

It is interesting the discussion one can encounter on Facebook! A few months ago a friend posted a simple remark about salt. This one little post started a two day discussion on salt. We shared how salt is used and misused. How salt can be used for good or ill. One asked what we thought about when we heard the term “an old salt”? And, another wondered why the “salty” language sailors use is often seen in the negative.

The Scriptures also contain references to salt and its usage. In Judges 9:45 the land of the captured enemies was “salted” to make it useless. But, Jesus says of his followers that they are to be, “*the salt of the earth*” (Matt. 5:13). In Mark 9:50 Jesus tell us, “*Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with each other.*” The Living Translation says, “*So, don’t lose your flavor.*” How do we remain salty? How do we keep our “flavor”?

One of the ways we can find the right amount of saltiness is in the wisdom we gain from the Proverbs. They play a role in helping us to find the right balance in life and in living in community. They share a wisdom which we call common sense. They call us to listen to our elders, or teachers and to be open to what others are saying. They urge us to seek wisdom for all the things we do - all of our lives from youth to old age. They try to keep us from saying, “If I had only listened.” We could say, they work to keep us at the right level of saltiness for the world.

Today Mother Teresa has become St. Teresa and in listening to the news of this I began to think of those in my life who I would call saints. (I think we all are but that is a whole different theology!) For the most part these were people who lived out their faith with humility and who sought to be “like Christ” in their daily living. They did not need to shout how religious they were - they simple lived the faith they professed. They were not constantly preaching or nagging, telling everyone else what they were doing wrong - but sought to be an example of Christlike behavior. There was always room for one or two more at the table. They loved while not always agreeing with the action of the other but understood that love is greater than any other emotion. They had a helping hand always ready to be extended to those in need. They did not know it all - was always ready for a new adventure and new learning. They laughed and cried and in all of this sought to serve the Christ they called Savior.

Another aspect I see in them which I did not understand at the time (when younger) was that diversity was accepted. They understood that God equips each of us differently. They understood the freedom that God has put into creation and though not always agreeing with the choices made understood the freedom we had to make them. They led without pushing and seldom insisted on their own way. They didn’t mind laughter and a good story and some even danced! They remembered the wedding celebration in Cana. They had the right amount of saltiness.

Proverbs, for me, helps us to gain the right perspective in life and in living. Some of them are serious and have pointed truths to teach. Some are just funny, pointing out the absurdity of life with a grain of truth. They all seek to keep us on the right path with an appropriate amount of saltiness. They seek to teach rulers how to rule. They observe life and we nod our heads that yes, this is correct. They seek for us to live the type of life that God has intended us to live. They urge us to understand the complexities of life - it is not all simple and easy.

And, in all of this salt is a good example. Salt is used to make ice cream colder (if you have ever made ice cream in an old fashioned churn you know you need to add rock salt to the ice to make the ice cream freeze appropriately). However, that same rock salt was used on the roads

and sidewalks in the winter time to melt the ice and make the roads safe for driving and walkways safe for walking. Salt, the same salt, is used for two distinctly different things - each appropriate uses with a different result.

Isn't that true of most things in life? Things can be used for good or bad. It is not salt that is bad but how it is used. It is not the internet that is bad but how it is used that makes a difference. The trouble comes when we don't always have the wisdom to know the difference. Our call it to know how to use the "salt" in our lives and keep our lives just "salty" enough to influence the world. We are "the salt of the earth."

Wisdom comes in knowing how much salt to use and when to use it. The Proverbs help us to keep the proper balance of salt in our lives. As we come to this Table we are reminded of the life of Jesus. We are reminded of his example of love and grace. How he had just the right amount of "saltiness". Might we not lose our flavor, our ability to love as he loved - to be the salt of the earth.

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NIV, New International Bible Society, Zondervan, 1973, 1978, 1985  
NRSV, Division of Christian Education, NCC, 1988