

**“UMAMI”  
Matthew 5:13-16  
June 11, 2017**

**INTRODUCTION:**

**Unless you are an avid watcher of cooking show -  
or have a good knowledge of culinary arts -  
- you may not be familiar with the word “umami.”**

**Technically, umami the fifth basic taste,  
a taste that goes beyond sweet, sour, bitter and salty.  
It was “discovered” by the Japanese.**

**Umami is that other thing in food,  
the thing that sets one dish apart from the same dish  
prepared with a certain “something” in it.**

**It’s the thing you didn’t even know needed a concept or a name  
until someone pointed it out.**

**It’s that taste that is a perfect balance  
between boldness and harmony;  
the taste that leaves you craving more.**

**A personal example.**

**While serving a church in rural East Texas,  
someone talked me into entering jalapeno jelly  
in the county fair.**

**I did - and I won a blue ribbon.**

**The only difference between my jelly and all the others  
was an ingredient known as “yerba anise” -  
- Mexican mint marigold.**

**There was not enough in the jar to change the taste . . .  
 . . . just enough to enhance the flavor already there  
 something that set it apart from all the others  
 without being identified on its own.**

**Now . . . we were not called together for a cooking lesson  
 and I would not be the one to teach it if we were.**

**So, let's look at how Jesus is calling us to be the "salt" of the earth,  
 Jesus is calling us to be the "umami" in the world.**

**Let me explain.**

**WORSHIP:**

**Have you ever walked out of a worship service  
 and the sun seems just a little brighter?**

**There's a sense of peace and well-being  
 you haven't felt in a while?**

**You feel as though God was really present?**

**Sure you have.**

**Now . . . what set that worship service apart from all the others?**

**Was it the music?**

**Was it the sermon?**

**Was it the way the worship service flowed?**

**I know what you are about to answer:**

**It was the Holy Spirit.**

**Right?**

**Trust me when I tell you that the Holy Spirit is present  
 in almost every worship service -**

**- no matter how good or bad you may perceive it to be.**

**But there was something in that worship service  
that set it apart from all the others . . .**

**. . . there was spiritual “umami” in that worship.**

**And you recognize it - but can’t describe it.**

**SERVICE:**

**OK . . . set that thought aside for a moment.**

**Have you ever performed an act of service  
that left you feeling good about what you just did?**

**Of course you have.**

**Even if it was tossing an extra check into the offering plate**

**or giving up an hour or two to mow the church lawn**

**or staying after coffee on Sunday to help clean up.**

**Or putting up or taking down decorations in the Church.**

**What set that act of service apart from all the others?**

**That’s even tougher to describe, isn’t it?**

**How many times have you given a little extra**

**and not had that special feeling?**

**Or mowed the lawn or washed dishes**

**And it was just service as usual; duty, if you will.**

**That difference, my friends, is “umami” - spiritual “umami.”**

**INDIVIDUALLY:**

**Now, let’s get personal with things.**

**Jesus calls us to be “umami” in th world**

**- especially the immediate world around us.**

**Oh, I know the words in the Bible don't say umami -  
- it says "salt."**

**But in my soul,**

**I believe Jesus was calling us to be umami in the world -  
- that certain - difficult to describe - difference  
- that distinguishes a committed Christian  
from the rest of the world.**

**If you have never spent time in a cardiac ward,  
trying to survive on a "heart healthy" diet,  
you may not fully understand the role salt plays in food.**

**Salt can turn a pile of mashed potatoes from library paste  
to something edible.**

**Lack of salt can turn a pork chop into shoe leather.**

**So Jesus says to each of us . . .  
. . . be something *more!***

**When you talk to your neighbors,  
let the light of Christ shine through your words,  
your expressions, your actions.**

**Let the joy of your salvation leak out of every pore in your body  
so that those around you will *feel* the difference  
Jesus has made in your life.**

**Jesus says: You are salt - be flavorful -  
- use that salt to make the Gospel irresistible.**

**Jesus says : You are the light in the world -  
- be a beacon to those who seek the peace and faith  
that each of us has found.**

**Be umami!**

**Notice, Jesus didn't ask you - and neither do I -  
- to hound these folks with scripture  
or Bible tracts -  
- or the threat of eternal damnation.**

**Neither does Jesus say: Just be yourselves.**

**What Jesus says is: Be umami!**

**Let me give you a better illustration.**

**Just up the road,  
they have opened up a new restaurant.  
And the food there is absolutely magnificent!**

**The menu is not extensive -  
- they prefer to concentrate on making a few items excellent  
rather than making a lot of food mediocre.**

**Someone invites you to join them for dinner.  
And you are both excited and a little apprehensive.**

**When you get there,  
the atmosphere is inviting,  
The wait-staff is attentive.**

**And the food . . . it is simply the best meal you've had**

**in a very, very long time.**

**Now, your friends who invited you  
didn't cook that meal.**

**They merely invited you to a place they trusted  
would serve your meal  
with a HUGE portion of umami!**

**BACK TO WORSHIP:**

**Now . . . remember earlier when we were talking about worship?**

**And I said there was something in that worship service  
that set it apart from all the others . . .**

**. . . there was spiritual "umami" in that worship.  
And you recognize it - but can't describe it.**

**What do you suppose that umami is?**

**The choir? No - even though they are really, really good.**

**The preacher? I only wish I could take the credit.**

**The lighting?**

**The setting?**

**The Holy Spirit who is present in every worship service?**

**Not just the presence of the Holy Spirit  
or every worship service would be great.**

**YOU!**

**You are what makes a worship service great.!**

**When you come to worship the One True God**

**- the One who loves you beyond measure**

**- the One who shepherds you through dark times**

**- the One who dances with you in the good times . . .**

**When you come expecting to meet that God,  
you bring the umami that makes all the difference.**

**Look, I know that sometimes it is all we can do  
to bind our spiritual and emotional wounds  
and crawl through the door of the church.  
I've been there - and I'll probably be there again.**

**At those times,  
I am blessed and fed by the umami in the room!  
I am nourished by the love and care of each of you  
- and the gathered "you" we call the church.**

**CONCLUSION:**

**Jesus said: "You are the salt of the earth . . . "You are the light of  
the world." (Mt. 5:13-14)**

**You have the opportunity given to you by God  
to make this Church great!  
To fill every seat in this sanctuary!  
To introduce someone to the Christ you follow!**

**You have the opportunity to be umami.  
May God bless and empower us!**

**PRAYER:**

**You have called us, O God. You have equipped us. Now empower us  
and unleash us!**

**In the name of Jesus Christ - Amen.**