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Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York

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Communion Sunday - Everyone Will Be Salted With Fire

Mark 9:49-50

Prayer: *Father, I just again, I thank you for this opportunity that we have to come together once a month to focus in on what you've done for us on the cross on this communion Sunday. I just again, I pray as we enter into this sacred spot, this sacred place that your Holy Spirit would guide us, direct us, and make this of permanent value and I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well like I said, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died he met one last time with his disciples to celebrate a Passover supper. It's described in *Matthew 26*, which says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."*

So Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat that remembrance of his sacrifice on a regular basis and this is what we call "the Lord's table." And we celebrate it once a month, as I've said, and we do that by meditating on what it is that Jesus Christ did for us on the cross, by then examining ourselves and that's asking God's Holy Spirit to point out areas in our life where we have sinned, where he's convicting us of that sin and by confessing that sin and then participating in the elements. Jesus said in *John 6:53*: *So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."*

Well we're following the life of Christ, we're following it in the gospel of Mark. And now as his public ministry is winding to an end, Jesus is giving us intense instruction to his disciples who've been fighting and bickering among themselves. Last time out Jesus spoke at length about Gehenna which was the dump that burned continuously outside of Jerusalem and he spoke of it as a metaphor for hell. And then he ended his teaching with a very cryptic statement, actually three different statements, all about salt. This is *Mark 9:49-50*. Jesus says: *Everyone will be salted with*

fire. *"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."* Well in two simple sentences Jesus winds up using salt as a verb, as a noun, as an adjective and then as a noun once again. I mean he clearly gets a lot of work out of the word salt. So first let's get at what Jesus is talking about when he uses that term, and then let's kind of take a look at each of these uses.

So first let's take a look at salt as noun. Again Jesus says, *"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?"* Well in Jesus' day salt was an incredibly valuable commodity. Salt is actually where the word "salary" comes from because sal is the Latin term for salt. Roman soldiers were sometimes paid their wages in a salarium which was a bag of salt. A salarium became what we know today as a salary or a regular payment for services. A worker or soldier who didn't earn his keep was considered to be somebody not worth his salt.

The reason why salt was so valuable was just what you expect. It was rare. It was hard to come by. I mean nowadays salt is so cheap that we throw it on our sidewalks. I mean it's hard to imagine salt being that rare and that valuable but it was. And the reason why it was so valuable was at that time there was no

refrigeration obviously, there was no such thing as food preservation as we understand it today. Food had to be prepared and eaten right away as spoilage was going to render it useless. Salt was one of the few options that you had to extend the shelf life of food, sometimes almost indefinitely. And in addition salt was able to impart a certain sustenance to otherwise very bland flavors.

Jesus' primary use of salt is as something that prevents decay, something that holds back rot. Jesus says to believers in *Matthew 5:13*, he says: "*You are the salt of the earth,*" meaning that his followers have a critical role to play and that is literally as societal preventers of rot. That protection from rot and decay comes simply from them being present. It's that connection itself that acts as a preventive, keeping a culture from becoming as bad as could be or at least slowing down the process.

A culture that has real Christians in it is a culture that is connected to absolute truth and beauty because they are connected to God. A culture that has phony Christians, not so much. Real Christians understand that loving God and loving others is the driving force in their lives. And it is and always has been the presence of real Christians that has made democracies thrive. It was de Tocqueville who said that democracies will only work in

cultures that believe in a form of biblical morality, that is when the general citizens understand that they all answer to a sovereign God.

God only gave us ten commandments to follow and he knew when he gave us those ten commandments that they covered all aspects of morality. And you look at the ten commandments, you see three of them are oriented towards God; one is about the Sabbath, but the other six, they're aimed at our fellow man. Now honor your parents, don't murder, don't commit adultery, don't steal, don't lie, don't covet. I mean if you think of those ten commandments as a superstructure of a society, if you think of it kind of as girders that hold up a building, well then all the other parts, the floors, the walls, the doors, the ceilings, all of those other parts, they're made up of the good will of the hearts of those who are seeking to do God's will if only from a cultural perspective. That's what culture does. But even cultural Christians know instinctively that murder, adultery, stealing, lying and coveting are things to avoid and that honoring your parents is something to embrace. And it's those hearts, those hearts that function as salt in a society, they serve as rot preventers.

So when the salt of Christianity starts to become unsalty, well those rules, they begin to no longer apply. And when the salt

begins to disappear, people no longer have hearts, cultural or otherwise, that innately desire to follow God and his rules. They find dozens of different ways to break those Ten Commandments. And so the building starts to lose its infrastructure that was created by the presence of salt in the first place. The girders that are holding up the building are no longer enough. And the world's response to that is to fill in those empty spots in the building that used to be filled in with good will with what? With new laws, new laws that cover more and more aspects of everyday living, aspects that used to be understood automatically.

I mean if you think of the Ten Commandments as the girders or the steel support structure of a building, you understand how biblical morality would be the salt that would fill in the details. You know God says, "*thou shalt not steal.*" That's a structural law. A biblical morality would understand even at a cultural level that that law covers a whole host of secondary issues involving taking something that doesn't belong to you. When the biblical morality that filled in those secondary issues disappears, when the salt begins to lose its saltiness, the only way the government can respond to this is to start enacting more and more laws to cover more and more circumstances. In the past biblical morality would say you can't steal someone's goods and claim them as your own, but it was also understood that that included that you couldn't steal

somebody's work and claim it as your own. Well as the salt has lost its saltiness, people find dozens of new ways to steal other people's work, if not their deeds. And so lawmakers now have to pass new and more sophisticated laws in order to catch them.

I mean today we have thousands of new copyright laws to fill in the blank spaces in our building, spaces that used to be filled with biblical morality that no longer exist because biblical morality with regard to stealing has disappeared. We have a command not to bear false witness. Well, biblical morality, I mean, salt, if you will, would insist that that covers a whole host of behaviors all of which rely on a level of transparency in everything we do. Well when that biblical morality disappears, legislators, they have to enact dozens and dozens and eventually sometimes even thousands of new laws dealing and protecting -- defining and protecting people from the illegalities of lying. I mean here in the United States we average over 100,000 new laws proposed every single year, because when biblical morality begins to fade away we respond simply by passing more and more laws to make up the difference.

But new laws aren't the only reflection of what happens when salt loses its saltiness. You see, when that happens whole governments begin to change the way they relate to their citizens. Alexander Solzhenitsyn pointed out that there are two very different ways to

achieve anarchy, which is the total absence of anything regarding law. One way is the obvious way which is to have a complete and total breakdown of any laws such as we found in the Rwandan genocide of 1994, some of what we see breaking out in certain parts of Ukraine today. But the other way, a far more prevalent way is to have so many laws covering so many different aspects of everyday living that you could pull anybody off the street at any time and quickly figure out a way that he was breaking some kind of law. So whether it's the absence of any laws or the multiplication of laws to the point of absurdity, you both wind up with anarchy. And you get there by replacing biblical morality with legislated morality, and that's directly the result of salt losing its saltiness. And so as we as a culture as we move from Christian to post Christian, we can certainly see the rot and the decay. It's not just coming in but it's taking over. As Jesus told his disciples: *"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?"*

Well Jesus is now moving from salt as a substance to salt as a different type of matter, in this case he's talking about saltiness. Jesus asks how does salt lose its saltiness? Well if you remember the chemical composition of salt from your high school chemistry days, you know it's a combination of sodium and chlorine, it makes a very stable compound, something that could be found

simply by digging it up. Well that's what the ancients did. See, the saltiness of salt has everything to do with its purity. Good salt was pure salt. Bad salt was salt that had been adulterated either before or after he was mined with other materials which might look just like salt. In fact some areas were famous for producing salt that was mixed with gypsum which gave it a highly alkaline flavor, very offsetting flavor. The more you adulterated pure salt with that, the less effective it became until eventually it became less than useless. In fact it became nothing more than a toxic substance useful only to be trampled underfoot.

And again Jesus says: *"Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again?"* Well, today we have no problem reconstituting and removing impurities from salt but back then that was virtually impossible. No amount of effort could make salt that had lost its saltiness anything but useless. So we ask, all right, what is Jesus driving at here? I mean he's not talking about salt here, he's talking about people. How do we lose our ability to be salt?

Well the simplest way to strip salt of its purity is to adulterate it with something. And of course that raises the question of people losing their saltiness. Is that possible? Can someone who is at one point the salt of the earth become so thoroughly useless,

so absolutely worthless that he's no longer considered to be part of the kingdom? I mean to put it in the simplest terms, can we lose our salvation? Well there's another story that Jesus tells about falsely living a Christian life until it too became so adulterated that it's literally choked off and it's a story you're familiar with, the story of the sower and the soils. It's in *Matthew 13*. Let me just read it to you.

It says: *And he -- that's Jesus -- told them many things in parables, saying: "A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell along the path, and the birds came and devoured them. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and immediately they sprang up, since they had no depth of soil, but when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and produced grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear."*

So Jesus is describing the fate of four different soils as they receive the seed of the gospel. And the first one, the pathway soil, produces no results whatsoever and Jesus claims the devil just snatches the word away as it's preached. Well the rocky soil and the thorny soil though, they both produce what at first looks

like an impressive amount of growth. Jesus explains the parable. This is how he says it, he says: *"Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is what was sown along the path. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful."*

So Jesus is identifying two primary conditions in which the plant never develops and one is persecution but the other, it's cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches. To put this in the context of saltiness, this is the gypsum, this is the gypsum that adulterates the salt making it essentially useless. And in both cases Jesus is not describing someone who blossoms as a believer only to be cut off and discarded when he fails but rather as someone who never was part of the kingdom but who gave early evidence that he might be. I mean certainly no farmer, no farmer counts as part of his crop or harvest plants that sprang up and died. I mean plants get choked out according to Jesus by worldly

cares and money and none of it is a surprise; there's no trickery here on the part of the enemy. I mean the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches, they simply present themselves as an alternative to life in the kingdom. And many of us have seen how effective that temptation is, I mean, it was Jesus who said: *"No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money."*

So Jesus is asking what master you'll serve and the choice in the case of the soils, it's pretty obvious. The question of salt losing its saltiness is not so obvious, and the reason why is because salt loses its saltiness when it gets adulterated but it gets adulterated by things that look very close to the real item. See if you had a pile of gypsum and a pile of salt you'd be hard pressed to physically tell the difference between them. It's only when you combine them do you realize that the two are vastly different and that the phony salt renders the real salt useless. You see in this case we need to remember the context that Jesus is speaking into. If you remember he had just caught his disciples actually on more than one occasion arguing about the most petty and worldly things such as who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom of God. His warning about losing saltiness differed from his warning about rocky and thorny soil in that there's many

aspects of saltiness that appear on the outside to be good and godly. So what does phony salt look like? Well salt itself is the connection to what's right and true and godly, then phony salt would give an appearance of that while lacking its substance. And that's exactly what the Pharisees were selling. And that's just the attitude that Jesus saw in its incipient phase in the disciples; that's what he was trying to nip in the bud.

Paul saw that very same attitude and he warned Timothy about it in 1 Timothy. And again the warning that Paul gives to Timothy is apropos particularly in these days. This is what Paul said, he said: *But understand this, Timothy, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people.*

Now who in the world or why in the world would Paul tell Timothy to avoid such people if he doesn't expect him to run into them where? In church. I mean Paul's letters to Timothy are called the pastoral letters because he's explaining to him how to pastor a

church. I mean am I suggesting that all those nasty things that Paul just listed could possibly be applied to the saints in the church? I mean that we sheep could be selfish, greedy, proud, arrogant and abusive, along with a host of other things? Well, consider the disciples themselves. Remember the context Jesus is speaking into only 15 verses before. This is *Mark 9:33*. It says: *And they came to Capernaum. And when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you discussing on the way?" But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest.* I mean the disciples had just been caught having an argument as to who's going to be the greatest in the kingdom and Jesus may very well be calling them to task about adulterating their saltiness with all kinds of worldly attitudes that while giving an appearance of godliness, denied its actual power.

So how are we to tell whether these folks, just like the disciples, are exhibiting a momentary glitch, a sin, a falling, a stumble or something so adulterated, so mixed in with the phony that it's beyond redemption? It's a question we all have to ask ourselves. The question is: Just who am I? Am I a saint who struggles or am I a seed planted in rocky or thorny ground destined to pop up and shine for a brief moment and then just disappear? Am I the salt of the earth or am I salt that has lost its saltiness making me, as Paul would say to Timothy, someone to avoid? Well, there's one way

to cut through all of that to find out who you really are. There's one simple question that you need to ask and answer for yourself that will settle that once and for all. The question is this: Do you love Jesus? Very simple question. You understand John defines Jesus' sheep in the simplest of terms in 1 John. *He said we love because he first loved us.* Listen to how Paul put this. This is Titus 3. He said: *For we ourselves were once foolish, disobedient, led astray, slaves to various passions and pleasures, passing our days in malice and envy, hated by others and hating one another. But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit.*

See, to put it another way, we believers in Jesus Christ, we recognize that we believe in the ultimate fairy tale. And just like all other fairy tales when people realize that there really was a good prince who came down to this planet to rescue his sheep who had been taken captive by an evil prince who was ruling this world and that the good prince came down and fought the evil prince over us, we can't help but respond with affection for that good prince. And then when we learn that what it cost the good prince to rescue us, the deeper that love that we have for him has to grow. And when we finally come to grips with the idea that the

good prince came down to this planet not as a prince but as a servant born of a peasant woman and that he lived his life taking no advantage whatsoever of his status as prince not just of the world but of the universe and that he lived perfectly among us only to have us turn on him, betray him and crucify him all according to God's foreordained plan; and that God's perfect justice would have to condemn us for falling short of his glory but God's perfect mercy would come to the cross to pay the price of that condemnation if we simply put our faith in his sacrifice. And when we finally realize that that's what he's done for us, we can't help but fall in love with Jesus Christ. And that's just where we start. The rest of our lives is time spent learning and growing in our understanding of the depth, the breadth, the height and the width of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And so the question that we need to ask ourselves this morning is not are we salty enough, the question is do we with all of our faults, with all of our foibles and all of our sins, do we love the Lord Jesus Christ?

As we begin to prepare to receive the bread, consider the words of *1 Corinthians 11* which says: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves,*

we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.

And as I say each time communion is serious business. To enter into communion in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. And I say this, if you are not absolutely confident you're a child of the King, if you haven't by faith trusted in Christ as your Savior or if you first need to be reconciled to your brother and sister by bringing the sacrifice of yourself to the altar first, then don't participate; just pass the elements on. If you don't feel right about participating err on the side of caution and get right with God first.

And as I always say you can also make the mistake of thinking you have to be flawless in order to do this. We are -- it's a huge mistake to think that you are unworthy to receive communion, period. You see, being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, that you don't fail. It means that we recognize the salvation we have been given is a gift that no one is capable of earning -- quote -- "by being good." And I quote it each month, Dane Ortlund's quote: "In the kingdom of God, the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means when we fail we are aware of the fact that we've sinned because God's

Holy Spirit now lives inside us convicting us. And so we grieve as children who know that we have a Father who longs to forgive us and cleanse us, who says: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that you're sinless, it means that you understand that when you sin you have an advocate with the Father, someone speaking on your behalf.

1 John 2:1 says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.* And that's the key right there. Because we know we have Jesus' righteousness and not our own -- it's a foreign righteousness that belongs to him, it's given to us -- and because we have that righteousness, we are now free to eat from his table. And so if you love your Lord, do not deny yourself the privilege that he purchased for you. As I said, he lived the life we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die in our place so that we could be worthy of this moment. So ask yourself a simple question: Do I love Jesus?

1 Corinthians 11:23 says: *For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and*

said, *"This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."* So take, and eat.

Jesus said: *"Everyone will be salted with fire. Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."* So we've been looking at salt primarily as a noun that has a connection to the goodness and holiness of God, that has this preserving effect on the culture that we're part of. I want to look at the next way of looking at salt and this time it's as a verb. And here people have a lot of trouble. Commentators are greatly divided over just what Jesus meant by saying, *"Everyone will be salted with fire."*

The ESV study notes says, *"'everyone will be salted with fire' is a puzzling statement that occurs only in Mark and many interpretations have been proposed."* Well some folks think that Jesus was referring to hell, some think he was referring to judgment on the world, others see this as a reference to the disciples. And again that makes the most sense to me because it lines up perfectly with what Jesus was doing and that was instructing and warning his disciples about what was going to come next. I mean Jesus knew precisely what he was saying when he said that *"everyone will be salted with fire"* because he knew exactly what the future was going to hold. He knew his disciples were

going to be scattered, he knew they were going to be terrified, he knew that Peter was going to deny him with cursing. He knew that the disciples would be undergoing a process of salting, a verb, in which people are transformed from ordinary fishermen and tax collectors into people who literally turned the world upside down.

Now they may not have realized it but Jesus had been salting them for the past three years. He was salting them when they were in a boat crossing the Sea of Galilee and a huge squall overtook them and the waves were breaking into the boat and they were absolutely terrified. Jesus turned to the storm and said: *"Peace! Be still!"* And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. He said to them, *"Why are you so afraid? Have you still no faith?"* And they were filled with great fear and said to one another, *"Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"* See, at that moment he was salting their confidence in his power.

He was salting them when he came down from the mount of transfiguration to find them engaged in this vicious argument with the Pharisees over their failure to cast out a demon from a child. It says: *And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me."* Well there he was salting their own ability to harness the power of Christ for themselves. He was salting them when he asked

them pointedly in *Mark 9*: *"What were you discussing on the way?"* But they kept silent, for on the way they had argued with one another about who was the greatest. Well there he was salting their understanding of how easily good gifts could be turned into bad. See, salting is what we now call "sanctification." That's the process of turning sinners into saints. It's a process that takes place once we fully enter into the kingdom of God and are justified by Christ's death on the cross. And time again Jesus encouraged, corrected, rebuked and congratulated the disciples as they became more and more Christ-like, as their reactions and responses to kingdom life lived on earth became more like his. And as they became more and more like Jesus, their lives took on the nature and characteristics of salt itself. But all of that teaching was about to come to an abrupt end as a new teacher was about to appear. That teacher was suffering itself. See, Jesus knew that he was no longer going to be in a position to salt them with wisdom and insight and grace. He was about to go to the cross. He knew what he said, *"Everyone will be salted with fire."*

You know, Tim Keller recently spoke to 2,000 Chinese house church leaders, and he was talking about salting, and he was talking about salting through the fires of suffering. This is what he said. He said: "Suffering changes us. It will make you a far better Christian than you would have been, or a far worse Christian than

you would have been, but it will not leave you as you were."

See, I think Jesus is salting us right now today in the very same way that he did with the disciples 2,000 years ago, and I also think at some point that salting is going to be by fire. Right now it's the same way as the disciples experienced it as they lived with Jesus. And the more -- I mean the more we rub shoulders with Jesus through scripture, the more we find Jesus encouraging, correcting, rebuking, and congratulating us just like he did the disciples. But we can't help but notice that the salting is becoming a bit more fiery. A lot of what we took for granted, these biblical teachings about sexuality, about gender, about life in the womb that used to go unchallenged simply as part of our Christian heritage is now being openly challenged as views that belong to bigots and haters or fascists. Like Keller pointed out, it's making us either far better Christians than we would have been or revealing us as far worse than we thought we would be.

I mean it's downright easy to be a progressive Christian or a mainline Protestant today. It gets harder and harder each day to stand up for the orthodox Christianity that Jesus Christ represents, and I have no illusion that it's going to get easier. *Hebrews 12 says: Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or*

fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. The fact is we have haven't even come close. The worst we've had to put up with so far is insults and mockery, but even that should cause us to pause and count the cost. Because Jesus is telling us a promise we can bank on: "Everyone will be salted with fire."

Now if you're one of his you are here to be literally the salt of the earth, a man or a woman whose mere presence can slow down the advance of rot and decay. Jesus said, *"Salt is good but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again"* and the fact is you can't. The good news is that we are not actual salt. We are fallen human beings who worship God who longs to forgive us. And if the salt of our lives has become adulterated, we confess our sins and he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to make our salt salty again.

And finally he says: *"Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other."* The place we first need to start practicing the art of being salt is among ourselves and that's the body of Christ writ larger than 25 Sullivan Avenue. I love the brother pastors that I meet with once a month even though I'm sure there's lots that we disagree on theologically. Every one of us is united with one clear fact: We love Jesus. We know that he rules and reigns,

and we know that salting by fire is coming soon. We also know that there's a lot of rot that has crept into the church and that we're witnessing a house cleaning of sorts. People in the Christian community are dividing and realigning themselves, some to fit more comfortably with a culture that's increasingly at odds with the gospel and others define fellow traffickers in truth, those willing to be salt in a culture that hates the very idea. It was Jesus himself who said only a few verses back, *"For the one who is not against us is for us."*

So take a moment this morning to ask yourself what kind of salt you are and what kind of salt you want to be and if there's a difference between the two, confess it to God and ask him to make it right.

1 Corinthians 11:25 says: *In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."* So take, and drink.

This is the part that I call head heart and feet, where we try to find some practical application of what it is that we're talking about with acknowledging Jesus and communion Sunday. Now you all know, at least I'm assuming you all know that on Tuesday there's a

big event coming up, there's going to be an election. And the election is between two very, very different parties. One party literally shakes its fist at God over issues of gender, over issues of sexuality, over issues of life, particularly life in the womb. It makes no effort whatsoever to hide its antipathy towards biblical Christianity. It deeply resents the whole idea of salt and saltiness. The other party would throw us under a bus in a heartbeat if it could, and just that it recognizes that at this point evangelicals have a lot of political power. You see, we're entering into an unprecedented time when salting by fire is going to become a genuine reality.

My sister's pastor did an ad for a politician, a local politician in which he complained -- he's also a businessman, he has a business on the side that he does -- and he complained about her tax structure and how terrible it was and it was immediately written up in *Mediaite* which is a national publication as "An Islamophobic, Homophobic Pastor Has Complained About Our Politician." This is a pastor said the very same things I've said over and over again. He had the gall to say that marriage is between a man and a woman; for that he's considered a fascist.

Here's what I'd like us to think about and pray about this week, a question I would like us to ask ourselves. Question is this: How

do you respond when late night comics, when pundits and political figures mock us, slander us or outright lie about us? Do you get angry? Do you get embarrassed? Do you get fearful? This week especially I would ask us to check our attitudes when we feel we are under attack and realize that life is preparation for the future. You see, we are in training right here and right now.

Next week is IDOP Sunday. IDOP Sunday is International Day of Prayer for the Persecuted Church. We get *Voice of the Martyrs* magazine. I hope each of you get it. I've always made a commitment, I get that magazine, I read it cover to cover. I always don't want to and I always am glad that I have. And if you read that magazine you realize it almost always consists of four or five case histories all around the world of people who have been undergoing horrendous things at the hand of incredibly wicked people who hate, hate the gospel. And almost one hundred percent of the time these victims respond by praying for and asking for the very best for those who've attacked them. We need to realize that that's the attitude that God wants in us. And that now is the time while it's still easy for us to practice it. So let's pray.

Father, I just, I pray that your kingdom would advance on Tuesday however that works out. There are hundreds of different political races and you know far better than we know the simple politics that

we are following. I pray for those who want to advance your kingdom to advance, I pray for those who want to advance the kingdom of death and evil and fist-shaking at your face, that they would be stopped. I also pray, Lord, for the climate as it's getting more and more hostile towards things of God, things of Christ, things of scripture. I pray that you would give us the ability that these folks in that magazine Voice of the Martyrs constantly put on display the ability to pray for their enemies, to pray for those who would spitefully use you, give us the ability Lord, give us the courage to do just that, I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.