

*Sunday 07 March 2010. 6.30pm Communion.*

*Building Outreach Belonging. X10.*

**Luke 14: 25 – 33 but this evening add vv34 & 35.**

***Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again.***

***It is no good for the soil or for the manure heap; it is thrown away.***

***Listen then if you have ears.***

**Jesus is always looking for Disciples who have ears!** Deaf disciples are unable to listen, learn and change their ways. *V35 Listen, then, if you have ears! ( Same statement as end of Parable Sower 8:8)* So friends – *lend me your ears!*

Jesus was on his way up to Jerusalem and the crowds of Galilee were following their popular Messiah Jesus of Nazareth.

He is speaking to these crowds and making them think about and estimate the cost of following him – being his Disciples.

This morning we were looking at measuring the cost of following Jesus not initially in terms of pounds and pence but in terms of our precious and valued relationships - particularly with our friends & family.

New family of those who obeyed our Father God:

*V27 Daily take up your cross* – be prepared to die – to let our own preferences/wants go in favour of loving and therefore obeying Jesus. **The one relationship that must come before any other is the one with Jesus.** That's what following Jesus means: he alone is to be valued and trusted even before intimate family and friends. (His new family and therefore ours – those we are closest to are those who obey our Father God. *Matthew 12: 46 – 50*). God will call upon us to sacrifice the dearest things. We do not literally hate (hyperbole) our biological families – we just seek to love Jesus more. ....

**Who do we take our lead from?**

**Jesus used 3 small parables to make the would-be followers of Jesus think about this: the parable we thought about this morning was:**

The parable of estimating the cost of building the tower from foundations to finish.

The parable about one king going out to meet another king and estimating to see if he can defeat the other king before engaging. (As yet not thought about)

This evening there is this short statement or parable about discipleship and salt's purpose and usefulness.

*Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, there is no way to make it salty again. It is no good for the soil or the manure heap; it is thrown away.*

Here in the context I think Jesus is particularly challenging those who may want to be his Disciples to know who they are & must be if they are true Disciples. They must know– what their distinctive is and what their purpose is.

It's this that Jesus wants them to listen too and think about.

SALT (halas) is a valuable substance in all cultures. It's main purposes are known as both giving flavour and also purifying food, as well as the purposes stated here – to act as an anti septic (on dung heap) and in moderation only to be used as a fertiliser on the soil.

The people of Palestine had a valuable and unlimited source of salt in the Dead Sea but also SW of the Dead Sea in the so called hill of salt.

There were cases particularly around the hill of salt where impurities meant that what was served up as salt was not tasty and had to be thrown away, also at the Dead Sea sometimes salt leached out and tasteless crystals or carnallite remained. Real salt will not lose its taste.

So salt was useful, something that was traded and able to bring about good things in the right quantity. (If it was tasteless and not real salt – it was described as useless/ foolish)

Jesus uses the description of salt on a few occasions metaphorically to talk about Christian character and behaviour which has purpose.

In *Matthew 5: 13* in the *Sermon on the Mount* Jesus says to again a group of Disciples: *You are salt for the whole human race!* This is an amazing statement indicating that his disciples have purpose for and throughout the world. He is here referring to being distinctive – adding something of value to humanity. He is perhaps referring to the call on his Disciples to stop decay and therefore to be of real use?

Too much salt in one go of course according to various OT passages e.g. Deuteronomy and Judges can bring sterility rather than increased growth.

In *Mark 9: 50* Jesus uses salt as conveying **friendship**. It's a rather lovely symbol of faithfulness in friendship. Salt is therefore an emblem of friendship. It was used and still is in the Arab world to ratify deals and to seal Covenants. It is of course expressly used during the sealing God's Covenant with his people (*Numbers 18: 19 and 2 Chronicles 13: 5*)

“Salt in speech” to convey the idea of adding wisdom. *Colossians 4: 5, 6 READ.*  
Our conversations can be seasoned with salt.

Although these are not easy verses their context in Luke's Gospel gives us the idea of Jesus challenging a large crowd of would be followers to be distinctively salty and not to give up being salty. (As in the need to complete building the tower and also win the battle he is saying – continue to be salty – bring a distinctive contribution into the world.)

We as Disciples are here to add something to the world, to the human race in all our interactions. We need as I often say in the words of Becca Manley-Pippert to get out of the salt shaker and into the world.

Mix but beware just trying to blend in! Jesus seems to be saying that the Disciple who cannot stay distinctive is useless and will come under judgement.

Am I still salty – are you still salty?

Well the test comes really if we ask the question: would our removal from a situation make any difference?
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Would our distinctive questions and conversation be missed? When I am present in the public meeting, or staff training, or residents association, or interview,....is there a difference? Are things of beauty and goodness and even justice highlighted by my conversation? Do I add friendship and particularly faithfulness in relationships at work and in community?

True salt, true Disciples add value – they season, they stop decay, they produce growth and positive ideas and so on.

We are to have a distinctive identity and use because we are Disciples of Jesus – don't let the saltiness be leached out!

*You are salt for the whole human race. ....Be scattered and distinctive!*