

Pastor Don Nelson

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Beverly E.C.C., Chicago, IL

“SALTY SALT”
Luke 14:25-35

■ **“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”** (Luke 14:34-35).

? Physical salt stimulates thirst. Is Christ’s presence in me causing others to thirst for the Living Water? *Am I salty salt?*

? Physical salt arouses the appetite by making food taste better. Is Christ’s presence in me causing others to hunger for the Bread of Life? *Am I salty salt?*

? Physical salt preserves food by inhibiting the growth of microbes and fungi. Is Christ’s presence in me causing others to choose Life and Holiness? *Am I salty salt?*

☑ The chemical formula for table salt is NaCl. Bind together one part sodium and one part chlorine and the resulting material will inevitably stimulate thirst, enhance the flavor of food, and preserve food. The attributes of saltiness are intrinsic to the substance.

Salt loses its salty qualities when – and only when – the chemical bond between the two elements is broken. In other words, unsalty salt isn’t salt at all. So, *Am I salty salt?* really means *“Am I salt?”*

? In Luke 14 this is a question of human identity and character. *Am I a Follower of Jesus inside and out? Are my inward substance and outward traits consistent with the*

name “Christian”? Are my attitudes, thoughts, words, and deeds in harmony with my confession of faith?

I am not talking about sinless perfection.

Striving to achieve *that* provokes pride, legalism, and works righteousness. Commit yourself to that struggle and you will lose your saltiness.

I am not talking about skin-deep Christianity that conceals worldly thinking and lifestyle under a veneer of orthodox belief and church membership. Live like that and you will lose your saltiness.

○ {Eph 4:23-24} I am talking about true discipleship, in which we, by God’s mercy and kindness, give ourselves completely to his Son, “[putting] **off** [our] **old** [selves]... [being] **made new in the attitude of** [our] **minds; and ...** [putting] **on** [our] **new** [selves], **created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.**”

■ The rest of our text does not use the imagery of saltiness, yet it is all about “salty” discipleship. In Luke 14:26 Jesus warns: **“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even life itself – such a person cannot be my disciple.”**

That word **“hate”** sticks in our craw, does it not? Take a deep breath. We will clarify this hard language.

① First, let’s compare this verse to a few of Christ’s other teachings about love and hate.

○ {Mt 22:37-40} When a Pharisee asks, **“Which is the greatest commandment in the Law?”** Messiah replies, **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This**

is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”

○ {Mt 5:43-44} Jesus also declares: **“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”**

○ {Mk 7:9-13} And the Lord rebukes the Pharisees for using religious commitment as an excuse to neglect their elderly parents’ material needs: **“You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! ...‘Honor your father and mother.’”**

② Up next are two teachings about the intersection of discipleship and family life.

○ Luke 12:51-53:

“Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division. From now on there will be five in one family divided against each other, three against two and two against three. They will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother” and so forth.

This is not a proclamation of the Messiah’s intent; it is a description of the discord that is triggered by his claims of Lordship. In some cultures it is common for siblings to become alienated, marriages to end, and children to be disinherited or abused when one gives their allegiance to Jesus.

¶ And then Matthew 10:37: **“Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves a son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.”**

Loving one’s family is right and essential to discipleship. To paraphrase First John 4:20, **“if we say we love God yet hate a brother or sister, we are liars. For if we do not love [our kith and kin] whom we have seen, we cannot love God, who we have not seen.”** Family relationships are a prime *opportunity* for discipleship.

They are also a prime *obstacle* to discipleship. How many potential disciples reject Jesus outright for fear of family disapproval? How many potential disciples formally say “Yes” to Jesus and then say “No” to prayer, “No” to worship, “No” to Bible study, “No” to service, “No” to obedience because their families come first?

■ Back to verse 26: in light of this evidence, **“hate”** is a hyperbolic term of comparison. Messiah calls us to love him better than our own families – so much better that we will stand firm even if they literally hate us for it. If we chose family over Jesus we **“cannot be”** his disciples.

You and I have it easy in this culture. Few of us have been, or ever will be, required to make such a stark choice between the Lord and our loved ones.

Yet it is a certainty that our commitment to Christ will be tested in other ways. Which will come first: Jesus or friendship, Jesus or money, Jesus or possessions, Jesus or success, Jesus or reputation,

Jesus or pleasure? You and I must choose, perhaps even day after day.

? Salty Christians choose Jesus. *Is this what I am doing?*

■ Verse 27: **“Whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.”**

¶ {Lk 9:23} Elsewhere, Jesus puts it in positive terms: **“Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”**

☑ {FF Bruce} **“Denying oneself is [decisively] saying ‘No’...to one’s hopes...plans and ambitions ...one’s likes and dislikes... one’s nearest and dearest for the sake of Christ.”** It is centering our lives in him rather than in ourselves.

○ {Ro 14:8} **“[Taking] up [one’s] cross”** is renouncing our right to life. It is handing over our existence to the Messiah, so that **“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. [Either way] we belong to the Lord.”**

○ {Heb 12:2; Php 3:8-9, 14} Following Jesus is **“fixing our eyes on”** him and following his lead regarding career, family life, and all that we do. It is counting **“everything else a loss,”** pressing **“on toward the goal”** in order to **“gain Christ and be found in him.”**

? Salty Christians deny themselves, **“carry their cross and follow”** Jesus. *Is this what I am doing?*

■ And so in verses 28-30 the Lord insists that we count the cost of discipleship: **“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...”

? Salty Christians make an informed decision and pay the cost. *Is this what I am doing?*

■ By the same token, it is equally essential to consider the cost of rejecting discipleship. Vv 31-33:

“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... 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.”

○ {Ro 8:7} Apart from Christ we live as kings and queens of our petty realms. Our **“sinful [minds are] hostile to God.”** We **“do not submit to”** his reign and some would fight to the death rather than bend the knee.

○ {Lk 9:24} But those who **“ask for terms of peace”** and **“give up everything [they] have”** find that discipleship is not about losing; it’s about losing to gain! **“For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for [Jesus] will save it.”**

○ {2 Co 4:11} And they discover that discipleship is not about dying! It is about dying to live. **“We... are**

being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may also be revealed in our mortal body."

? Salty Christians come alive! *Is this what I am doing?*

■ That brings us back to verses 34-35: **"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."**

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Luke 14:25-35 is the word of the Lord.