

THE ROLE OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTORS BASED ON THE PERSPECTIVE OF MATTHEW 5: 13 "SALT OF THE EARTH"

Epi Phania Napitupulu^{1*}, Bangun Sahat M.Z Hutabarat²

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Tarutung.

*Corresponding Author

Epi Phania Napitupulu

Institut Agama Kristen Negeri
(IAKN) Tarutung.

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Abstract: This study discusses the role of Christian religious instructors from the perspective of Matthew 5:13, which states that they are the "salt of the earth." Religious educators are seen as the frontline in guiding, enlightening, and defending Christian values in a changing society. In the context of Jesus' teachings, the parable of salt illustrates various meanings, including flavoring, preservation, healing, and judgment. This study uses a descriptive qualitative method with text analysis of Matthew 5:13, describing the role of religious educators in positively influencing, maintaining the authenticity of Christian teachings, maintaining moral values, and being a living testimony of the Christian faith. The study concludes that Christian religious educators have an important contribution in shaping a better society and witnessing the Christian faith to the world. This conclusion is drawn by detailing the role of religious educators in positivity, preservation of moral values, healing, and judgment, in accordance with the teaching context of Matthew 5:13. The journal highlights the importance of the role of Christian religious instructors in understanding and applying religious teachings in daily life. By understanding and practicing this role, Christian religious instructors can become agents of change who advance the religious life of the community and bring positive impact to the world around them.

Keywords: Religious instructor, Salt Of The World.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is a teaching that comes from God or the results of human reflection contained in holy books that are passed down from generation to generation with the aim of providing guidance and guidelines for human life.¹ The role of religion is very important for society in the face of social change, because a religion provides teaching about the values and norms that already exist and apply in society and religion is also used by the community as a guide in living life, because religion in all its teachings regulates and fosters creatures, especially humans in life, with the aim that humans are directed in facing everyday life.² In the Christian tradition, the Bible is the only basic written source as a guide, appreciation, and practice of the entire content of His Word in order to grow Christian faith on an ongoing basis.³ And the Gospel of Matthew is one of the most respected and widely studied books. In the Gospel of Matthew, particularly in chapter 5, there is a collection of the most influential teachings of Jesus Christ, known as the "Blessing on the Mount" or the "Glorious Words." One teaching that stands out in Matthew 5:13 is the parable of the salt. Jesus said, "You are the salt of the earth". But if salt becomes tasteless, what will it be salted with? It is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot" (Matthew

5:13, TB). This message invites deep reflection on the role and responsibility of an individual or group in maintaining and spreading religious values. In this case, religious instructors have a role and function in the community to help direct, guide and provide light (become a torch) in the community. The role of religious instructors is oriented towards guidance through religion, understanding the reality of religious pluralism and building religious moderation for the creation of inter-religious harmony.⁴ However, the role of religious instructors is not always easy, and they are often faced with the challenge of reviving the spiritual and moral spirit in an increasingly secular and deviant society.⁵

Through the interpretation of Matthew 5:13, this study aims to explain the role of religious instructors and its relevance in society. In the context of this verse, religious instructors are seen as "salt" who must retain strong moral and spiritual ideals, in order to make a positive impact in an ever-changing world. In addition, the relationship of religious instructors in society is seen in their efforts to translate religious teachings into the context of everyday life. They are responsible for guiding and providing a correct understanding of religious teachings, while helping people understand and cope with the changing times. Strong moral and

¹ Ahmad Asir, "Agama dan fungsinya dalam kehidupan umat manusia," *Jurnal Penelitian Dan Pemikiran Keislaman*, 1.1 (2014), 51.

² Muhammad Maskur Musa, "Peran Agama dalam Perubahan Sosial," *Nuansa*, 14.2 (2021), 221.

³ Marthem Mau, "Studi Survei Alkitab Perjanjian Lama Dan Perjanjian Baru Sebagai Dasar Pengajaran Iman Kristen," *Phronesis: Jurnal Teologi Dan Misi* 2, no. 1 (2020): 31–55.

⁴ Damayanti Br Hombing Enda Dwi Karina Peranginangin, Hanna Dewi Aritonang, Tiur Imeldawati, "Tantangan Dan Strategi Penyuluh Agama Kristen Dalam Pelaksanaan Program Penyuluhan Selama Masa Pandemi Covid Di Kabupaten Tapanuli Utara," *Humaniora, Jurnal Christian* 6, no. 1 (2022): 23–43.

⁵ Simorangkir, J, "Understanding the Pattern of Sowing-Reaping in Christianity: Efforts to Redesign the Model of Christian Education in School Facing the Aftermath of Covid-19 Pandemic," *The International Journal of Education, Theology, and Humanities* 1, no. 1 (2021): 1–7.

spiritual ideals serve as a foundation for religious educators to make a positive impact, inspiring individuals to live according to religious values in their daily lives.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used by the author is qualitative research with a descriptive qualitative approach, which analyzes the study data on the role of religious instructors as salt of the earth.⁶ And it is inventoried both in meaning and context. After formulating the concept of exposure, it is done by explaining text analysis in search of meaning, namely through a library research approach. As stated by Cresswell, this method is appropriate even though it is more complex and requires more in-depth data analysis.⁷ It then briefly describes how the salt of the earth plays a role. Using the Bible as a primary source, verses that contain the words desired by the theme are found.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Definition of Christian Religious Counselor

Based on the Big Indonesian Dictionary (KBBI) the word *penyuluh* comes from the word *suluh* which means an item used for lighting or torch media.⁸ Meanwhile, an instructor is a person who is in charge of providing lighting or pointing the way. Extension workers are at the forefront of caring for sick people through services in their respective foster groups.⁹ Extension workers are people who deal directly with the community. Religious instructors are the spearhead of the Ministry of Religion in carrying out the duties and functions of fostering religious communities in order to improve the quality of people's religious life.¹⁰ In addition, religious instructors are at the forefront of fostering religious harmony.¹¹

So it can be concluded, Christian religious instructors are someone who has the duty and responsibility to provide information, guidance, and assistance in the teachings of Christianity to the community. They act as the frontline in the advancement of the religious life of the community, with a focus on fostering Christian harmony.

The salt of the earth in Matthew 5: 13

"You are the salt of the earth. If the salt becomes unsalted, what will it be salted with? It is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trodden under foot" (Matthew 5:13) Jesus did not say, "Be ye the salt of the earth." The equivalent verses are also found in Luke 14:34ff. and also in Mark 9:50. The general meaning of this verse is that the function of the disciples is similar to that of salt. From various Old Testament writings, it appears that in Jewish life, salt was used in various ways to achieve many

purposes: (1) Salt is a basic human need. "The basic necessities for human life are: water, fire, iron and salt, flour and honey, wine, oil and clothing." (Sir 39:26), (2) As a seasoning to make food taste better. "Can plain food be eaten without salt, or does egg white have any flavor?" (Job 6:6) and (3) Salt was an important part of the offering. a) "You shall put salt on every meal offering; you shall not remove the salt of the covenant of your God from your meal offering; with all your offerings you shall offer salt" (Lev 2:13). b) "You shall bring it before the LORD, and the priests shall sprinkle salt on it and offer it as a burnt offering to the LORD" (Ezek 43:24). c) Elisha used salt to purify the spring at Jericho (2 Kings 2:19-22). (4) Abimelech sprinkled the city of the Tower of Shechem with salt to bring a curse on the arid land and also a curse on the city - after killing the people (Judg 9:45; cf Deut 29:22-23; Jer 17:6; Zeph 2:9). (5) Salt as a sign of permanent friendship: the covenant of salt. a) All the special offerings, that is, the holy offerings that the children of Israel offer to the LORD, I give to you and to your sons and daughters with you; it is a statute forever; it is a statute forever; it is a covenant of salt forever before the LORD for you and for your descendants" (Num 18:19). b) When King Abijah of Judah went to war with Jeroboam, he cried out on Mount Zemaraim: "Hear me, Jeroboam and all Israel! Do you not know that the LORD God of Israel has given the kingdom over Israel to David and his sons forever by a covenant of salt?" (2 Chron 13:5). (6) Salt has healing and cleansing qualities. a) "The people of the city said to Elisha: 'Look! The city is well situated, as you can see, but the water is not good, and there are many miscarriages in the land. He said: 'Take me a new pot and put salt in it.' So they brought it to him. Then he went to their spring, threw the salt into it, and said: 'Thus says the LORD: I have made this water healthy, and there shall be no more death or miscarriage of children by it.' So the waters have been made healthy to this day according to the word that Elisha spoke" (2 Kings 2:19-22). b) "Your birth was like this: When you were born, your center was not cut off, nor were you washed with water to make you clean; neither were you rubbed with salt or swaddled in swaddling clothes" (Ezek 16:4).

Salt is an image of judgment. In Gen 19:26 Lot's wife was judged by God; she became a pillar of salt for disobeying God's command not to look back. It can also be said that salt is a preservative. Salt preserves foodstuffs so that they do not spoil quickly, for example, it is sprinkled on meat so that it does not spoil quickly (Remember salted vegetables, salted fish etc.). In hot climates without refrigeration, salt is still used like this. The ancient Semites even used salt as fertilizer. Therefore, the expression 'salt of the earth' is quite natural, especially when we consider the Gospel verse about salt that has become tasteless: "It is no longer good for the field or for fertilizer, and people throw it away." (Lk 14:35)¹²

"You are the salt of the earth" (Mt 5:13). This means that Jesus' disciples (whoever they are) play an important role in humanity. As mentioned earlier the earth is no longer defined as 'land for agriculture' but universal humanity.¹³ As with salt, every believer must not destroy anything in the world that is already

⁶ Sonny Eli Zaluchu, "Strategi Penelitian Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif Di Dalam Penelitian Agama," *Evangelikal: Jurnal Teologi Injili Dan Pembinaan Warga Jemaat* 4, no. 1 (2020): 28-38.

⁷ John W Cresswell, "Riset Pendidikan: Perencanaan, Pelaksanaan, Dan Evaluasi Riset Kualitatif Dan Kuantitatif," *Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar*, 2015, 123.

⁸ Ebta Setiawan, "Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI)," 2012.

⁹ Melina Agustina Sipahutar et al., "Etika Komunikasi Penyuluh Agama Kristen," *ELETTA: Jurnal pendidikan Penyuluhan Agama Kristen Institut Agama Kristen Negeri Tarutung*, 1, 2023, 21.

¹⁰ Naibaho, D, et al., "Fostering Fraternity in Humanity: The Church's Efforts to Bring Compassion within the Framework of Religious Moderation," *Kurios* 8, no. 1 (2022): 94, <https://doi.org/10.30995/kur.v8i1.537>.

¹¹ Abd. Kadir, "Peran penyuluh agama dalam peningkatan kerukunan umat beragama di Kabupaten Mamuju," 3 (2017), 92.

¹² Patricia Liana S. Elly Raheliyawati. Avenie Putri Sari, Miranda Naomi, Gaby Gabriella Tuwuh, Janis Rosalita Suprianto, "Agama Kristen I Etika Kristen Sebagai Garam Dan Terang Dunia," 2013.

¹³ Martasudjita Emanuel, *Sakramen-Sakramen Gereja: Tinjauan Teol, Liturgis, Pastoral*, 2003.87

good. Instead, every believer must endeavor to prevent the good things in the world from decaying. In simple terms, it can be concluded that every believer must maintain what is good and develop (fertilize) it to be better.¹⁴ When it is said that the earth is no longer defined as 'land for agriculture,' this refers to a shift in understanding from a physical concept to a more abstract and universal meaning. Jesus' disciples were instructed to see the earth as a representation of all of humanity, not just as a physical place or their immediate surroundings. As such, their task is not limited to the local or religious sphere, but has a universal dimension involving the entire spectrum of society and human life.

The role of Christian extension workers based on the perspective of Matthew 5: 13 "Salt of the Earth"

The text of Matthew 5:13-16 is one of the most famous parts of the Bible. It is unfortunate when the most famous text becomes a text that is taken for granted by some. The popularity of this text leaves believers unchallenged to investigate it more carefully, so it is no wonder that the beauty of the meaning in this text is easily overlooked.¹⁵ Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:13 is also related to what Jesus stated about being the salt of the earth or the light of the world, but "you are the salt of the earth and the light of the world". The word "are" refers to being, an identification, and not becoming.¹⁶ Therefore, from the calling set by Jesus and who was sent as the salt and light of this world, making believers actually find the meaning of church life as a blessing and testimony to the world, which basically certainly reveals God's salvation in Jesus Christ to the world.

The position of Matthew 5:13 is quite interesting to note,¹⁷ the meaning in the word Salt is a parable taught by God as we humans must be able to be good salt which means, salt is a flavor giver, it can be analogized that, we as humans must give a taste in the form of a good influence on others and the environment around us. For the role of religious instructors, this parable is well realized in guiding, and bringing the nature of love to the prisoners, and teaching the Word of God.¹⁸

In addition to being interpreted as a flavor giver, salt can also be interpreted as a preservative, it can be analogous that we as religious instructors must be preservatives or can also be interpreted, that as instructors must be able to maintain teachings and moral values and truth to make themselves better. In coaching and mentoring to be applied to life for society. Jesus' statement in Matthew 5:13 which states, "You are the salt of the earth" contains important meaning in the context of the role of Christian religious instructors. In this context, the parable of salt can be interpreted as a guideline for Christian religious instructors in bringing positive influence to others and the surrounding community. The following is an explanation of the role of Christian religious instructors based on the perspective of Matthew 5:13 "Salt of the Earth": (1) Giving

Flavor (Positive Influence): Just as salt gives flavor to food, Christian preachers are expected to give "flavor" to the lives of those they mentor. They should exert a positive influence in the way they think, act, and interact with others. They should set a good example in living out Christian teachings and values and encourage others to follow their example. (2) Preservers of Moral Teachings and Values: Just as salt serves as a preservative, Christian religious instructors have the role of preserving the teachings and moral values contained in Christianity. They must remind and ensure that the principles of Christianity remain relevant and practiced in daily life. This means preserving the authenticity of Christian teachings from change and deviation. (3) Preservation of Truth: Christian extension workers also have the responsibility to preserve the truth of Christianity and share it with others. They should be a source of knowledge and understanding that can help others understand the Christian faith more deeply. This also includes combating misconceptions or misunderstandings about Christianity. (4) Serving as a Witness: In their role as the salt of the earth, Christian religious educators should be living witnesses to God's salvation in Jesus Christ. They should demonstrate by actions and words that the Christian faith can transform lives and bring blessings to individuals and society. As such, they become instruments for God in bringing salvation to the world.

It can be concluded, then, that the role of Christian religious instructors in the perspective of Matthew 5:13 is to be the salt of the earth that gives flavor, maintains the authenticity of Christian teachings, defends moral values, and provides a living testimony that reflects the love and truth of Christ. By fulfilling this role, Christian religious instructors contribute to the formation of a better society and give witness to the Christian faith to the world.

CONCLUSION

Christian religious instructors are individuals who have the responsibility to provide information, guidance, and assistance in the teachings of Christianity to the community. They serve as the frontline in promoting the religious life of the community and also in fostering religious harmony. The parable of the salt in Matthew 5:13 illustrates the important role that followers of Jesus play in the world. Salt, in this context, has various meanings, including flavoring, preservation, healing, and judgment. This illustrates how followers of Jesus are expected to exert a positive influence, maintain moral values, and be a source of truth in society. The role of Christian religious educators should reflect the meaning of the parable of the salt in Matthew 5:13. They should make a positive impact in the lives of those they mentor, maintain the authenticity of Christian teachings, defend moral values, and give a living testimony of the Christian faith. By fulfilling this role, Christian religious educators contribute to the formation of a better society and give witness to the Christian faith to the world.

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¹⁵ Sarjono and Sahari.152

¹⁶ Daniel Yonatan Alex Arifianto, Reni Triposa, "Menerapkan Matius 5 : 13 Tentang Garam Dunia Di Tengah Era Disrupsi," *Shamayim : Jurnal Teologi Dan Pendidikan Kristiani* 1, no. 1 (2020): 92–106.

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Corresponding Author: Epi Phania Napitupulu

Email: epiphanianpt@gmail.com

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