

Hello everyone,

PERCENT OF BIBLE COMPLETED: 73.1%

Weekly Readings will cover:

Sunday: Matthew 5:5 – 6 & Luke 6:21

Monday: Matthew 5:7 – 8

Tuesday: Matthew 5:9

Wednesday: Matthew 5:10 – 12 & Luke 6:22 – 23

Thursday: Matthew 5:13

Friday: Preparation Day

Saturday: Sabbath Rest

Current # of email addresses in the group: 726

I hope each of you had a productive and blessed week. It's been a busy week here on a number of fronts. Tomorrow we will be recognizing 16 children who have participated in our youth education classes, as well as two high school and two college graduates. My youngest daughter Ciara is one of the High School graduates, and as you will remember, her senior year of high school started with some real challenges for her. I can't believe all of that has occurred in less than a year. Also, we praise God that good comes out of trials. I know many, if not all of you, prayed for our special daughter during that time. She continues each day to have to fight, but we are so deeply thankful for where we are now versus where we were when her senior year began. Tomorrow, after services, we will hand out certificates, recognitions and then have a cookout together. We see throughout God's Word how special the young people are to Him. I look forward to tomorrow with much anticipation and joy.

This week in our study we will spend most of the time continuing through the Beatitudes. I hope you each enjoy this week's study and come away knowing even more about this special section of scripture.

Current and archive of this reading program is available at:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/san-francisco-bay-area-ca/announcements/audio-links-re-three-year-chronological-deep>

The audio archive information is also available on our UCG Bay Area YouTube page here:

[https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA\\_tacLBfv1XR3jH](https://youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792?si=EA_tacLBfv1XR3jH)

You may actually prefer accessing it directly from this Playlist tab:

<https://www.youtube.com/@ucgbayarea5792/playlists>

### **3-YEAR CHRONOLOGICAL STUDY: Week 116**

Read the following passages & the Daily Deep Dive on the daily reading.

Day 785 – SUNDAY: June 7<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 5:5-6; Luke 6:21

Daily Deep Dive:

Matthew 5:5 – “the Meek” – I believe the idea of “meekness” is a very often misunderstood word of the Bible. In English, “meek” often sounds like “weakness” --- but not in the Greek. In the Greek, meek did not mean weak (passive, timid, spineless or easily pushed around). The main idea of “meek” or “meekness” was about having great “strength under control”. This is about having the capacity to exercise strength, yet choosing not to. This is reflected in gentleness when one could be harsh. It is power governed by wisdom and restraint. Meekness is the opposite of arrogance, uncontrolled reaction in anger, prideful aggression or domination. I struggled to fully understand this word until I discovered how it was used in regards to “meeking a horse”. A meeked horse still possessed tremendous strength, yet its power was now disciplined and directed.

I dove into this concept in a series of sermons about the fruits of the spirit. This sermon was specifically on “meekness”.

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/becoming-family-series-part-6-meekness>

In Psalm 37:11 it states “But the meek shall inherit the earth”.

When the Old Testament was written into Greek (Septuagint), the word used here is the same as the word for “meek” in Matthew 5:5. This psalm seems to be the clear passage that Jesus Christ is quoting from. Jesus Christ would later describe Himself in this same way in Matthew 11:29 “I am gentle [same word for “meek”] and lowly in heart”.

Our Savior was not weak. He confronted evil and hypocrisy. He turned over tables and stood up fearlessly to leaders who wanted to kill Him. His strength was always under control.

In the Roman world, the strong dominated. The Jews at that time were looking for a powerful Messiah to overthrow Rome. And even in our world today, often it seems the aggressive, forceful, and loud --- are those who self-exalt and become the tyrants who win, conquer and gain. So the message of Jesus is that those who have strength and power, but choose to exercise self-restraint and control, are the ones who will ultimately inherit the earth.

We as Christians should not try to exert our wills over others or grasp power selfishly. We must become like the “meek” Jesus Christ if we desire to inherit and become co-heirs with Jesus Christ at His second coming.

Matthew 5:6 – “hunger and thirst for righteousness”. The Greek here for “hunger” (peinōntes - πεινῶντες) was not typically used Greek word describing “a mild appetite (casual desire)”. If that were the case, the Greek epithymeō (ἐπιθυμέω) could be used to describe “a desire”, “a longing for”, or a “craving”. Additionally, in Greek the word oregōmai (ὀρέγομαι), could mean to seek after or desire. Finally, another Greek word, boulomai (βούλομαι), could be used to express “a wish” or “a want”. However, the word Matthew used often referred to real hunger, deprivation or strong bodily need. This was similar to how we recently talked about the real hunger David and his men had when they were given the showbread, and also likely the hunger that the disciples were feeling when they were plucking heads of grain as they walked. To the first-century audience, especially poorer Galileans, hunger was a very real experience --- not just a metaphor. Many who listened to Jesus’ words would have personally experienced famines, and food insecurity. The heavy taxation (Romans, Herodians, temple, and local) at the time often left people having too little food due to a lack of money. Throughout the Gospels we often see parables and lessons involving day laborers needing a daily wage, concerns about daily bread, paying off debts, beggars, and crowds in need of food. All of this reveals a society where many people lived with very little margin (lived

right on the line). Therefore, this beatitude is powerful in that it took very real needs (hunger and thirst) that these listeners likely experienced and applies this real longing to the longing we should all have for God's righteousness.

So far through the beatitudes, we've seen a focus on the three qualities we must each have, be developing and desire to ultimately be transformed into --- being poor in spirit, mourning and meek. Here too, we must each have an incredible craving to become righteous people. People who ultimately crave to obey God, overcome sin, yearn for transformation --- and who strongly desire to think and act like God. Righteousness is a way of life in alignment with God.

Do our lives now demonstrate a deep longing for God's character, His justice, holiness and will to prevail --- not only in our lives, but throughout the world as we long for His Kingdom to be established. Just as we can be longing physically for food to have our craving satisfied, so too can God spiritually feed us and satisfy our longing. While the ultimate fulfilment of this righteousness will come in God's Kingdom (2 Peter 3:13), even now it can begin in our personal spiritual growth, understanding and transformation through God's Holy Spirit. Satan wants us to hunger for physical comfort, recognition, pleasure, self-advancement and success. God wants us to hunger for holiness, truth, justice, mercy, the removal of sin, and love.

So far, as we move through Matthew's order, we've seen a progression of realizing our emptiness apart from God: our being poor in spirit, our mourning (grieving over sin and brokenness), the bringing of our strength under control as we submit to God (meekness) --- and now a deep passionate longing for God to fully transform us to become like Him (hungering for righteousness).

Day 786 – MONDAY: June 8<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 5:7-8

Daily Deep Dive:

Matthew 5:7 – “merciful”. In scripture mercy is much more than a feeling. Like so much of Christianity, it’s through the action that true Christianity is shown to be both understood and internalized. Not only did this Greek word for “merciful” include the emotions of mercy, compassion and pity, but this quality was demonstrated by activity showing kindness and care to an individual --- and therefore the merciful were those who act upon those emotions in a way that makes a meaningful impact on an individual. This involves helping the helpless, responding to suffering, forgiving offenses and showing kindness even when punishment could be demanded. To practice this in our lives, we must enter another person’s suffering and respond with faithfulness. Through the Septuagint, we see a connection to this mercy vocabulary back to scriptures about God (like Exodus 34:6). This is what God Himself practices with us and mankind. Throughout the Old Testament, God showed Himself to act out of compassion, patience and forgiveness --- abounding in a steadfast enduring love. Therefore, one who is merciful is acting like God.

In this first-century Roman world, mercy was often viewed as weakness. Some still view it that way today. The Roman world admired and responded to strength, power, honor, and domination. Many rulers thought mercy only encouraged further disobedience. Some still view mercy through that lens today. Biblically we see mercy demonstrated through forgiveness of the guilty. They deserved punishment, yet that punishment was withheld --- and instead a pardon was granted (Matthew will later record the very detailed account of a debtor who owed an unpayable amount, but was forgiven due to the master’s mercy – Matthew 18:21-35).

Mercy was not only demonstrated through forgiveness in the Bible, but also through feeding the hungry, helping the poor, caring for widows, to name a few. All of these were mercy in action. It’s our own

awareness of the mercy we've needed that motivates us to be patient with others --- even those who are struggling in sin. We understand we never approve or are permissive of sin, yet we understand that we too are sinners --- and therefore we can be patient with others who are struggling, but desire to grow and change. We see that the end of this beatitude shows that those who can implement mercy in action are the same ones who will receive mercy from God Almighty. This principle is shown not only in the Matthew 18:21-35 example, but also in the model prayer of Matthew 6:14, where Jesus said **"For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you."** James 2:13 states all of this very plainly "For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."

So building off of one's great hunger to become like God and live in the right way, comes practicing the heart that God has for broken people, by becoming much more merciful to other people, including to their suffering, failures and weaknesses. Do we want justice for everyone else, but mercy for ourselves?

Matthew 5:8 – "pure in heart". In Greek, the idea of "pure" could be used in regards things being physically clean (like clothes, a house, one's body after washing). It was also used for clean water that was drinkable and free of contaminants. It was also used in regards to purified metal like gold or silver that was refined to remove impurities -- and therefore no longer had foreign things mixed in. In a legal or ceremonial sense, it was used to reflect someone's innocence, being free of guilt and therefore untainted. The idea of clean/pure vs unclean/impure is a major Biblical theme that moves through the whole Bible (clean animals, ceremonial defilement, purification, clean people, etc.) The Greek Septuagint (Old Testament) used this same word for "pure" to relate to the Old Testament concepts of cleanness and purity.

Often, we see Jesus criticize the religious leaders of His time for their particular focus on the external things of life (dishes, hands, etc.), while ignoring what mattered even more --- what was going on inside a person. So, it fits that Jesus Christ didn't focus on "clean hands" or the "ceremonially pure" --- but on the "pure/clean in heart". His focus was on what was going on inside of us in our minds. Everything that comes out of us, is simply an outward reflection of what is occurring internally (compare Matthew 15:18-19).

The heart was not just the organ that pumps blood. They understood it as the source of thoughts, desires, intentions, motives and one's will. So, Jesus is not just reflecting moral purity of actions, but purity of motives (not doing things to impress others), thoughts, loyalty, desires, intentions, etc. This was not something Jesus made up in the New Testament, these reflect the Old Testament scriptures He inspired David to write, such as in Psalm 24:3-4, where it states: "Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart..." --- and Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart,..."

What is the promise to one who through God's transforming Spirit, becomes one who has a "clean/pure heart"? "They shall see God". What an amazing promise. In both John 1:18 and 1 John 4:12, John makes it clear that "no one has seen God at any time". This scripture points to an amazing time in the future when God's children, those who have the firstfruits of His spirit, will become like God and shall see Him as He is. Notice how John puts this and ties it to our purity in 1 John 3:2-3 "Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."

As we have moved down through these beatitudes, we see this progressive shift that is moving deeper into the heart of who we truly

to become. Mercy in action as we reflect on the great mercy we have needed and received, and the transformation of the heart that we are striving to develop, where motives, intentions, thoughts, etc. are progressively becoming more and more pure as we yield and are transformed by God's Spirit.

### Day 787 – TUESDAY: June 9<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 5:9 -

Daily Deep Dive:

Matthew 5:9 – “the peacemakers”. So now building off this inner conversion that God is doing through His Spirit in those who yield and submit to God's transforming power, it is no longer just a focus on how we are caring for and thinking about others, but now, what happens when there is conflict? Problems? Well, that really tests our character in a different way.

What did the word “peacemaker” in Greek mean? The Greek word *eirēnopoioi* (εἰρηνοποιοί) is actually a fairly rare word, even in the Greek usage. The Greek is a compound word made up of: *εἰρήνη* (*eirēnē*) = peace, and *ποιέω* (*poieō*) = to make, to produce, to create. From this we already learned this isn't about someone who themselves are peaceful and enjoy peace, and not even someone who simply maintains peace, but instead, in their lives and in what they do, they actually bring about or produce peace where peace did not previously exist. Not to belabor the point, but to drive this home a bit; If you were a dressmaker, You have the skills and ability to bring a dress into existence where there previously was no dress. So here in a similar way, is an individual who through being led by God's Spirit, has the skills, talents and ability to actively create peace.

Peace in Greek didn't simply mean the absence of fighting, but carried the greater idea of harmony, order, stability, reconciliation and social well-being. Jesus teaching about being a peacemaker was interesting,

because Rome had their idea of being “makers of peace” by the Roman military power. This time period of the first century was known by this famous idea of the “Pax Romana” (Peace of Rome). Their peace was essentially, submit under our power, and there will be peace, and we will keep the peace. This was a very different “making of peace” than what Jesus was claiming the children of God were to create.

We should remember that Jesus was speaking to a group of people living in a land of conflict. Rome occupied their homeland. They were charged taxes that were unfairly driving them often close to poverty. Zealots advocated a violent resistance/revolution. There was conflict between religious groups (mainly the Pharisees and Sadducees). There was conflict between the Jews and surrounding peoples --- such as the Samaritans and other nations (Gentiles). In this environment, most believed there were only two options: fight or submit.

Peace to the Hebrew ear was a very rich and deeply meaningful term. You’ve likely all heard the Hebrew word: “shalom” (שלום). This included the ideas of wholeness, restoration, flourishing, harmony, well-being, and reconciliation with God. I believe this is one of the most misunderstood beatitudes. I believe there has even been harm done due to this misunderstanding. Jesus did not say “peace-lovers” or “peace-keepers”. Many love the idea of peace and many avoid conflict to “keep the peace”, but that isn’t what Jesus modeled. When religious leaders sought to trap Jesus, we don’t see Him turn around and walk out the door and say, “sorry, I don’t get involved in conflict”. The Bible authors go out of their way to make sure we understand that Jesus knew exactly what they were doing, and yet stayed and engaged in conversation with them, despite their ill motives, in order to let the truth of God shine. It wasn’t about pride or ego, but Jesus upheld justice and right, and clear teaching of God’s Truth and this often brought Him into conflict with those who misunderstood God’s truth. Jesus could engage without losing control over His emotions, words or

actions. By holding His ground, and upholding the Truth, Jesus would reveal hypocrisy, injustice and harm that was occurring to many. Jesus also didn't call us as Christians to be "Peace-At-All-Cost People". When Christianity came under attack by Rome, many surrendered the truth to avoid persecution and conflict. When we understand that true peace involves more than an absence of conflict, but relationship wholeness, restoration, and reconciliation, then sometimes making peace actually requires having difficult conversations (motivated by love and a desire for a greater closeness), and confronting sin. People commonly believe Jesus was just a door-mat, and took whatever anyone wanted to do to Him, but this is a misunderstanding. It was the plan of the God Family that Jesus would freely choose to lay down His life and suffer at the hands of men. This had to happen, and therefore Jesus allowed this to happen.

Additionally, we see that Jesus taught living a life that actually exposed injustice through responding not in kind, but forcing individuals to choose between behaving very poorly or confronting their bad behavior. We'll discuss this more when we get to verse 39 of this chapter. Jesus rebuked Pharisees, cleansed the Temple, and challenge hypocrisy. He stood up to pride, false religion and oppression. His life and teachings challenged the wrong teachings at that time. He would challenge their biases against Samaritans, lepers and sinners. He tried to get people to stop hiding behind excuses for mis-treating each other or keeping distance in certain relationships and modeled touching those others wouldn't touch, eating with those others wouldn't eat with, etc.

The ultimate way Jesus was a peacemaker was that He brought about peace between God and man (Colossians 1:20). Notice, peace between God and man did not exist, yet through His life and action peace was created. Jesus showed that the peacemaker is not driven by the desire to win, dominate, humiliate, or destroy an opponent. Instead, he seeks

restoration, truth, justice, repentance, and ultimately reconciliation. While the world often asks, "How do I defeat my enemy?", the peacemaker asks, "How can this relationship be restored to what God intended it to be?" If a relationship is abusive, the abuse has to stop for the relationship to be as God intended. Peacemaking often creates temporary conflict before it produces lasting peace and proper relationships. This is similar to how a surgeon creates a temporary cut in order to help facilitate healing. A peacemaker may need to expose sin, and confront or address painful realities --- before true reconciliation can occur. False peace can ignore problems, but real peace works to solve them. Jesus was not interested in preserving superficial peace.

Day 788 – WEDNESDAY: June 10<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23

Daily Deep Dive:

Matthew 5:10 – “persecuted for righteousness’ sake”. This is the last beatitude --- as verse 11 is typically seen as an expansion and application of this final beatitude and not a separate beatitude in form. Verse 10 here marks a drastic shift in the beatitudes. It shifts from describing what a disciple IS (or is in the process of becoming), to describing what a disciple will often EXPERIENCE as a direct result of who that disciple is and Who (God the Father and Jesus Christ) they reflect. The Greek word here, which is *dediōgmenoi* (δεδιωγμένοι) for “having been persecuted”, comes from a root that contains the meaning of “to pursue”, “to chase down”, or “to hunt down”. Before Christianity, it was commonly used for hunters pursuing prey, soldiers pursuing an enemy and legal prosecution. The verb used here in Matthew 5:10 is in the “perfect passive participle” form. This form often carries the sense of an action that has occurred and yet the effect of that action continues. So, in this case it carries the idea of “those who have been pursued, harassed, opposed, and continue to bear the consequences.” The passive voice indicates that “something is being

done to them". They are the ones on the receiving end. This language expresses that someone has been "targeted" by possible harassment, hostility, exclusion, mistreatment, etc.

And why has this person been "persecuted"? On account of the righteousness they have pursued and developed. We already saw this word for righteousness in those who hungered and thirsted that this righteousness would be filled. Here it is that same righteousness, that same right conduct, virtue, uprightness, where we strive to live according to God's way, law, and morality, that brings about us having a "target" placed on us that leads people to relentlessly pursue and persecute us. Doing right before God is what leads to the persecution. We can look back through the Bible and see time and time again that doing right is the very thing that brought about persecution against God's faithful followers (consider Daniel and his friends, Elijah, Jeremiah, Paul and of course Jesus Christ Himself). This is one of the great paradoxes of the Bible. We would expect that people would appreciate individuals who did right, but often it's doing right that actually places the target on your back and brings opposition. Righteousness throughout the Bible has a way of shining light on others' dark actions (consider John 3:20 **"For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."**). As truth, light and right living expose, this exposure often produces hostility. This beatitude shows that as we Christians become transformed and grow to obey and follow God, the world will not applaud. And while this world will tolerate a lot in the name of religion, it often resists and comes against genuine righteousness. Jesus teaches that sometimes God's favor is demonstrated not by the absence of opposition, but by faithfulness in the midst of it.

Something interesting that both the first beatitude (Matthew 5:3) and the last beatitude (Matthew 5:10) share the same promise "For theirs is the Kingdom of heaven". This forms what is called an "inclusio". This is

a literary device where the author places the same words/theme/phrase/idea at the beginning and end to create a “frame” around everything in between. This “inclusio” of the beatitudes essentially conveys “all these beatitudes describe the citizens of God’s Kingdom”.

Matthew 5:11 – As mentioned before, most see that verse 11 is an extension of the beatitude in verse 10. Here there are a number of Greek words that adds a layer to the picture of persecution Christians will face.

- The Greek translated “revile” means “insult, ridicule, heap shame upon, or disgrace publicly”. In the ancient world, honor and shame, carried enormous weight. Reviling wasn’t about hurting someone’s feelings, but damaging their reputation, humiliating them publicly, and dishonoring them before the community. We will see in other places in this chapter where this “honor/shame” culture comes into play in ways we don’t immediately recognize on the surface of the scripture.
- We already talked today about the idea of “persecution” here in the Greek. This is the same word family, describing targeted active opposition and sustained pressure/hostility.
- After describing how people will come after us and attempt to publicly shame us, it says they “say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My (Jesus’) sake”. The Greek for “evil” can mean “harmful, troublesome, wicked, and malicious”. These words are intended to be damaging to injure one’s reputation. But these words are “false”. These words are lies, falsehoods, or intended to deceive. The clear meaning here is that they will be actively spreading false information with the intention of damaging you and your reputation. In all of this, for His sake (being a loyal true Christian), we may be mocked publicly, targets of hostility, have lies spread about us and suffer damage to our reputations.

In the honor/shame culture, this could have a lasting devastating impact on someone's life, reputation affected employment, family standing, social acceptance and community relationships. In this way, Jesus is intending to describe the real social cost of following Him. In all of this we must remember that Jesus is describing the individuals truly favored by Him and His Father. Most people at that time would have thought, "if God is pleased with me, people will honor me". Jesus completely overturns the normal human expectations by revealing that if you truly please God and follow Jesus Christ, people may insult you, target you, lie about you and try to do you harm.

Matthew 5:12 – After what might feel like a downer in verse 11, Jesus now shows the true reaction we should have.

- First, He says we should "rejoice". This is in the present imperative meaning "keep rejoicing". The natural response to insults, lies and persecution is to feel discouragement, anger, and fear --- but Jesus says "keep rejoicing". Keep experiencing joy even with this occurring.
- Then He adds "be exceedingly glad". This Greek word in the ancient world could be used to describe "overwhelming joy" where your body can't help but to leap with joy and rejoice exuberantly. Why is Jesus using such strong "rejoicing" language? Jesus wants us to reframe how we think about the suffering we experience on His behalf. If people oppose us because we are living a life of faithfulness and obedience to God and Jesus Christ, Jesus shows this to be something worth celebrating and being "over the moon" about --- because that shows a life that is in alignment with God and a life that God is very pleased with. If we know God is so well pleased with us, shouldn't that produce a lot of joy and make us want to express that joy?
- Jesus goes on to proclaim that if this is what happens to us, our reward is great in heaven! Not small or minimal as rewards in heaven go, but abundant, large and great!

- Jesus ends this section of the beatitudes by reminding us, that when we go through these difficult things because of Him, we are in good company with all the prophets of God who were persecuted too. Why did they suffer? Because they spoke God's truth, followed and obeyed Him and this dark world turned against them. The Jews of that time looked back on the prophets as heroes of God (as we do today), yet they were often hated by their own generation. Jeremiah and Micaiah were imprisoned. Elijah was hunted. Zechariah was murdered. The reward God has instore for them at Jesus Christ's second coming is great! And so will ours be if we follow their examples. God see's your faithfulness, remembers your suffering, and has prepared a GREAT reward in His Kingdom for you!

#### Day 789 – THURSDAY: June 11<sup>th</sup>

Matthew 5:13-16

Daily Deep Dive:

Verse 13 – So far in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus described the qualities that His true followers should have (what citizens of the Kingdom of God should be like), and then showed how the world will often treat faithful followers of God. And now He pivots to the impact and influence His followers should have on the world around them.

He first describes His followers as the “salt of the earth”. How were the disciples “salt”, and how should we be today? To those in the first century, salt carried several important associations. And while I will consider what salt meant to their world, it's important that we not try to force all of the symbolism into one statement --- and that we consider the context that it was given in.

1. First, salt at that time was used to preserve food. Since they had no refrigeration, meat/fish would spoil and food would decay. Salt slowed this decay. While it may not have been Jesus' primary

point, it's true that in a similar way to salt slowing decay, true followers of Jesus Christ help resist moral and spiritual decay through our example, influence and impact.

2. Second, salt was valuable. Salt was so valuable that we can see in history that it was associated with wages in some cases.

Our English word "salary" ultimately comes from the Latin "salarium", which is related to sal ("salt").

The etymology is generally:

Latin sal = salt

Latin salarium = a payment, allowance, or stipend associated in some way with salt

Old French salaire

English salary

Scholars believe "salarium" may have originally referred to an allowance for purchasing salt, money connected with salt supplies and compensation related to salt transportation and provisioning.

In English, we have the expression that someone is "worth his salt", meaning that someone is worthy of their pay or are valuable/competent/useful.

3. Third, salt had a connection to offerings and covenants. In Leviticus 2:13 it states: "And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt." A "covenant of salt" is also referenced in Numbers 18:19 and 2 Chronicles 13:5. Since salt preserves and helps things endure, it became a symbol of durability, permanence and covenant faithfulness.
4. The fourth meaning of salt, and which appears (based on context) to be the most specific meaning intended by Jesus --- is that of its use as a flavoring agent. The right amount of salt makes food more enjoyable. Job 6:6 asks "Can flavorless food be eaten without salt?" Salt improves the taste of many dishes. Almost every recipe has some amount of salt to make it taste the best.

Jesus calls them the salt “of the earth”. The point was that of their broad influence and impact that went far beyond themselves, their families or friends. Salt influences all that it touches.

And that brings us to another important word in the verse. That’s the Greek word *mōranthē* (μωρανθῆ) --- which is translated in this verse as “loses its flavor”. It comes from a root of “fool” and literally means to “become foolish”. By context, translators understood this to mean that “salt can become useless for its intended purpose of flavoring”. How would this happen? In the first-century, salt wasn’t taken for granted the way we might today. It’s now cheap. And we have a lot of it. For Jews living in Galilee and Judea, the most important source of salt was from the Dead Sea. The Dead Sea is 8 to 10 times saltier than normal seawater. Salt could be obtained by collecting salt crystals from the shore deposits; gathering salt encrusted earth; or gathering salt water and letting the water evaporate, leaving behind the salt. Salt was therefore typically mixed with gypsum, sand, limestone and other minerals.

Today, if you have pure table salt (pure sodium chloride), it doesn’t “go bad” or lose its flavor. However, salt around the dead sea wasn’t pure salt, as I already mentioned. It might look like a chunk of salt (to the eye), but it wasn’t. It was maybe only 20% actual salt. Moisture from rain, humidity, dew, groundwater, etc., could come into contact with the chunk of salt, earth and minerals --- and because sodium chloride (salt) is highly soluble in water, it dissolves readily. The other minerals are far less soluble, so they remain and still look like salt (white salt-like deposit) --- but most of the sodium chloride has already dissolved into the water. Therefore, it would not only no longer make food more desirable, it also loses its ability to preserve food and to be valuable. Jews of Judea and Galilee understood that salt could lose its saltiness

over time, even if it was in sacks and jars, since these could get moisture into them and overtime lose its saltiness.

With all this background, we can understand how salt can still look like salt --- but lose its ability to make food taste better, preserve food or be valuable, and therefore become good for nothing and be simply discarded and walked over. And Jesus parallels this to a warning to His disciples (and by extension to us). The issue is to function and be useful for the intended purpose. Christians must be on guard that overtime they don't still look religious (perhaps still attend church and be able to quote Scripture), but they no longer impact the world in the way that they should, especially as it relates to the qualities that Jesus had just covered in the beatitudes. If that happens, they have lost their value to God and Jesus Christ. The Bible in many ways describes this as "losing our first love". We find this to be a description of some of the Christians in the church at Ephesus by the end of the first century. Christianity was intended to make a huge, beneficial impact on the world. Sadly, through Satan's corrupting influence much of the world's "Christianity" is empty and lacks the impact for which it was intended.

If anyone would like to learn more about what likely had occurred to the church in Ephesus and a warning for you and me, here is a sermon I gave back in 2023 entitled "The Church of Ephesus in Me":

<https://www.ucg.org/sermons/church-ephesus-me>

Day 790 – FRIDAY: June 12<sup>th</sup>

Preparation Day

Day 791 – SATURDAY: June 13<sup>th</sup>

Sabbath Rest