrity Music), Used by permission CCLI 509237

Bible Reading:

- **Mark 12:28-34** One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"
"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength'. The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no greater commandment than these."
"Well said, teacher," the man replied. "You are right in saying that God is one and there is no other but him. To love him with all your heart, with all your understanding and all your strength, and to love your neighbour as yourself is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."
When Jesus saw that he had answered wisely, he said to him, "You are not far from the kingdom of God." And from then on no one dared ask him any more questions.

Message: "Needs Salt"

How many times have you sat down to a meal, say a steak, chips and salad, and after the first mouthful saying, "Needs salt!". I recently heard someone tell of visiting the Dead Sea and doing the traditional thing of reading the newspaper while floating high on the water. Apparently, there are shops nearby doing a roaring trade selling Dead Sea salt products

Needs Salt

with people spending big sums to benefit from the health-giving qualities of salt. They wanted to be really salty!

In the reading above, Jesus is asked by a teacher of the law his opinion on the most important Jewish laws. Jesus' reply was, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all you're your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself."

We could, and do, boil this down simply to, "Love God and love your neighbour", but this maybe waters down the whole-heartedness of it – and the strength of commitment to love your neighbour as yourself. Needs salt? Then this is the way we get salty like God wants us to in Matthew 5:13 – You are the salt of the earth. And if we lose our saltiness, if we are not whole-hearted, then we are no longer good for much as Christians.

We have waged a war in our denominations where as "evangelicals" we have been scathing of the social justice people as being more interested in welfare projects and saving trees and whales than they are in a deeply personal relationship with God. On the other hand, evangelicals can be sneered at for being "so heavenly minded as to be of no earthly use". There is a danger of regarding these as two mutually exclusive viewpoints. Not so from Jesus' teaching. The two most important laws require us to whole-heartedly love God (first) and then whole-heartedly love our neighbour. If we evangelicals, with all the spiritual depth and close relationships with God in the world, aren't out in the world, the community, and society, then we can't be the salt of the earth. If the social justice crew don't have a personal relationship with the risen Jesus, then all the helpful programmes in the world don't make them the salt of the earth because they are not salty. Jesus commands us to do both.

As we would expect, and as we know, Jesus doesn't just give us some pithy sound bites but is the perfect example of what we should be doing. He regularly took time out on his own to speak with his Father – at the high moments, such as the feeding of the crowds, and at the low moments – such as the garden of Gethsemane. This is where he maintained his relationship with God the Father and was empowered to do his will.

And there were so many moments where he engaged with people, showing them that he loved them, and that God loved them. That he had compassion for them is demonstrated in the Scriptures time and time again – he healed the blind who cried out to him for help, he gathered children around him when others were trying to keep them away, he healed the woman who touched the hem of his cloak, he spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well, he welcomed Zachaeus, he raised his friend from the dead, and at that moment when he was at his most vulnerable, he spoke to his mother and the disciple John, and the thief on the cross next to him. And not only did he touch, heal, feed, comfort, welcome and teach them, he glorified God, spoke of new and changed lives for them, and led them into a relationship with the Father. That's what he means by being salty!

We may sometimes think it would have been a bit easier for Jesus there in Israel when everyone already knew about God. But they crucified him for doing good things amongst the people! So how does it work in Australian society? We would all agree that there are plenty of people with needs for which Jesus is the answer. But how

Needs Salt

often do I think of the disadvantaged being “bludgers”? I mean, they are on a pension, or the dole, aren’t they? This may be true of some, but how much easier is it to love God but not my neighbour in this situation? How often do I write off aboriginal people for not wanting to assimilate, for expecting all the benefits of Australian society but wanting to be separate from it? And then there are the refugees! Each one is a neighbour!

On a less dramatic level, and perhaps more common in our communities, there are people just like us amongst our neighbours. There are those who are hurt and damaged by present or past circumstances, those suffering through pain and illness, those enduring a downturn in their fortunes, and can’t see God as relevant or helpful. And there are those who are disinterested, cynical, self-made successful people who don’t need God. All are my neighbours, all loved by God, and Jesus tells us to love them, whole-heartedly – and be salt!

So, how can we be salty for them?

- Firstly, your saltiness comes from your own relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Don’t neglect that.
- The closer we are to God, increasingly we will be like that line in a song we sometimes sing – our heart will break for what breaks God’s.
- Don’t overcomplicate things. God uses *our* gifts and skills, not those we see in other people. An inconsequential young lad brought just 5 loaves and 2 fish, and we know what Jesus did with those.
- Go to where your neighbours are. It’s a fact of life that people rarely come to where we are. Think back over the years you have been connected to a church. How many have just walked in to hear the gospel? As Jesus said, “**As the Father has sent me, I am sending you**”. (John 20:21)
- Be yourself. Let what God has done in your life be seen (lights and bushels!). A number of years ago I was Principal of a highly disadvantaged school. Daily we were dealing with kids with behaviour problems stemming from difficult family situations which included abuse, neglect and drugs. One at least of those who spent time in my office is currently in gaol. (Mind you, there were lovely kids there as well!) One parent who came to my office to complain about something was a male witch and really looked the part with long black hair, a long black coat and a pentagram around his neck. One day an SSO on the staff asked if she could see me after school. When she came, she asked me, “I want to know why you are so calm and peaceful?” It surprised me a bit because although I prayed often for God’s presence in my job, I didn’t think it was noticeable. But what an opportunity! I was able to explain that as a Christian, God changes my life with his presence and gifts. I hoped I was being salt for that person – and all the kids!
- Be ready. Be steeped in God’s word and think through what you can say when the opportunity arises.
- Don’t be compromised by the world. Be sharpened by God’s word which is very clear about what God has done through Jesus. The world would love us to water down the gospel, make it inoffensive, make it woke, and thereby make it weak.

Needs Salt

- Be encouraged by some of our Christian heroes.
 - William Wilberforce who spent decades working towards the abolition of slavery.
 - Jackie Pullinger got on a ship with the intention of getting off where God told her. She changed the infamous Walled City in Hong Kong.
 - Billy Graham. A good ol' farm boy.
 - Mother Teresa. Just a nun.
- And remember, it won't always (if ever) be easy. Salt stings! Jesus' teaching is to love God and love our neighbour. We cannot love God and not love our neighbour and still pretend that we are being obedient. It is a hard teaching, and we will spend the rest of our lives getting better at being salt.

Song: *(Attr. St Francis of Assisi)*

1. Make me a channel of your peace, where there is hatred let me bring your love
Where there is injury, your pardon Lord, and where there's doubt true faith in you
*O Master grant that I may never seek, so much to be consoled as to console
To be understood, as to understand, to be loved as to love with all my soul*
2. Make me a channel of your peace, where there's despair in life let me bring hope
Where there is darkness, only light, and where there's sadness only joy
3. Make me a channel of your peace, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned
It's in giving to all men that we receive, and in dying that we are born to eternal life

© public domain

Benediction

Go into the world and be salt. Look to the Father who loves you to show what it means to love others. Look to Jesus who saved you to give you a passion to save others. Look to the Holy Spirit to empower you, to give you words, and to protect you.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA