

Worth Your Salt – Pr Jim Sprengle, Pentecost 18, September 26, 2021

- I. **Mark 9:49-50** – ⁴⁹ For everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ Salt is good, but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you make it salty again? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another.
- II. **Jesus continues to give us some difficult teaching...**
 - a. As we read through this passage of Mark, Jesus teaches about outsiders doing miracles, jumps to those who might cause little ones to sin, and then tells us to take drastic measures to avoid sin... finally ending in a strange statement about being salted with fire and yet having salt in us!
 - b. Wow, big job for a preacher today.
 - i. However, when you consider the context of our last couple of weeks, Jesus is trying to teach His disciples (and us) about the kingdom or *reign* of God.
 1. The reign of God is Jesus entering our world in human form and being with us to bring salvation
 2. It's not a typical kind of ruling or reign, but it has to do with servanthood, sacrificial love, humility and other things that we sinful humans have all kinds of trouble with...
 3. Yet, Jesus is headed to the cross, and He wants His disciples to understand that the kingdom is not so much about power and fighting...who's the best... who is an insider versus an outsider... but instead it's about bearing a cross and even dying.
 - c. So we first read about an "outsider" attempting to use the name of Jesus to heal people – and the "insiders" (or the disciples) aren't so sure that's ok.
 - i. Jesus explains that whenever someone sees mighty works or does them in His name, that they will be positive about Him – in fact, they are working in faith.
 - ii. This was the hang up for the disciples as they were thinking, how can this outsider do great things for Jesus? WE don't even know him!
 - iii. It reminds us of our reading in Numbers today as Eldad and Medad are prophesying and Joshua was all uptight... but what does Moses say? Oh that EVERYONE would prophesy!! (Numbers 11:29)
 - d. Jesus then goes into what causes people to stumble...
 - i. He explains that there are consequences to sin... for those who would cause others to sin (especially children), but also for the person who does the sinning.
 - ii. In fact, He uses a radical image of casting away the parts of the body that might cause sin...
 1. This is not to say Jesus wants us to literally cut or gouge ourselves... Professor Jeff Gibbs said something like, "the

kingdom does not consist of mutilated people but of healed and restored people”

2. What Jesus is getting across here is that sin is drastic... sin is death and separation from God – so take it seriously!
 3. Way too many of my Lutheran friends rely on what I call “cheap grace” – they presume they are forgiven and therefore sin is not that big of a deal...
 4. Well, you read Jesus’ words today and tell me sin “isn’t a big deal.”
- iii. We all must consider the people, places and things that play a part in our sin, and repent... turn away from those things to live for Christ.
- e. Finally, Jesus talks about salt... first the salt of fire... and then the salt in us as believers.
 - i. Now, these passages are pretty difficult to interpret, but again, we consider Jesus is trying to teach about the big picture of God’s reign and what that looks like
 - ii. Okay, so what this seems to mean in verse 49, “For everyone will be salted with fire,” is that people will have fire applied to them that will do the same job as salt.
 - iii. Just like in the passages about cutting off your hand or gouging out an eye, this “salted with fire” language is figurative, but probably means that we will have challenges in life that will keep us on track.
 - iv. In other words, the fire works like salt – which is what?
 1. What is salt?
 - a. Besides taste, it keeps things from rotting... it preserves
 2. The preservation comes when fire (salted with fire) burns off the things that would have us rotting and dying on the inside... it keeps us on track with God’s will in our actions.
 - v. And that is the final point, Jesus says to have salt in yourselves... and be at peace with each other (vs 50).
 1. Again, having salt in this case seems to be pointing to not having rotting, negative, sinful lifestyles, but have salt to cut back on this and to grow the good stuff!
 - f. I realize all this is a handful as you walked through the text today – but let’s just sum up the most important point – God hates sin.

III. **The sin that we commit is worthy of eternal separation.**

- a. I don’t want any person to sit here today and tell themselves, “Well, ya know, God loves everyone, so that means I don’t have to follow His commandments” –
 - i. uh... no, that is exactly what Jesus says leads to hell.
- b. I don’t want any person in here today to think they “aren’t that bad” and “I’m pretty good most of the time, so that should count for something, right?”

- i. Again, no, we don't DO anything that counts for something...
- c. Sin and the evil that comes from us should never be taken lightly – and if you have been taking it lightly – I have one thing to say, “repent.”
- d. If Jesus didn't make it clear what happens when we continue down the path of sin and let it rule our lives, I don't know what else He can say.
- e. Turn from that way of thinking and the sin that clings so closely (Hebrews 12:1) and seek forgiveness from Jesus!

IV. **You see, Jesus died for that...**

- a. “That” being anything that would take us away from Him... anything that would have us rotting inside and rejecting God along the way...
- b. Jesus knows that we struggle with sin of every type and He hates sin for the very reason that it separates us... separates us from each other and it separates us from God.
- c. You have probably seen images in the past where a cross is placed over a big divide – which acts like a bridge that connects us (sinful and broken as we are) to God Himself.
- d. When I consider the sacrifice Jesus made on my behalf, I can't help but seek His forgiveness whenever I fall.
 - i. In fact, it is the power of the Holy Spirit that keeps us turning toward God rather than away...
 - ii. The Holy Spirit calls us home... calls us to the cross... calls us to repent and turn from sin... to our Savior.
- e. And the best part?
 - i. Jesus is always there... just like the father of the prodigal son... open arms, rejoicing that repentance and grace win the day!
 - ii. I can't stress this enough, if God hates sin, He loves you more.
- f. You know, there is one more blessing besides preservation that salt gives to the believer and even to those without faith... thirst.
 - i. When we are filled with salt an interesting phenomenon occurs... we thirst all the more for the Water of Life.
 - ii. The Water of Life is the spiritual life that we have by the power of the Holy Spirit...
 - iii. We thirst for connection with God, for the Good News, for fellowship, and of course the Word of God...
 - 1. And all of this doesn't just stay with us alone – but others are impacted... others hear the Word of God and hope... others become connected because of the salt in us.
- g. In and through the work of our Savior Jesus, you are worth your salt.
 - i. He loves us beyond our ability to understand
 - ii. He wants us to be with Him for eternity
 - iii. And, no matter where we are, or how low we have gone, He brings us forgiveness...and life... and salvation. Amen.