

# Called to Be “Salt of the Earth”

*ENVIRONMENT* Have a table prepared visible to all with a bowl of salt to be used in closing ritual gesture.



## Introduction

*Leader* Salt is not eaten by itself. It is sprinkled on other foods in order to bring out the fullness of their flavor. Salt gives wholeness. It has its own taste, yet it loses itself in transforming the food that it seasons. It becomes one with that which it is united, and both the salt and the food are transformed. In biblical tradition, salt was a sign of covenant. The covenant partners became one through the sharing of salt.

## Readings



### Reader 1

Once upon a time, in ages and traditions past, a great King held an enormous banquet four times a year for his Lords, Ladies, Nobles, Knights and Serfs. The banquet was unusual in that there was no rank maintained at the table. The long banquet table would have Lords next to Nobles, Ladies next to Serfs and Knights intermingled among them all.

In front of the King was a container of salt. As the banquet began, the King would take the salt, flavor his food and then pass it only one direction down the long table. He would pass the salt to those Lords and Ladies, Nobles, Knights, and Serfs who, for that quarter, exhibited faithfulness and commitment to him.

He would pass the salt to those who furthered the work of the Kingdom and added to the life of the people. The King passed the container to those who were “worth their salt.”

*(Silent Reflection)*

### Reader 2

Once upon a time, in ages and traditions past—in one of those countries whose leaders denied the existence of God but allowed the church to exist under a secretary for church affairs—it happened that the secretary was not only a brilliant pastor, she was a medical doctor as well.

One day she was called before the authorities. Knowing there would be a new crackdown on the Christians, she started right in: “I know you gentlemen wish to interrogate me,” she began. “But first, may I say something?”

Permission granted, she continued. “You know that I am a medical doctor. As a doctor, I know the importance of salt in the human body: it should be maintained at about 2 percent. If it is less, a person gets sick. If it is eliminated altogether, a person will die.

“Now, Jesus Christ has said Christians are the salt of the earth.” Then she paused. “That is all. And now, gentlemen, what is it that you wish to say to me?” “Oh nothing, nothing,” they said. And she was dismissed.

*(Silent Reflection)*

### Reader 3

Once upon a time, in ages past but traditions known to us, a great King who loves and cares for people sent a Jewish rabbi to spread an enormous banquet for all his people, and through it to spread the flavor and spice of the King’s giftedness. That Jewish rabbi calls you and me, the people of that King who loves and cares for us, to share the salt. To be faith-filled people preserving the faith of the Kingdom. To make people thirsty for the Living Water of Life. To be gift to one another proclaiming the greatness of the God who makes us magnificently beautiful. To be salt for one another, adding flavor, zest, spice, and life to all we meet

*(Silent Reflection)*

### Reader 4

It is unknown when salt was first discovered, but there are 41 verses in the bible which reference salt, the earliest being the story of Lot’s wife being turned to a pillar of salt. Numbers 18:19 refers to the “covenant of salt.” The Greeks had a saying, “Trespass not against the salt and the board.”

An Arab saying went, “There is salt between us.”

In Ezra 4:14, the expression “to eat the salt of the palace” is used.



The modern Persian phrase, *namak haram*, “untrue to salt,” means to be disloyal or ungrateful. In English, “the salt of the earth” commonly describes someone who is both loved and trusted.

Colossians 4:6 says, “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” The ancient Chinese and early Romans used salt as currency. The word *salary* stems from the Latin word *sol* meaning salt.

Salt is an indispensable influence in human health and is fed to livestock for the same reason. It is also used as a preservative and for seasoning, as well as in curing hides and as brine for refrigeration. Salt adds flavor, zest, and spice to life and to food. Salt is whole making. Its flavor spreads through the whole substance to which it is added. And there is another fact about salt that is worth considering—salt makes people thirsty.

*(Silent Reflection)*



**Leader** God calls us by name to be the Salt of the Earth. And we celebrate our call by God today under the symbol of salt—free, simple, zestful, and strong. We celebrate our call to make people thirsty for the Living Waters of Life. We celebrate the gift we are to one another in proclaiming the greatness of the God who makes us magnificently beautiful. And we celebrate being salt for one another, adding flavor, zest and life to all we meet.

## Scripture

### Reader 5 *Isaiah 43:1-4*

But now, thus says the Holy One who created you,...

Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name: you are mine.

When you pass through the water, I will be with you; in the rivers you shall not drown.

When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned; the flames shall not consume you.

Because you are precious in my eyes and glorious, and because I love you, I give people in exchange for your life.

### Sung Response “I Have Loved You” by Michael Joncas

*(Refrain only, sung twice)* I have loved you with an everlasting love I have called you and you are mine.

*(Brief pause between each reading)*

### Reader 6 *Matthew 5:13*

You are the salt of the earth. But if salt loses its taste, with what can it be seasoned? It is no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

### Reader 7 *Mark 9:49-50*

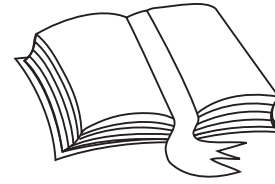
Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if salt becomes insipid, with what will you restore its flavor? Keep salt in yourselves and you will have peace with one another.

### Reader 8 *Luke 14:34-35*

Salt is good, but if salt itself loses its taste, with what can its flavor be restored? It is fit neither for the soil nor for the manure pile; it is thrown out. Whoever has ears to hear ought to hear.

## Faith Sharing

*(Invite participants to share, completing the statement)* As a Christian, I am like salt because ...



### Shared Prayer

*(Allow time for participants to share prayers of gratitude for people whose response to God’s call has been a source of personal inspiration and strength, people who have been salt for us.)*

**Leader** We praise you, God, we thank you for your Word. Let your Spirit come upon us all, and over our community that we may be what we are called to be, sisters and brothers to all in faith. We praise you for our sister salt—a sign of covenant, token of friendship, faith, and peace, full of zest and flavor.

*(All extend hands over the bowl of salt and pray...)*

**All** Bless this salt, Loving God, and bless us so that we may be what you call us to be—“salt of the earth” and “worth our salt” adding flavor, zest, and new life to all we meet on the way.

## Closing

**Ritual Gesture** *(The Leader takes the bowl of salt from the table and offers it to the next person, saying, “You are the salt of the earth” The person takes a pinch of salt, places it on her/his tongue, and offers the salt to the next person with the same words until all have received the salt and proclamation.)*

**Closing Song** “Bring Forth the Kingdom” by Marty Haugen

*All share a Sign of Peace and a Blessing for the journey home.*

## Acknowledgment

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