

Sermon Notes: February 8, 2026

[Lectionary Readings](#)

Focus: Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth” and Edith

In Scripture, saltiness is an image of faithfulness, durability, and covenantal promise. Considering our Annual Meeting last week, I want to explore the biblical meaning of saltiness. Thinking about 2026, we have a strong year ahead and many opportunities to be salty people: salty and light-filled people, salty and communal people. My sermon will focus broadly on salt as metaphor of caring.

Saltiness *preserves the quality* of a community that refuses to let relationships decay and a way back when they do. I am going to talk about this story as well as Lot’s wife in Genesis because I could not reconcile “salt of the earth” and “pillar of salt.”

The Gospel In Mark 9:49–50, Jesus warns that salt which loses its saltiness is no longer good for anything. This is not technically true, NaCl never stops being salt. But what Jesus is referring is likely salt collected around the Dead Sea. It sometimes was corrupted by water leaching out the good stuff. This leaching left behind a white crystal that looked like salt, but not of the preservative powers, the closest modern analog would be gypsum salt.

This ‘Jesus saying’ belongs to a larger block of teaching about discipleship, sacrifice, and communal faithfulness. Jesus is not scolding attitudes; he is warning against losing covenantal integrity and communal effectiveness. To remain salty is to remain faithful. For us, staying salty means returning often to the well of Jesus’ living practice. We don’t read the about Lot’s wife who looked back and was turned into a pillar of salt in the Lectionary, but...

Edith - I could not get her out of my head. She is unnamed in scripture, but one Talmudic tradition calls her Edith. The Hebrew word is for "witness" or "testimony." I could not help but wonder what was going through her mind. It was probably a beautiful sunset that night and they finished watching TV and cleaning up after dinner, when Lot rose to answer the door. Three men/angels/lords had left his relative Abraham’s tent near the tree of Mamre. Then they arrive at one of the cities of the plain, Sodom where Lot lived. Lot, Edith’s husband, welcomed these strangers and soon after a mob gathered outside his door demanding access to his guests. THEN, he offers his daughters instead. The guests he welcomed tell him to RUN.. Chapter 19 in Genesis:

15 When morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, ‘Get up, take your wife and your two daughters who are here, or else you will be consumed in the punishment of the city.’ 16 But he lingered; so the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him...When they had brought them outside, they said, ‘Flee for your life; do not look back or stop anywhere in the Plain; flee to the hills, or else you will be consumed.’ And Lot said to them, ‘Oh, no, my lords; 19 your servant has found favor with you, and you have shown me great

kindness in saving my life; but I cannot flee to the hills...24 Then the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulphur and fire from the Lord out of heaven; 25 and he overthrew those cities, and all the Plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and what grew on the ground. 26 But Lot's wife, behind him, looked back, and she became a pillar of salt.

Every-single-time I have heard about Lot's wife, she longed for her old life (unrighteous) and therefore was mummified in salt as a testament of unfaithfulness. You would be in good company, if you agreed. Jewish, Islamic, and Christian theologians land on her being stuck and unwilling to let go of her sinful life. How in the world does Lot escape this fate? He is described in the most burlesque detail of his own intransigence and unfaithfulness.

Two pieces of the pillar puzzle

Xenophobia: Lot and his family are a caricature of the crudeness of the Moabites and Ammonites (the descendants of Lot). It is a way to elevate Abraham's ancestors and belittle Lot's succeeding generations. By portraying Lot's wife as failing and his daughters as committing incest with their dad, they are delegitimized as Israel's neighbors.

Sexism: Phyllis Trible, in *Texts of Terror*, describes nameless victims of male-centric plots. She notes the irony that Lot, who offered his daughters to a mob, is "saved," while his wife is obliterated for a glance.

Geography Edith's story is also an explainer for strange landscape around the Dead Sea. The ancients look at these desolate plains, sure that God must have been mad to make it so barren. Pillars of salt on Mount Sodom are still around the Dead Sea today. There is a five-mile-long salt diapir (dome of salt) on the southern edge of the Dead Sea. Erosion naturally carves this salt into pillars that resemble human figures. Oral traditions attempt to explain why these once-thriving cities were now desolate ruins.

Edith the Witness I want to offer a generous, less popular alternative. Her life is memorial to refugees and migrants. Refugees often die going on journeys no one would willingly sign up for. Her pillar is a reminder to all of us that the brutality in being dislocated. Being forced from your home is an unbearably heavy burden. We can remember, give memorial to those who have died in pogroms, trails of tears, concentration camps and the whole gallery of horrors we human visit upon each other. This is not to mention the devastation earthquakes, droughts and storms cause.

Now back to Jesus and Salt Jesus reminds us that being salty is to be reliable and tuned into the needs of others. Because God's made salty promises to love us, we can then pay it forward in fellowship and reliably caring for each other. I hope the connections are helpful. This bond helps us bind the wounds in our communities.

Todd