

Taste Test

- *Kids talk*
- Imagine I'm a TV chef - just produced a new book - "The Season of Salt!"
 - obviously, as a chef, I'm passionate about food - especially salt!
 - I've got some food here I'd like a couple of volunteers to come and taste...
 - these will be really nice foods - I just want you to choose your favourite!
- Blindfold the two volunteers
 - cheese and chocolate in the first round
 - sugar and salt, on spoons, in the second round
 - (water on hand to wash away taste...)
- What were their favourites?
- "I can't understand why they didn't choose salt - can you?"
 - get to point of salt on its own doesn't taste nice, only in other things...
- Jesus says we should be like salt, salt on its own is useless:
 - it needs to be in food to be worth anything
 - similarly, its only as we interact with other people that we can be salty!
 - God calls us to be his flavour in the world
 - so, as we go about our lives, we will be helping people taste something of God - by being like him - eg kind, friendly, honest...

Introduction

- In context of Beatitudes, Jesus has just been talking to his disciples about their special position before God:
 - **blessed are those...**
 - and those areas of blessed-ness - poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, mercifulness, etc, are all things they are either already learning or will one day experience
 - see especially **v.11** - this is directed to the disciples, and it is about them - **those who love and follow the Lord**
- In verses 13-16, however, Jesus moves the discussion along:
 - having received, the disciples are to give
 - having been blessed, the disciples are to bless others
 - the challenge that Jesus brings here is whether we are willing to be salt and light to the world, for we have received from him blessing upon blessing
- Or put it another way:
 - in the John 9 passage, Jesus describes himself as the light of the world - "**While I am in the world, I am the light of the world**" (John 9:5)
 - but when he is gone that responsibility comes to those who have received from him that light
 - **us!**

Salt and Light

- We think of salt as seasoning
 - in Jesus' day preservative...
 - and **therefore essential!**
- What is it like when your fridge breaks down?
 - in so many ways we have come to rely fully on having a working fridge
 - our whole food supply infrastructure, from farm to plate
 - what we eat
 - **eg no milk, no cup of tea, John and I very unhappy!!**
- I can do without salt on my chips - I can probably do without the chips! - but I can't eat rotten meat!
 - salt, for Jesus and his listeners, was an essential preservative
- **Similarly for light - in a world without street lights!**
- Therefore the role of Christians in preserving and illuminating society is **vital** one, not an **optional** one

How?

- Our lives are taken up with the mundane
 - shopping, washing, working, cleaning, relaxing...
 - **nothing that smells of preserving society!**
 - how are we to act as light and preservative with our colleagues, with our neighbours, with our family and friends, within our world?

First

- Discern and identify what is good and essential to God's abundant life
 - what is good in the way God made the world?
 - live that way...
 - see the significance in living well - caring for the uncared for, living with integrity, caring about justice, showing compassion and mercy, caring for the environment, living and speaking the gospel into people's broken lives....
 - huge significance in being salt and light - rubbed into the life of our world, shining

in the midst of the daily grind and darkness

Second

- Having identified all of that as **significant**, what then in particular are you, am I, called to live out?
 - what part can I play in being salt or light?
 - what small step can I take this week to be a part of this process?
 - can I talk to my neighbours, and value them as people who are worth listening to?
 - can I listen to my colleagues at work, not merely as functions who help (or hinder) me in getting my work done, but as those who God has made?
 - can I work a bit harder at sorting the rubbish into the right recycling piles?
 - can I write a letter to my Councillor or MP, supporting them in their work or calling their attention to a particular issue of importance?
 - can I join a campaign on a particular issue?
 - can I pray, for someone, with others?
 - can I bake someone a cake?

Conclusion

- Salt and light are pointers to the character of what we are to be doing:
 - but it has to be translated into the mundane realities of our daily life
 - salt has to be rubbed into the meat to preserve it
 - light has to have the cover taken off to shine into the darkest corners
 - how will you be salt and light today, this week?
 - how has God's goodness ministered to us over the years? How has he preserved us? In what ways has God been a life-giving light to us?
 - **drawing then on our own experience of God's workings, how will we pass on God's essential goodness in a rotting world?**
- *End with reflection on PowerPoint, me do all 4 readers*