

Prayer

Dear Father, who has cared for me and all those whom you love, I come now to bring my sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to you. May this time of worship be a time of encouragement and blessing in your presence.

I come aware of my failings that have disappointed you and grieved the Holy Spirit. Dear Father, forgive me I pray, and restore me to yourself, thankful that you will and indeed have.

I love you and am so thankful for your abiding presence, your guidance through life, the hope that you have given me, and the joy of knowing and serving you.

I pray these things in my Saviour's name,

Amen.

Song: (MHB 970, T: Peel Castle) *by W.H. Gill*

1. Hear us, O Lord, from heaven Thy dwelling-place:
Like them of old, in vain we toil all night,
Unless with us Thou go, who art the Light;
Come then, O Lord, that we may see Thy face.
2. O Bread of Life, Thou in Thy Word hast said,
Who feeds in faith on Me shall never die!
In mercy hear Thy hungry children's cry,
Father, give us this day our daily bread!
3. Sow in our hearts the seeds of Thy dear love,
That we may reap contentment, joy, and peace;
And when at last our earthly labours cease,
Grant us to join Thy harvest home above.

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Scripture

- Matthew 5:13-20

Message Salt of the earth, Light of the world

Salt. There are various types of salts, most of them chlorides (remember your chemistry?) Magnesium chloride (MgCl). Potassium chloride (KCl). Sodium Chloride (NaCl). Jesus would have been talking about the last one, NaCl, common salt. How useful is salt? Less than ten percent of all salt production is used for food, as an additive or preservative. Some may remember a wooden box with hinged lid, a salt cellar, hanging on the wall in the kitchen, with a small half spherical cupped spoon inside. How often was that lid raised and a sprinkle of salt added to various pots on the stove? The other 90% of salt production is

used for some 14,000 different uses, with world consumption about 200M tons per year: agriculture, manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, textiles, cleaning, road de-icing and more¹. The tomato growing company Sundrop, near Pt Augusta, uses Concentrated Solar Power (CSP) to heat salt to beyond its melting point (just over 800°C) to store heat for the generation of steam and electricity, using sea water from the gulf. It is essential that the salt used for CSP is free of impurities because contaminated salt will cause a higher rate of corrosion in the equipment.

How like Jesus to use our worldly experiences to make a point. Of course Jesus wasn't thinking of today's industrial uses of salt, but rather its use in food preparation. "You are the salt of the earth" he said. "But if the salt becomes contaminated, it's only good for the bin." That's still true.

And how do you be the "salt of the earth"? Salt enhances what is good about food. It preserves and limits decay. So you promote what is good in God's sight. You encourage others. You commend them for doing well. In so doing you discourage what is wrong and destructive.

Some years ago a Christian I know was working with about 20 others on a \$20M IT project for the SA Government. He had a reputation for integrity, occasionally addressing blasphemy, and one day a fellow worker commented "You keep the moral standard for this project team". This is what being the salt of the earth means.

All around the world, and to different extents, Christians are declaring what, according to God's standard (also called the plumbline of righteousness, Amos 7:7-8), what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. It might be being part of yesterday's Walk For Life around North Terrace. Or a letter to the editor or to politicians about some matter, or preaching God's word, or supporting what is good and opposing that which is not. This is what being the salt of the earth means.

Or it could be providing an example of goodness by words and actions to grand children, or helping your neighbour, or speaking with kindness to the shop worker, encouraging others in their work, financially supporting mission work, and a myriad other ways, small and large, all demonstrating God's proactive love and care. This is what being the salt of the earth means.

But whether for food or for industry, contaminated salt is no good. How do Christians ensure that their "salt" does not become contaminated and therefore ineffective, potentially "thrown out and trampled on"? By keeping in fellowship with God's people. By reading the Scriptures regularly, sometimes with others. By asking the Lord to help you keep your part of the covenant. By prioritising the things of God, that is to seek first the Kingdom of God. By loving God and neighbour. This is what being the salt of the earth means.

Jesus also said "you are the light of the world". It is extraordinary that some of the attributes of God Almighty are also applied to the Christian. Isn't Christ seated at the right

¹ SA Government Energy and mining website, 'Salt'.

hand of the Majesty in heaven (Hebrews 1:3)? And yet the Christian is also seated there (Eph 2:6). Isn't Christ head over all things (Hebrews 1:4)? And yet the Christian will rule as kings with Christ (Rev 20:4). And here it is again. Jesus said "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12) but he also says "You are the light of the world". In these three instances, for both aspects to be true, the Christian must be "in Christ", which is exactly what the Scriptures say. Over and over again. Amazing! Christ is the light of the world. The Christian is in Christ. Therefore the Christian is the light of the world.

What an extraordinary phenomenon light is! It sometimes behaves like a stream of particles, a characteristic essential in the generation of electricity by solar cells. But it also behaves like waves (If interested, look up Young's Double Slit Experiment.) And it's fast! And it's necessary. Obviously it enables creatures to see objects. Light also exposes things. Sin loves to operate in darkness. It takes very little light to penetrate that darkness. And light gets reflected. The Christian's light source is God Himself. When Jesus says you are the light of the world, it's his light that is being reflected by you. Or you could say that Christ's light shines through you, like a prism, breaking up into a beautiful array of colour. Jesus goes on to explain both the cause and effect of that light – "when they see your good works (*the cause*), they will praise your Father in heaven (*the effect*)".

Does it work? Undoubtedly yes. The historic impact of the witness and testimony of the church in general and the Christian in particular is manifold and conspicuous. Just to quote one example, Greg Sheridan writing in *The Australian*²: "Millions of east Europeans rallied around their national churches during the communist period because the church was often the only institution communists couldn't quite crush." The salt was having its designated impact. The light could not be stopped by the darkness.

Always has. Always will.

Prayer for suffering Christians, North Korea *from Barnabas Prayer for 8/1/25*

In North Korea Christians are ranked in the lowest "hostile" class, according to the *songbun* system of identifying citizens' loyalty to the state. They are considered worthy of punishment and execution if their faith is discovered, or even just owning a Bible.

Dear Father,

We pray that the light of the knowledge of God's glory will shine in the darkness of North Korea (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Oh God, for whom nothing is impossible, send revival to this beleaguered nation and communicate Your Word powerfully to its people.

We pray in Jesus' Name,

Amen.

² The Weekend Australian, 21-22 December 2024

Song: by Tim Hughes

1. Light of the world you stepped down into darkness
Opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore You, hope of a life spent with You

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down

Here I am to say that You're my God

You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy

Altogether wonderful to me

2. King of all days oh, so highly exalted
Glorious in Heaven above
Humbly You came to the earth You created, all for love's sake became poor
Chorus

I'll never know how much it cost to see my sin upon that cross

Chorus

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Benediction:

Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

This service was prepared by Warren Mack for HopeNet SA