

*Text of a message delivered by Caleb Finlayson at Windsor Park Baptist Church on Sunday 3rd of May 2026.
The written text may vary from the spoken/video version due to time and flexibility.*



Salt

Luke 14:25-35

What are you made of and what are you made for?

A few years ago Rachel and I watched a show called “Salt Fat Acid Heat.” It is a mini-series all about the four basic keys to cooking. I like to pretend in my head that I can one day be this amazing cook and watching TV shows and series like this make me think is possible.

In this series, Chef Samin, travels the world discovering the key components of what brings flavour. And it continuously shows up in these four elements: Salt, Fat, Acid and Heat. The same can be said as we journey through scripture and in particular the Gospel of Luke. We hear the same themes again and again. Repetition in scripture is key, God uses it intentionally. Over the past few weeks we have heard Grant speak of the “narrow door” and Aidan spoke about “Decisions and Divisions” and then this week just gone, Mikayla spoke on the parable Jesus uses to illustrate these concepts with the idea of the banquet and in particular stepping into the practical aspect of who will you invite to sit around your table?

Much like the mini-series that I watched, where Chef Samin goes around the world and finds the same things to be consistently true about cooking, today our passage reinforces the same key themes and we are reminded of the polarizing path of following Jesus and faced with the choice of how we will live our lives.

Now disclaimer, as you look at the title in your bible some of you may notice it is listed “The Cost of Discipleship” and since I’ve preached on that exact subject a couple of times

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recently, today I am wanting to specifically hone in on a couple of key aspects of our passage. Having said that, let's read together Luke 14:25-35

Large crowds were traveling with Jesus, and turning to them He said: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.

"Suppose one of you wants to build a tower. Won't you first sit down and estimate the cost to see if you have enough money to complete it? For if you lay the foundation and are not able to finish it, everyone who sees it will ridicule you, saying, 'This person began to build and wasn't able to finish.' "Or suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace.

In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has ears to hear, let them hear." (Luke 14:25-35)

Start the End

Just like the rest of the gospel of Luke, we are again confronted by a particularly challenging passage of scripture. When we start at the beginning and read this passage it is confronting.

"If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." (14:26) How do we understand that? Seems like a wild statement, yet again from Jesus, how do we make sense of that?

If we are to start at the end, I believe it helps us contextualize the picture. The passage concludes by saying "***whoever has ears to hear, let them hear.***" (14:35) Don't we all have ears, so isn't this for all people? Well technically yes, scripture and the words of Jesus are

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for all. However, some scholars would argue that Jesus is specific with his audience here. In verse 25, we read **“Large crowds were travelling with Jesus.”** Jesus is addressing those who were traveling with Him and He is intentionally creating decisions and divisions, He is reminding them there is a narrow door to the kingdom. Those same scholars would argue there is a difference between having ‘ears’ and having ‘ears to hear’

Jesus’s challenge may fall on deaf ears, may seem to be too extreme for some within the large crowd, or maybe Jesus is actually reinforcing the cost of following Him. The questions that this story begins and ends with is: ***are we really listening? Do we have ears to hear?***

Salt – Abundant and Precious

Prior to his concluding statement, Jesus uses this salt analogy. It is a powerful metaphor that all would understand at the time. And I think a deeper understanding of this aspect of today’s passage will help us to understand the fullness of what Jesus is saying and inviting us into for the future.

In the cooking show, I learnt that salt, is fundamental to cooking. It is not simply an occasional addition. It enhances, it brings food to life and when you properly used it can change food from the inside out. The ancient world would have understood this. But this was not the end of their understanding. Salt was abundant but precious. Salt symbolized permanence, what would not decay. It would be used to preserve food. It was so interwoven into the fabric of the ancient world that soldiers would be paid in salt, hence we get our term “salary” from it today.

Salt was a key figure in daily life, right down to the point where in the Old Testament, in Exodus and Leviticus as they describe how to do the daily sacrifices, among others, salt was a key element to be used. Therefore, when Jesus says, **“salt that has lost it saltiness... is not fit for soil, nor the manure pile, but to be thrown out”** – the people would understand exactly what is being said.

When we read in Matthew’s account of the Sermon of the Mount Jesus says you **are** the salt of the earth. Not you must be, or you have, but you *are*. The way that God made you, in his

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image, we *are* salt. Reading and understanding the significance of salt in an ancient context, it brings a greater depth to what Jesus is saying.

One of these is not like the other: Influence and Foolishness

In my research about salt I learnt there is a difference between pure salt (NaCl) and refined salt. Refined salt is 99% the same, but it is not exactly the same. It has been bleached, it has additives that stop it from caking, and things like aluminium in it. They are very close to being the same, but they are not. In context of Jesus addressing the large crowd and addressing us today, there is a difference between a good person and a follower of Jesus. From the outside they may seem the same, but in reality, they are not the same.

I also learnt that pure Salt (NaCl), cannot lose its saltiness. If this is the case what does Jesus mean here? How can something lose what it can't lose?

Jesus reference to salt losing its saltiness in the original Greek word is actually a reference to becoming foolish, to become dull, insipid, and to lose its flavour or influence on its surrounding. Even to lose a God given quality one commentator writes. Salt is made to influence its surrounding, not to be influenced by its surroundings. Salt influences the food it touches, salt in a burnt offering changes the colour of the flame, when used in incense it stabilises and preserves the contents purifying the scent reducing the harsh burnt smell. In our very bodies, salt influences things like fluid balance, nerve impulses and muscle function.

If salt loses its 'saltiness' in any of these situations things become a very different. Salt is an ancient symbol of permanence, therefore salt that perishes is seen as useless, why because it loses its very reason for existence. Salt that is not salty is foolish.

Jesus is intentionally being provocative again. "Are you foolish?" He says. "Have you lost your very reason for existing on this earth?" He was discipling His followers to influence their surroundings. Not to be changed by them.

Science Time

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This salt, as I pour it into the water. And mix it around, you know what is happening. The flavour of this water is becoming very, very salty. The salt is influencing its surroundings. If I am to take a sip, the flavour is strong and hard to handle on its own.

What is happening here? The water and the salt are reacting, the water is in fact, ripping the salt apart. The salt dissolves and the salt has influenced its surroundings.

Now if the water evaporates, the salts connection to itself is so strong it will return to its original form and remain just as salty. If for some foolish reason, the salt lost its saltiness, when the water evaporates, there would be nothing left. One author writes:

The only way for salt to lose its saltiness, from a chemical perspective, is for a chemical reaction to occur. NaCl is a very stable substance. The chemical bond is very tight. You see, sodium and chlorine are happy to become one and share their one electron. Things work out really well for them...they are like the happily married couple that just loves to be married, not matter what hits the fan.

I believe this is the key to what Jesus is trying to get us to understand. We are called to influence our surroundings by the good news of Jesus. We are not called to *be influenced* by our surroundings.

Like Mikayla shared last week, let us invite all to our table, not so that we will get anything in return. Let us serve in the lowly places, let us be humble taking the lesser walked path. Let us not be like the one who is focused with their, new land or donkey. Let us not be influenced by that of the world.

Paul writes, ***“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (1 Cor 1:18).”***

Those following Jesus and hearing these words may think it to be foolish for salt to lose its salty nature. But yet gospel is good news. It brings power.

The choice

When we return to the start of today’s passage, an extreme statement begins to make more sense. Jesus says: ***If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife***

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and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple. And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple. (14:26-27)

Jesus is not calling us to genuinely hate our closest loved ones or even ourselves. But in fact, He is calling us to have a love that is so great for Him, that it outshines even the love and loyalty we show to our closest loved ones.

In our calling to have a great love for God, we are not to make poor choices. Like somebody building a tower or King going to war, they must make a wise choice. They must count the cost. And answer, are they willing to pay to the price?

In particular, the king facing a war. This is not necessarily the king's choice, or desire to face a war. The way in which the king responds is everything. It may be the difference between life and death, freedom or slavery for an entire kingdom. Just as the king counts the cost, we too need to count the cost of following Jesus.

We are salt, we are called to live a life of salt. Enhancing the world around us. Bringing life wherever we go. We are to influence not be influenced. Who comes to mind when you think of this concept?

Mother Teresa is one, or one of the very first Baptist missionaries, Hopestill Pillow. These women lived lives of reckless abandonment. They were salt, influencing their surroundings and living out their faith. It is easy to point out people like this, but what about those that we see in our world around us here and now?

As I was thinking about this, one of my very first youth boys came to mind. He hasn't had a simple journey in faith. But I met up with him and had dinner a couple of months ago. And as he talked about how God has shown up and story after story came out as he talked about how God is calling him to influence his surroundings. A young ambitious guy, who wanted to be in the NBA, who wanted to become a successful businessman by the world's standard. But while traveling the world, encountered Jesus to the point where life has shifted from,

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“how successful can I be,” to, “how can I be Jesus to others – anybody can have a seat at the table and nobody is to go hungry at this table.” And not a day goes by where doesn’t seek the Spirit of God, to put people in his path who he can simply share a meal with and love of Jesus.

That is being salt. That is influencing your surroundings by the power of the Spirit.

As we conclude today, at the door on your way out, you can pick up a packet of salt if you wish. Please take this and let it be a physical reminder to you, where can I be the salt in my world? Who can I be salt to?

Maybe this sits on your desk at work to remind you. Maybe there is a place that you want to pour this salt out, a physical response to seek breakthrough by the Spirit of God. Maybe you simply want to put it in a meal and eat it as a symbol of God changing you from the inside out.

However you feel like the Holy Spirit is leading you, take one and allow him to speak to you. Let us pray.

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Reflecting on Sunday 26th April 2026:

Did you practically invite somebody to sit around your table this last week? If so, what did it look like and what happened? If not, how could you remove the barriers this week to do so?

These questions help you think more about this message. We hope they might be a conduit for conversation and reflection, encouraging us to wrestle with how this message might practically work itself out in our lives.

- Jesus says salt that loses its saltiness becomes useless—what are the subtle ways a follower of Jesus today can begin to “lose their saltiness” without even realising it?

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- Where are the spaces in your life where you bring influence? Where are the spaces that you are being influenced? What are the catalyst for these?
- What are the rhythms you can place in your life to prevent yourself losing your salty flavour?
- What is one way this week you can practically respond to Jesus call in today's passage?

If you'd like to chat with someone about your spiritual journey or anything else going on in your life, please contact us at care@windsorpark.org.nz; **we're better together and no perfect people are allowed.**



Below are some further resources that may take the message further and deeper and enable you to explore other viewpoints on the same theme. We also encourage you to engage with the preacher if there are further questions you have or if you'd like clarification on anything. Email info@windsorpark.org.nz and we'll direct your query to the appropriate person.

- 1. Inward:** If you're looking for something deeper and practically geared to work through that sits alongside this, we recommend ***Practicing the Way – by John Mark Comer***. There is both a book and series find out more at:
<https://www.practicingtheway.org/>
- 2. Outward:** If you are wanting to discover ways that you can shape the world around you, ***Culture Making – by Andy Crouch***, explores concepts of how we can influence the culture around us.
<https://www.thenile.co.nz/books/andy-crouch/culture-making/9781514005767>
- 3. The Bible Project** have a great range of the general concept of Salt and its importance in scripture and ancient meanings.
<https://bibleproject.com/playlists/the-salt-of-the-land/>