

Salt and Light.

You... are the Salt of the Earth

You... are the Light of the world

It's the YOU that makes them interesting
especially the second one since another gospel Jesus says...

I... am the light of the world... but not here.

Here he says ***you are***.

To whom is he speaking? To you.

Whoever you are... and whatever you're doing here...
that part hasn't changed.

He's speaking to ***you who identify as followers***

those of you who are committed...

and those who are just curious...

You who live big lives...

and you who live small ones... on purpose or by circumstance...

You because you're the one listening

and that's a perfect match

for those who were there on the day he went up on the mountain
sat down and began to teach.

He never said that teaching was only for those in the front row

Or those that had signed up for the duration

Seekers were fine with him

After all... they who would decide whether his teaching had legs

If it didn't... they were free to go.

Jesus wasn't trying to build his platform.

Jesus was trying to change the world!

Salt and light meant different things to his listeners than they do to us.
They were harder to come by...

For one thing surface salt was rare and fire-light required fire.

One was expensive and the other was volatile
the human body couldn't produce either of them
though both were necessary for life.

Both were used for more than one purpose, though the way Jesus
talked about them made his meaning clear...

Salt... was for flavoring. And light... was shining.

Whoever his listeners were... and why-ever they were there...

And whoever they were

He was giving them purpose

And since Jesus was specific about his listeners
being the salt of the... *Earth*.

and the light of the... *World*.

It's worth asking... what kind of earth they were living on?
and what kind of world?

If anyone in the crowd that day was over 100

they might've remembered a free Judea...

But anyone younger than that

lived their whole lives under Roman occupation

Their earth has soldiers on it who managed tax revolts
and power grabs during regime changes.

When Jesus was still in diapers...

The tumult following King Harrods death...

Pitted Jews against Jews... as well as Jews against Romans...

If he had a big audience for the sermon on the mount...
it was built on real hope...
that someone...
was it him?
Might turn that tide

By the time Matthew wrote this version of the sermon
Things hadn't gotten better... actually... they were worse.
The apostles and Peter and Paul had both been killed.
So had Jesus' brother James... head of the church in Jerusalem.

Emperor Nero...
had taken a perverse interest in the early Christian movement.
The first Jewish war against Rome
had failed after years and years of fighting.
The city of Jerusalem was in ruins... its people scattered...
The temple... gone for good... along with the priesthood.

Since we don't know for sure when Matthew finished his gospel
There's no telling if he lived through the volcanic eruption...
of Mount Vesuvius in 79.

But if he did... then that may have fueled his vision of the end times...
The sun will be darkened... he wrote...
The moon will not give its light.
The stars will fall from heaven...
and the powers of the heaven will be shaken.
all creation was hanging in the balance...

What was God up to?

Being salt and light must've sounded
like too small a job in the face of all that... too benign...

If Jesus had said...

You are the rare metals of the Earth... that would have been better

Or if he'd said... *you are the lightning of the storm!*

but that's not what he said.

He told his listeners *they were salt and light...*

so that's what Matthew wrote down.

And just like that.... *What is God up to?*

Wasn't the only question anymore...

There was another one

which may have made some people way back in the crowd
glad they were not on the front row...

It was implied not spoken, but it went something like this.

What are you up to?

You seasoners of the earth

You shining lamps of the world?

Never mind who I am for a minute... *Who you are...*

And how's it going on your end of things?

Your perfectly free to believe

Jesus was only addressing the Christians in the crowd
even if they weren't called that yet.

He was counting on them... to step up the salt and light production

People have been reading the sermon on the mount that way for years
so if you hear it as a sermon for Christians,
you will be well within the majority.

Just hold open the possibility... that Jesus wasn't seeing it that way.
He was seeing the whole earth spread out before him
Doing his best to describe an improbable way of life
That could turn things around if people... if ***any*** people
would just give it a chance...

The Greek here... is *not* singular... as in *you* and *you* and *you*...
Are the salt of the earth...
It's plural as in *y'all*
Ya'll are the salt of the earth... ***all*** Y'all

Same with the light... ***all*** Y'all

It was a big vision... with small parts
And that's why I worry about it...
Because who wants to be salt and light
in a world sold on hot sauce and neon

Even salt has become such big business...
With just a few keystrokes you can order
jalapeño salt... chipotle salt... or habanero salt... vanilla salt...
soothing eucalyptus salt...
and salted caramel chocolate salt... for balance...

A friend recently received sweet smoky maple salt to use on salmon...
along with rosemary sage infused salt for roasted potatoes.
She says they're good when she remembers to use them
But she keeps saving them for... ***Who knows what!***

Same thing for light
Have you shopped for bulbs lately?
the lights above my bathroom mirror
made half my face look like I was at the dentist office
and the other half look like I was on the porch at sunset.

LEDs come in three different kinds
Refresh... with a cool and energizing tone you need to be more active.
Reveal... provides whiter whites in rooms where clarity matters most.
Relax its warm to perfectly creates the cozy atmosphere you need.

Now all you need to do... is decide...
whether you want to be revealed... or relaxed at the bathroom sink.

Salt and Light are really good metaphors.
Otherwise... Jesus wouldn't have picked them.

Plus... they raise important questions for us...
with more choices than his first listeners ever dreamed of

Does salt have less flavor... if the only ingredient in it... is salt?
When someone's calling for your help in the dark
does it matter whether your light is cozy or refreshing?
To believe that fancy is better than plain
is to cut down on how many of you... have salt and light to share

but believing that more is always better
is another thing to watch out for... even when well intentioned

If Jesus wants salt... He will produce a mountain of it.
Does he want Light? More than 10,000 lumens coming right up.

a youth group discovered that their salt and light squad
wore out their welcome on a mission trip.

with blinding white rescue lamps
and our embarrassingly expensive supplies
they meant well... but a lot of the time...
They ended up making people they came to help...
Feeling poor and patronized.

The thing about salt is...
A little makes all the difference!
Too much ruins the whole thing.
If you're a cook, you know how much salt and sugar look alike
get them confused one time...
and the whole bread pudding goes into the trash

You'll never use either one again... Without tasting it first!

Light's such a popular metaphor... especially among Christians
But remember... *light can burn and light can blind.*

A table lamp gives enough to read by
but if you look straight at that bulb
your reading is over for a while.

Did you spend too much time in the sun when you were young...
I did... just this week my dermatologist took nine biopsies.
Thanks to all that sailing and surfing and swimming

What are... just the right amounts... of salt and light...

Another thing about being salt and light...

There's no talking.

Salt doesn't explain... it flavors.

Light doesn't preach... it shines.

Both keep quiet... in a Very. Loud. World.

Did you know...

there are presently more than 2 million podcasts available online?
with 48 million episodes...

700 hours of video are posted on YouTube every day

The number of self-published books increased 264% in five years

A whole lot of people... have a whole lot to say...

There was an article in Time Magazine about over-talkers.

Maybe you know one or two.

The author said he **was** one... but it wasn't **all** his fault...

We live in a world that doesn't just **encourage** over talking
but **demand**s it.

Success is measured by how much attention we can attract.

The power of keeping your mouth shut in endlessly noisy world.

Learn to embrace... **Quiet. Listen. Short Answers. Wrap it up.**

Instead of having a talk with you family, Have a listen...

Don't give answers to questions no one has asked.

Learned how to **season** a conversation

instead of dumping the whole salt shaker in.

We are how God shows up in the world,
not the only way... and not only for the benefit of our kind...
but as species go... we are the ones with God like power on this earth.
We may not be as smart as dolphins...
Or as sacrificial as ants...
But there's a lot riding on what we do with our salt and light
And that's not an instruction. That's a fact.

Don't turn your salt and light into huge burdens
flavoring is a subtle thing... so is shining...
a little goes a long way.

Jesus said a lot more about mustard seeds...
than he did about the cedars of Lebanon.

So take care... You followers of Jesus...
and you curious looking... just for answers
whoever you are... you're here.

There is light just flying out of you... all over the place.

Amen.