

Speaker : Assoc Pastor David Seah
Sermon Title : Warning: Contains Salt
Text : Matthew 5:13-16

Introduction

I remember the story of a foreign domestic helper who wanted to know the cause of the commotion that was coming from upstairs of the house where the children were playing. Instead of asking - "**What on earth are you doing?**" in her limited command of the English language she asked - "**What are you doing on earth?**"

We are not the only ones pondering over this age-old question.

Numerous books have been written to throw light and understanding on this great question of life. The search for life's purpose has for centuries left many bewildered and perplexed. Why is it so? It is because we typically begin at the wrong starting point – ourselves. We ask self-centered questions like –

- What do I want to be?
- What should I do with my life?
- Who should I marry?
- What are my goals, my ambitions, and my dreams for my future?

These are without doubt important questions to ask. However, focusing on ourselves will never reveal our life's purpose. Contrary to what books, movies and seminars tell us, we won't discover the meaning by looking within ourselves.

To begin with, we didn't create ourselves, so there is no way we can tell ourselves what we were created for! If I show you an invention you have never seen before, chances are you wouldn't know its purpose and the invention itself wouldn't be able to tell you either. Only the creator or the owner's manual would be able to reveal its purpose and show how best to use it.

Thus, our search for life's purpose must begin with God, our Creator. We exist only because God wills that we exist. "**We were made by God and for God.**"

Unless we understand and come to terms with this truth, life in its totality will never make adequate sense. We are all too familiar with clichés like believe in your dreams; aim high, set goals, identify your strengths and talents, clarify your values, be disciplined and never give up.'

Well, these recommendations are good and often lead to success. **But being successful and fulfilling our life's purpose is not the same thing.** We may reach our goals, achieve great accomplishments according to society's standard, and still miss the purpose God has created us for.

It is only in God that we discover our **origin, our identity and our significance.** **So how do we discover our life's purpose?** To know what our purpose on earth is, let's look at what Jesus says in **Matthew 5: 13- 16.**

"¹³Let me tell you why you are here. You're here to be salt-seasoning that brings out the God-flavors of this earth. If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage.

¹⁴⁻¹⁶"Here's another way to put it: You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do

you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine!

Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven” (Matthew 5: 13- 16).

Jesus used two of the most important elements on earth to illustrate the purpose of a believer's life.

1. Firstly, He used the metaphor of the salt

In the ancient world, salt was highly valued.

Columns of salt rising from the extreme saline waters of the Dead sea. 8.6 times saltier than the ocean. 33.7% salinity.

The Greeks called salt 'divine' because it performs two vital functions. Firstly, it is the most common of all preservatives.

Salted cod

It keeps things from turning bad. Secondly, salt gives flavor to food.

In using salt as an illustration, the point that Jesus was making is clear: Just as salt must be absorbed into the food in order to give the food a distinct flavour, Christians must assimilate themselves into the world in order to make an impact.

In John 17:15 -18, Jesus prayed – “I'm not asking that you take them out of the world. But that you guard them from the Evil One. They are no more defined by the world. Than I am defined by the world. Make them holy—consecrated—with the truth; Your word is consecrating truth. In the same way that you gave me a mission in the world, I give them a mission in the world.”

Friends, we have a God-given mission. Our mission is to ensure that our sodium chloride compound makes a difference in the world.

But how? What is our saltiness supposed to do? Well, I would like to suggest that **salt is to food what meaning is to life.**

Without salt, the food would taste bland. Without meaning, life would be directionless. Purposeless. Hopeless. People lose hope primarily because they can't find a purpose or a meaning to all that they are going through. In the absence of 'purpose', hopelessness abounds and this eventually leads to a loss of desire to really live.

Remember the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4?

The woman had no direction, no hope, no specific meaning in life. Her lifestyle revealed a lack of purpose. Perhaps she was searching for fulfillment and she thought it could be found in relationships. And so that led to one partner after another. One marriage after another. So much so that she couldn't even figure out what the current one was supposed to be. A partner, a husband, a boy friend, co-habitator? What?

And Jesus began to sprinkle the first dose of salt into her life by saying – “You are right when you said that you have no husband. In fact you had 5. And the current one you are with isn’t even your husband.” Jesus showed that He knew her past & yet was not rejecting nor despising her.

And He continued his conversation and marinated her insipid life with meaning. He talked about God and God’s salvation. **He explained about what matters most in life: our worship before God. And that in order for our worship to be acceptable to God, it must come from our spirit which is in the pursuit of truth.**

There must come a sincere determination to obey Him, to walk in His truth. (because many can be sincere, but they can be sincerely wrong).

And truth was one of the last things that this woman had. She had believed lies upon lies upon lies that resulted in her current lifestyle up till that point.

And finally, before they parted, Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah, whom the woman, as well as other Samaritans were waiting for.

“The woman said “I don’t know about that. I do know that the Messiah is coming. When he arrives, we’ll get the whole story.” “I am he,” said Jesus. “You don’t have to wait any longer or look any further” (John 4:25-26).

The encounter this woman had with Jesus was the turning point in her life. She finally found meaning in life.

How do I know? You would observe that she ran back to the town to share with everyone her new **found meaning in life**. You see friends, you can only share with others enthusiastically what you yourself have genuinely experienced.

She had met with the Messiah who revealed her own past to her without judging her! What can we learn from this passage?

Church, as believers, as salt of the earth, our mission is to bring meaning to the Samaritan woman in our lives. We all have our Samaritan woman encounter everyday:

- In school when we are talking with our classmate
- In the office we our subordinates or our superiors
- At a family gathering
- In church, in the LG

And every Samaritan woman represents every individual who is seeking & is hurting.

She was seeking & waiting for the Messiah. But she was also hurting, due to her failed relationships.

- i. What meaning do we bring to those who are seeking ? – Seek no longer. Jesus said “I am He”. Look no further. Taste & see that He is good.

My story of seeking God – God found me.

- ii. What meaning do we bring to those who are hurting? –

I understand. God subjected Himself to be hurt :

- by being man so that you will know that He understands the feelings of your infirmity;
- and that's not all He does, He later allowed Himself to be crucified so that His blood can cleanse our wrongs and heal our soul. Through His death we gain life.

People are seeking & people are hurting. Some are hurting, that's why they are seeking. Some may not be hurting, but they are seeking nevertheless, for that something greater, something more valuable, something lasting, something they can give their entire life to, something that will outlast their life.

Many don't show their needs upfront. You can't immediately spot them. But they are seeking & they are hurting. And like the Samaritan woman, they are going about their daily, busy lives.

Will we not bring meaning, the true meaning of life, in our conversation with them?

I'm well aware that the challenge we have is this : - how best to translate the powerful gospel, the most meaningful topic on earth, and assimilate it into our everyday conversation?

Let's ask the Samaritan woman – how did she tell the town people?

"I just told them what happened." "That's it? No ABC to witnessing? No 7 crucial steps to power evangelism? No training needed?"

"No, I just told them what happened." "And what happened next?" "Err, the people came to meet Jesus themselves." "They heard Him and were saved."

"Many of the Samaritans from that village committed themselves to him because of the woman's witness: "He knew all about the things I did. He knows me inside and out!" They asked him to stay on, so Jesus stayed two days. A lot more people entrusted their lives to him when they heard what he had to say. They said to the woman, "We're no longer taking this on your say-so. We've heard it for ourselves and know it for sure. He's the Savior of the world!" (John 4:39-42)

"Wow".

Friends, as salt of the earth, "we are to bring out the **God-flavours** of this earth."

But Pastor, I've not been much of a salt. Is God throwing me into the garbage?

Because Vs 13b says ma – "If you lose your saltiness, how will people taste godliness? You've lost your usefulness and will end up in the garbage."

Now, don't misinterpret this text. Jesus' intention was not to throw caution to that which could happen, but rather to highlight an **impossibility**.

You see, salt itself is extremely stable and is unlikely to lose its flavour. If we were to find salt that is not salty, it is either due to the faulty extraction methods of salt from the sea water or the unscrupulous acts of merchants mixing it with other substances. Salt doesn't lose its saltiness.

So Jesus was really stating an impossibility in order to draw our awareness to this truth. Salt doesn't lose its saltiness.

We are intrinsically salty by nature. Jesus was the one who extracted us (as it were) out from the Kgdom of darkness into the Kgdom of light.

We are made to be salt, and who we are in essence can never be eroded with any external impurity because of what Jesus has accomplished on the cross for us.

God saved us and made us salty. **We carry within us life's ultimate meaning – Jesus Christ, the Messiah.**

We bring meaning through our words and our action. **V-Impact is about being salty through our actions** – quote a few eg.

And friends, everyone of us, regardless where we are in our station of life, our maturity or the lack of it, the background we come from, we have this God given mission.

This is our lives purpose. This is why we are doing on earth!

Conclusion

But Pastor, I don't think I've made much of a difference. In fact, I already feel like I'm in the garbage. I feel wasted. I'm finding little meaning in all that I'm going through, let alone try to give meaning to others.

I feel lukewarm. I am not where I'm supposed to be. I'm far from Christ.

If that is you, then this message is for you. God loves you. Return to your first love. Reconcile with God. Come back. Do not let the tide of circumstances bring you further away. Draw near Him.

Come under His blood. Let Him purify you. Let Him again be the meaning why you live and let His mission be the sole purpose of your life.