

“Time to Shake and Shine”

Matthew 5:13-16

Series: Launch Week 1. Launched to Shine Brightly

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Imagine lying on your back on the very pinnacle of the world’s most enormous firecracker - a tube as tall as a 35 story office building and filled with a million gallons of fuel. Right below you is the Saturn V rocket – still the most powerful machine ever created. It is capable of burning 20 tons of fuel a second and pushing seven and a half million pounds of thrust. Apollo 8 was the first flight to use the Saturn V because it was the first flight to reach the moon. It was incredibly risky. Commander Frank Borman recalls, “Our primary mission was to go to the moon, circle it ten times and come home...alive.” Borman was joined by Astronauts Bill Anders and Jim Lovell who is most remembered for saving Apollo 13.

On December 21, 1968 Anders, Borman and Lovell were locked into the tiny capsule. Anders admits he thought they had a 1 in 3 chance of not making it back. When the countdown reached zero and they lit that rocket he recalls,

The sideways shaking was unbelievable. The vibration was so intense you couldn’t see the instrument panel. I thought we’d had it on that launch.”

He was afraid, with all the shaking, that Commander Borman would accidentally hit the abort button. Borman said he took his hand off the control because he would rather die than stop the mission. He recalls

I think we were all surprised at how strong that thing was. Unbelievable!

One minute after liftoff the Saturn V was supersonic. Then five engines in the first stage blasted Apollo 8 to seven times the speed of sound. Bill Anders says,

The second stage cut in. Big bang! I thought I was being catapulted through the instrument panel.

With the third stage the crew of Apollo 8 was launched beyond the earth where no one had ever been before. The whole experience was so gut churning that Commander Borman actually threw up...in zero gravity. It was a mess inside the space capsule. But there was nothing they could do. They were going to the moon no matter what. Apollo 8 went up with blinding light and earth-shaking sound. The people of the world were in awe of the wonder of it all. It was their time to shake and shine.

Woodside – today is our Launch. Today is the day we begin to go farther than we’ve ever gone before. Today is the day we lift off to make a great leap for God. Today is our time to shake and shine. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said,

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and

trampled by men. You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:13-16)

Salt and Light: two essentials for life. Salt needs to be shaken. Light needs to shine. Both, according to Jesus, need to be launched into the world. And you are that salt. You are that light. Jesus wants to launch you and me to influence and bless the world like salt and light. What did He mean? What are we supposed to do?

Today, in addition to seasoning food, salt is used to melt ice on roads, soften water and perform chemical reactions.

Salt is used in greater quantities and for more applications than any other mineral. It has more than 14,000 known uses. Everyone uses salt, directly and indirectly. Americans each consume more than 16 tons of salt during their lifetimes, 402 pounds a year for each living American. Only a small percentage of that massive amount is ingested as food.

Salt has an ancient history. Slaves were bought with salt thus giving us the phrase “not worth his salt.” Roman soldiers were paid their wages in salt that led to the term “salary.” Salt was bought, sold and traded across the ancient world.

So what did Jesus mean when He told us to be “the salt of the earth”? For one thing, He didn’t tell us to be the salt in the salt mine, the salt in the cupboard or the salt in the saltshaker. We have to be salt for the earth. The salt is worthless unless it is added to something else. You add it to the road to melt ice, you add it to water to make it softer, you add it to food to improve flavor. By itself it is useless. And in high concentrations it is deadly. If you and I are the salt of the earth, there are two things we must never do.

First, we must not keep our Christian faith concentrated in this building. That is one of the great dangers of the Church today – we keep our Christianity sealed up in this big salt shaker we call a sanctuary. The salt has to be shaken out of the saltshaker. We are commanded to sprinkle our faith out in the world. We have to live as Christians in the world. We are commanded to influence the world for Jesus Christ.

The second danger is to be Salt Lite – Jesus said, “If the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men” (Matthew 5:13). In other words, don’t water down the salt. Tell the message of Jesus Christ to the world in all its bold flavor with words and actions, with truth and love. What does it mean to be salt for the earth?

Salt Preserves Lives. In Jesus’ day, long before refrigeration, salt was the only way to preserve meat from spoiling. It prevented bacteria from corrupting food. There are two forms of corruption and pollution in our world. There is corruption in society and corruption in the soul. Liberals and conservatives tend to focus on one or the other.

Those on the left want to correct the ills of society while encouraging individuals to do whatever feels good. Those on the right want individuals to improve their behavior but they say the society should be free from control. They are both right and both wrong. If you don't address selfishness and sin in the soul it will create a corrupt society and if you don't combat corruption in the society it will encourage individuals to be selfish.

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus attacks both kinds of corruption and pollution. He challenges selfishness in the soul:

- Do not give in to anger (5:22)
- Do not obey lust (5:28)
- Do not break up relationships (5:31)
- Do not run after money (6:19)
- Do not judge (7:1)

He also attacks the sickness in society

- Reconcile before you go to court (5:23-25)
- Keep your promises (5:33-37)
- Practice non-violence (5:38-39)
- Love your enemies (5:44)
- Give to the needy (6:2)

One thing is certain: Jesus would not be invited to run for office by either party. But He knows how to prevent the soul and the society from corruption and pollution. It starts with you and me. We need to let His salt kill the sinful, selfish infections in our souls and then take that salt into our society.

In Jesus day salt was gathered from the Dead Sea also known as the Salt Sea. I have been to the Dead Sea. The concentration of salt is so high you actually cannot sink. Instead, you just bob like a cork on the surface. The reason for this high concentration is its low altitude. The Dead Sea is the lowest place on the face of the earth. Everything flows into it and nothing flows out. You might say that the Dead Sea is the most selfish sea on earth. It takes and does not give. And that's why it's dead. To save your life you have to give it away. If you have received salt from Jesus, you have to pass the salt.

During the next seven weeks we will be shaking out the salt Jesus put in the Sermon on the Mount. I encourage you, every week you are in town, to be here for the messages and if you are away I hope you will listen or watch the messages on line at our website. But don't stop there. Join a Growth Group and study these powerful teachings more in depth. Mine the salt from Jesus' great sermon and then begin to spread it. At the end of every study there will be suggestions for application – how you help prevent souls and society from spoiling.

Salt Heals Lives. It stings to pour salt in a wound. But in ancient times, that was the only way to stop gangrene. What's more, your blood is nearly the same concentration as salty sea water. When I was on one of the mission trips to the Dominican Republic I

consumed gallons of Gatorade. I mixed up some grape Gatorade in my bottle but it looked blue. One person said I was drinking Windex. Another said I was drinking from the Tidy Bowl. A third said it looked like embalming fluid. I think they said that because I looked near death. But why did we drink all that Gatorade? To replace the salt lost in sweating. Salt heals lives.

In 2006 we came to lay a foundation for a medical clinic in San Miguel. At first we thought we could remove the dirt and rock in a day, maybe two. Three at the outside. Well okay four days. Five max! But the rock in that pit was so tough we began to think it would beat us. For five and a half days we chipped, picked, hammered and hauled rock out of that pit. We moved the dirt and rock over here. Then they told us, “No we want you to move it over there.” Then they said, “No we changed our minds, please dump it in a third place.” We were afraid they were going to tell us to dump in back in the pit. My friend Bryon Pinajian said, “You know this is what they did to break the spirit of prisoners in concentration camps.” But in the end, the Americans and Dominicans beat the rock and laid some block. By the next year, San Miguel had a medical clinic to heal the diseases of the community.

And do they need it. On one of the days we didn't wrestle with rock we offered a free medical clinic as the DR trips have done for eleven trips. Between 600 and 800 patients receive a doctor's care and medicines. Our partner churches in the Dominican Republic, Haiti, the Bahamas, Zambia and Mozambique are sprinkling the salt of God's love and healing the diseases in their part of the world. And you are there with them. You are helping them spread that salt. You sent the missionaries and funds that prepared the foundation for all that future healing. You collected the healthcare items and medicines which are now strengthening their bodies.

During Launch we will ask you to give – to make a pledge to get rid of the mortgage on this launching pad, to get out and launch a new campus of Woodside and to get help for local and international missions. As you heard from Berry Long of the Outreach foundation, your gifts are putting in clean water wells in Mozambique as well as in the DR and Haiti. And that transforms a whole community. You are the salt of the earth.

Salt Flavors Lives. Think how tasteless and bland food would be without it. Commentator Douglas Hare says that the phrase, “salt of the earth” has become such a cliché it no longer has its original meaning. Perhaps in our day we should say, “You are the red hot chili pepper of the earth.” Jesus wants us to flavor lives with truth and love and joy. Do you know that sodium is an extremely active element. I remember my chemistry teacher in high school carelessly pushing some pure sodium from the counter into a drain and having an explosion. That's what happens when you mix it with water. That's why it always bonds with other elements. Chlorine, on the other hand, is the poisonous gas that gives bleach its offensive odor. But when sodium and chlorine are combined, the result is sodium chloride--common table salt--the substance we use to bring out the flavor of food. David Johnson says

Love and truth can be like sodium and chlorine. Love without truth is flighty, sometimes blind, willing to combine with various doctrines. On the other hand, truth by itself can be offensive, some times even poisonous. Spoken without love, it can turn people away from the gospel. When truth and love are combined in an individual or a church, however, then we have what Jesus called "the salt of the earth," and we're able to preserve and bring out the beauty of our faith.¹

When you put truth and love together it brings out the flavor of joy in your life. On November 4th we will all go out and share the love and truth of Jesus Christ through our words and actions. This will be our third Church Has Left the Building and we will be joined by fifteen other churches, three times the number from last year. We need to shake out the salt so it will season the lives of the people around us and give them hope and joy.

In the last six weeks I have had the honor of presiding over memorial services for four people from the community. Two men and two women ranging in age from 21 to 84. In preparation for each service I spent time with one or more members of their families. Now you might think visiting a grieving person is the most difficult part of a minister's calling. Sometimes that is undoubtedly true. But it is also one of the most special, sacred moments of my ministry. People ask me, "What do you say in those situations?" There is nothing to say. No words of mine will take away their pain. Only God can do that. But one thing I do is simply say, "Tell me about your loved one." Then I listen. Usually there are tears. But almost invariably, an unusual thing happens. The tears turn to laughter as joyful stories are told. Do you know what those memories are? They are the salt which seasons and brings out the flavor of our lives. How are you seasoning the lives of the people around you? What will they say about you? Are you seasoning their lives for the joy of the Lord, the truth of God's Word, the love of Jesus?

Finally, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world ... people (don't) light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:14-16). Salt is not supposed to call attention to itself. It brings out the flavor of the food. Light does not shine so that you can stare at it but so you can see what's in the room. We spread salt and shine light not so others will praise us but so they will praise and glorify our Father in heaven, so they will fall in love with Jesus.

1968 was one of the most turbulent years for America. There was poverty and rioting in our cities. There was violence at the Democratic National Convention. The Cold War continued to escalate. In Vietnam twelve hundred Americans were dying each month. Martin Luther King Jr. and Bobby Kennedy had been assassinated. That was the fragile world Frank Borman, William Anders and James Lovell left when, on December 21st Apollo 8 launched to be the first human attempt to circle the moon.

¹ David H. Johnson, Faribault, Minnesota. Leadership, Vol. 6, no. 2.

On December 24th, Christmas Eve, they sent back a live broadcast to this shaken world. They gave us one of NASA's most iconic pictures – the tiny fragile blue and white ball of earth rising over the horizon of the moon. In that moment they had the attention of the whole world. The only instructions NASA gave them for the broadcast was to say something “appropriate.” It was their opportunity. They could have praised the great achievements of humanity, lauded scientists such as Newton or Einstein who paved the way, glorified the United States in its race to beat the Soviets or sounded off on some political agenda. But instead, they chose that moment to shine the Light and praise a Higher Authority. All three astronauts took their turns reading,

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. And the earth was formless and void and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. God saw that the light was good. (Genesis 1:1-3).

To a dark, fractured, fragile and weary world, they shone the Light and gave glory to God.

Let's launch out and do the same.