

# WEEKLY SERMON

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## You are salt of the earth

It's an odd metaphor isn't it? I am quite happy to be likened to light, to seed, to a vine, to a farmworker, to a fisherman, even to a sheep.

But it feels very odd to be compared to salt. That's in part because I live in a world where salt is everywhere: scattered across the tables of fish and chip shops, thrown all over frozen roads, added in abundance to almost every product from burgers to ice cream.

In fact, there is so much salt about it's killing us off with high blood pressure!

But in the time of Jesus, salt was an incredibly precious commodity. Soldiers often preferred to be paid in salt than currency because it was more likely to hold its value (our word 'salary' comes from the Latin word for salt).

And that's because in the time of Jesus salt had two near-miraculous properties. First it could preserve food, and even meat, which in the days before fridges and in hot climates could be the difference between life and death. And second it gave flavour. It made things worth eating and turned dull, bland food into something delicious.

Looked at in that way, I am more than happy to do my best to be like salt. This wonderful metaphor shows us two of the key responsibilities that Jesus gives to his church.

First, we are to be life preservers. We declare new life in Jesus. Without him, human life is nasty, brutish and short. But through the cross Jesus has rescued us and set us free.

Made from the dust of the earth, in him we are transformed and destined for glory. If we believe that in our hearts, then we must declare that new life to others as we invite, share faith and bear witness.

And second, we are to be flavour-givers. For the new life we find in Jesus is not all about deferred pleasure. It begins the moment we offer our hearts to him. Life lived in Christ is not about humourless, pleasure-denying misery.

It is a rich and full life, one filled with love, one with purpose, one in which we need never be alone because we have friendship in Jesus and companionship in his church.

So, the next time you are bunging a bit of salt in your chips in McDonalds, remember, that salt is you.

Offer life. Give flavour.

**Bishop Philip North, Bishop of Burnley**

HEALTHY CHURCHES TRANSFORMING COMMUNITIES