

God's "Covenant of Salt" (Part 1)

"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."
(Mark 9:50)

The word "salt" occurs in the Bible as well in the Old as in the New Testament. It is sometimes synonymous with the word "covenant", and the scriptures mention the term "covenant of salt" three times in the entire Bible.¹ One of these is 2nd Chronicles 13:5 where it says: "Do you not know that the Lord God of Israel, gave rule over Israel forever to David and to his sons by a covenant of salt; a permanent pact, extending to each generation of Israel?" Obviously, this covenant was supposed to be a very strong one that would not expire. The Jews also used the mineral often as an important part of their temple offerings. Why is this so? What is so important about salt? To get a better understanding, it is helpful to go back in history: Refrigeration as a means of preserving food did not begin to spread until the latter part of the 20th century. Before this time, one of the primary ways of preserving food from decay, especially meat or fish, was with salt. It was even used for disinfection of waste. At times, the mineral was very rare. It even became such a valuable commodity, that in the ancient world, it was referred as "white gold". Some of the oldest trade routes in the world were used for its transportation. The Romans referred the word "salary" (salarium) from salt because their soldiers were paid with it, earlier. Similar to the Jews, the Greek regarded salt as divine. It was not only part of their offerings, but was directly dedicated to their gods. In the Arab world, salt covenants were common among political leaders to create peace. Again, in some old myths we can find that people tried to explain the great importance of salt in their days.

In His famous sermon on the mountain in Matthew 5:13, Jesus said to His hearers: "You are salt for the Land." (Complete Jewish Bible). This means, we Christians are supposed to be the preservers of life, and like the taste of salt in a food; we should make a difference in society. Our mission is to show God's love to the people around us, present God as the giver and sustainer of life and share the good news of the Gospel. Especially in crises times like now when the pandemic of COVID-19 is spreading everywhere and turning upside down the lives of all people around the globe, this becomes ever more important.

None of us was prepared for COVID-19. Theoretically, we know that bad things can happen unexpectedly, but now, this has become real, and it has come closer to us than we want to allow it. Within short time, the pandemic has caught all of our attentions. Many find it difficult to endure the loss of control that comes with the crisis. We like to have things in our hands, but the COVID-19 pandemic is taking over. All of us have to try to deal with a situation that rises our deepest fears. The news are full with scaring pictures of crowded hospitals where people suffer and many die. People are afraid of losing loved ones, and many are afraid, too, of losing their work. Alone in Germany, we have more than 11 million of pupils who have to do home schooling, now. Public sports games are forbidden, and many big and smaller events have been cancelled. This includes church and other religious activities. People have to work in home offices. Travelling has become difficult and often impossible. Almost everybody is being told to stay at home.

This situation is very new for the most of us. Nevertheless, the Bible in the Old Testament tells us the truth that "there is nothing new under the sun".² In history, we find pandemics, wars and other catastrophes. Political empires arise and fall. Systems and methods of how we communicate or organize life do change, but the essence of life remains. This means we don't need to panic or think

¹ Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; 2nd Chronicles 13:5

² Ecclesiastes 1: 4-11

that this is the end of all. However, Solomon teaches us that all we cherish in earthly life is vulnerable and will perish eventually. He concludes that we should seek God to find a meaning that goes beyond.

Prayer: "Dear God, we come to you with our fears and hopes. Have mercy on us all, help us in these difficult times, be our help, our strength, our peace, our joy. Reveal yourselves in new ways, help us to reach the unreached and tell the untold about Jesus our Saviour, and have mercy that this will end as soon as possible. Amen."

Greetings and blessings;
Yours Pastor Peter