

Peace in the Community (subtitle: We Are the Peacemakers)

Matthew 5:9 New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995)

“Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:13-15 New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995)

¹³ “**You are the salt of the earth**; but if the salt has become **tasteless**, how can it be made salty again? It is **no longer good for anything**, except to be thrown out and **trampled** under foot by men.

¹⁴ “**You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden**; ¹⁵ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it **gives light to all who are in the house**.

Psalms 34:8 New American Standard Bible (NASB, 1995)

⁸ O **taste** and see that the LORD is good;
How blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!

Introduction

This is the third part of our series on Christ’s Shalom (Colossians 3:15): *Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts,...*”

Two weeks ago, we talked about peace with God. We learned that peace with God is restored through Christ alone. On your behalf, I pray also that God grant His peace in all areas of your lives. But let’s not forget the order here. Peace with God first, then it trickles down to all other areas of our life such as emotional, mental, physical, relational, and even financial. In that order.

Last week, we talked about peace in the family. I urged you to be persistent in praying for the salvation of your family members. Take initiative in peacemaking through repentance and forgiveness. And declare Christ’s peace to dwell in your house all the time.

Now, all of us have achieved peace with God. We also pursue peace at home. But walk outside—what do you see? Conflict, fear, division, decay, and darkness. Our streets need more than just good ideas; they need the **preservative** power of Christ’s people. In other words, God sends us to carry the peace that we found in Him to the world. We are the peacemakers. We are the peace-bringers. To do so, we must remember who we are in Christ. We are the *salt and light* of the world.

Let me rephrase. **Children of God are the Peacemakers (identity) by being Salt and Light (action/method).** We live out our faith as salt and light to the world— shining truth, preserving goodness, and bringing God’s peace wherever we go.

Let’s check it out in today’s texts. First, Matthew 5:13-14.

Content

You are the salt of the earth;... You are the light of the world.

Christ speaks to **you and me**, His disciples, saying: You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Remember: this isn't a future goal—it's a present reality. Christ doesn't say, I will turn you into salt and light after you follow Me for ten years. You don't try hard to be, either. You already are! So, Christ commands us: Live out your true identity. Be the purifying and preserving agents where you are: in Manahawkin, Barnegat, Little Egg Harbor, West Creek, Tuckerton, LBI, Waretown, Whiting, Jackson, and your neighborhood.

As salt is a requirement of life (from which the word ‘salary’ originates), so are we to the world. As no life form can survive without the light, neither can our communities survive without us the light. We are a must in the world. That’s our identity!

Let’s go back to verse 13 where Christ says,

If the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? (v. 13).

Here, Jesus isn't talking about a chemical component; He's warning us against becoming spiritually **corrupt or diluted**.

If we become tasteless, He says, we are good for nothing, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by people. That means, when we fail to demonstrate the cleansing and preserving power of Christ and His gospel in the world, people will shame us and eventually reject Christ. May it never be!

I am going to talk about the state of ‘tasteless’ or ‘tasteful’ for the rest of my sermon.

Tasteless vs. tasteful:

Let me repeat: if the salt is the community of believers, the tasteless salt (or losing saltiness) means believers who fail to reflect the Lord’s character in their words and actions. Here are two possibilities of tasteless Christians. **Either** they have tasted the Lord then have fallen away and lost the touch with God **or** they have never experienced the Lord before. *The diluted and the counterfeit.* Let’s check them out.

A. The Diluted (believers losing fervor/purity)

If we allow ourselves to be repeatedly exposed to the worldly pattern, its principles, and false teaching, we will become a watered-down Christian or a half-hearted believer who has lost Christ's cleansing and purifying power in us. If we are taken over by the worldly desires and lusts, not walking in the Holy Spirit's guidance, we become spiritually corrupt and tasteless. Let me illustrate my point.

A Christian is meant to be an image of Christ. When we first taste the Lord, the image is **vibrant** (that is, sharp contrast between the believer and the world). The Diluted Believer is like a photograph left hanging in the direct sunlight (that is, the secular culture, media, worldly philosophy). They haven't been torn up or destroyed. Over time, though, the colors fade, the contrast softens, and the sharp image of Christ becomes muted. The longer they are exposed to the worldly influences, the more they lose their distinction.

In the same way, the Diluted Believer loses the contrast between their life and the world's life. When people look at them, they can no longer **clearly see Christ's image**—they look just like everyone else. The salt has lost its distinct, preserving flavor. **Romans 12:2 says this (NASB):** “*And do not be **conformed to this age**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*” The Diluted Believer fails to resist conformity to the world (‘this age’), causing the sharp edges of their faith to fade away. They blend in rather than stand out as ‘light.’

B. The Counterfeit (believers in name-only).

Next, there are some believers who have not tasted/experienced the living God in their lives. They are believers in name only. They may keep the outer shell of devotion and worship. Yet, they follow the crowd. They may go to church and give offerings to the Lord, sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, or even serve in church committees for years, yet their lives don't bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit (such as love, joy, peace, kindness, forgiveness, trust and obey). Therefore, people get wrong impressions of Christianity (e.g., being Christian means being a morally good person). Such people are yet to taste the goodness of God and meet the Lord personally. I am going to talk a little more about **tasting** the goodness of God.

It's time to listen to **Psalm 34:8: O taste and see *that the LORD is good*;**

What are the *flavors* of a life that has tasted the Lord?

Derek Prince explains well: “We are endowed with five physical senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste. What is it that’s distinctive about the sense of taste? I’ll tell you one distinctive feature of taste. If we see something, it’s external to us. If we hear something, it’s external. If we touch something, it’s still outside us. If we smell something, it may be still far from us. But there’s one thing about taste: **when we taste something, we take it right into us and it becomes part of us.** And I believe that’s why the Lord challenges us to “Taste and see.” **Don’t let the Lord remain external, don’t let Him remain something outside of you.** Paul says in the New Testament, “Christ in you, the hope of glory.” You’ll never really have that hope of glory until you’ve actually tasted of the Lord, till you’ve taken Him within you, and then you’ll know for sure He is good. Not because the preacher says it,..., but because **you’ve proved it in your experience, you’ve tasted, you’ve invited the Lord to come in and be an integral part of your life. And when you do that, you’ll know He’s good**” (Derek Prince Devotion).

When we taste and see that the Lord is good, we aren’t just learning about Him—we’re experiencing Him within us. His goodness becomes part of who we are. And when Christ’s goodness fills us, His peace and His character naturally flow out of us to others.

Be Tasteful Believers

Let’s consider the tasteful believers this time who tasted the goodness of the Lord. They are the ones who invited Christ into their heart to be their Savior and Lord. They have experienced the living God in their lives. They have met Christ personally. The Lord knows them, and they know Him too. They follow Christ and obey His commands. They walk in the Holy Spirit’s guidance.

Here are some examples of concrete "tastes": **First**, the taste of **forgiveness and love**. Remember the Amish school shooting (Nickel Mines, PA, 2006)? The Amish Christians forgave the murderer of their children in the name of the Lord on the same day of shooting. The world was shocked and soon forgot what the Amish believers had done to the perpetrator and his family: true forgiveness and unconditional love. In my opinion, those Amish believers are the true followers of Christ. They indeed have tasted the mercy and forgiveness of the Lord and passed it on. **Next**, the taste of **humility**. A pastor got a highest compliment from one of his members saying, “You’re the most Christlike person that I know.” Oh, how we all want to be like those tasteful believers! The taste of **self-control**. The taste of **hope**. The taste of **mercy**. The taste of **patience**. The list goes on.

Action points:

1. **Keep Your ‘Saltiness.’** Protect your purity. Be vigilant, and renew your mind. This is the internal work that keeps you ‘tasteful.’ **Beware** of the worldly influences and principles that march into your hearts through media (TV, internet, movies). Unless we diligently screen them out, they enter our hearts, stay there, and begin to corrupt our spirit and soul with a mighty force. Left nothing done, you become like the tasteless salt over time. What can you do about it? Be vigilant, train yourself to screen out, and take every incoming thought captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Renew everyday your mind and heart with God’s Word (Romans 12:1-2) and prayers.

2. **Apply Your Flavor and Shine Your Light.** Live out your true identity. Fulfill your purpose and what you are created for through your words and actions. God has called you to preserve the world from going decay. Preserve your place holy and acceptable to God wherever you go. Keep your home, workplace, and community from going dark. Brighten the corner wherever you are. Begin with small things such as the words you speak. Say ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ more often. Don’t gossip. Be kind to each other. E.g., *Let your speech always be with grace, as though seasoned with salt, so that you will know how you should respond to each person* (Colossians 4:6).

Conclusion

God sends you out into every corner of your community with Christ’s peace. Be the salt that preserves hope. Be the light that reveals God’s love. Be the peacemaker who turns hearts toward Jesus.

(Ask the congregation to stand, or bow their heads, and lead them through the declaration).

Let’s affirm together (say after me):

“I am the salt of the world. I am the light of the world. I am a peacemaker.”

Now, put your hometown in the following sentence:

“I am the salt of (Manahawkin).” “I am the light of (Manahawkin).”

“I will preserve wherever I belong. I will shine my light wherever I go.”

Amen.