

MATTHEW 5 : 14 – 16

THE LIGHT THAT IS IN YOU!

You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

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People are drawn to light, are they not? Why do people go out to see the northern lights? Or a meteor shower? Or a comet? It's impressive to see a sunrise, a sunset, a beautiful display of Christmas lights. People find lightening (without the thunder!) intriguing. And fireworks. If not warned, we would look right at the arc of a welder, or right at the sun. Light is an awesome gift of God. It's hard to understand what it would be like to be blind.

In chapter 4, prior to our text, Matthew tells us about Jesus beginning His ministry. It was not in Judea in the south of Israel, where John had been baptizing, and where Jesus had been baptized at age 30. It was not in Jerusalem, where the great Temple was and where the high officials sat. When John the Baptist was thrown into prison for not backing down to King Herod, Jesus left for the northern part of Israel, Galilee, around the Sea of Galilee. People thought of Galilee as "the sticks." The name "Galilee" means something like "circuit" or "district." Folks up there weren't in Jewish proper, but in "the district."

Matthew says that this was not a surprise move on Jesus' part. Isaiah the prophet had already said the Promised One would be a blessing to the land of "Zebulun and Naphtali" (two of the 12 sons of Jacob). The land-inheritance of Zebulun and Naphtali in the Old Testament was the region where Nazareth, Cana, Capernaum—Galilee—now were. Capernaum became Jesus' "headquarters." It was a special gift to Galilee; the people of Zebulun and Naphtali had turned to idol worship long ago; Isaiah described their territory as a land of darkness, a land given over to the Gentiles. Matthew quotes Isaiah—*Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned*" (Isaiah 9:1-2). Without true understanding of the Lord and His Promised Savior, these Jews at Jesus' time—although not steeped in the self-righteousness of the Pharisees of Jerusalem—faced darkness, gloom and eternal condemnation. Jesus came to bring Light and Life to these sinners—and to you and me as well.

Thus, in chapter 5, Matthew records Jesus going about His ministry in Galilee. We look at the words of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, by which He brought light to this sin darkened land. The sermon began with paradoxes of God's Kingdom. A paradox is something looking one way, but really being the other way. Example: A very tall man, who is a "jerk," might be described as being "small." On the side of a mountain (not like our Rockies), Jesus instructed His disciples and the crowds, how to find real success and glory in life. It is the poor in spirit, the meek, those who mourn their sins and cling to Jesus for forgiveness; who are merciful, who seek God's peace through Christ and share it with others; who are falsely accused and persecuted for the name of Jesus the Savior from sin; these are the blessed ones who inherit God' gift of His eternal Kingdom! Such news for those living in the land of darkness and shadow of death!

Jesus tells His listeners, “People, you are salt. You have a very important function in life.” Salt adds taste (please, pass the salt), salt preserves (beef jerky, salt pork), salt works to thaw what’s frozen (icy roadways and sidewalks). Soldiers at times got paid in salt. Thus, the expression, “He’s not worth his salt.” And there’s the related word “salary.” God’s children through faith in Jesus are salt in this world of sin. You are salt! You have an impact on life. Please function!

But there’s more; and we go back to the beginning thought of this sermon—Light. Jesus says, *You are the light of the world.* Light! How much more important! As the Father’s sons and daughters in Christ, you are lights in this sin-darkened world, sin-dying world! Just as Jesus the Savior went to Galilee to bring the light of God’s love, compassion, and forgiveness through His own blood, to the wayward and dying hearts, so also He says to us, “You are lights in the world.” Through you Jesus shines out to others. They need Jesus just as much as you do. ----- Am I telling you to live your faith each day? Yes. Not to join in with the cursing and misuse of God’s name that floods your ears? Yes. Not to find amusement in the off-color smudgy jokes that people tell? Yes. Not to give approval to marriage corruptions of every kind—those which debunk one-man-one woman together for life? Yes. Not to give approval to the idea, “No matter what or who your God is, just be sincere” Do not give approval to that.

There’s more. Realize that of themselves, your examples of Christian life, your actions, your deeds will never bring anyone to Christ. The news you need to share and the light you need to shine is that He is “the crucified and risen Savior from sin and its death.” Here it gets tough, doesn’t it? The sinful flesh says, “I can’t. I’m not comfortable. It embarrasses me to do so. I won’t talk about Jesus.” Lord, help us all—all!

Jesus said, *A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.* Let’s face it. You and I are different. Expect to be seen as different. Don’t try to be one of the boys, don’t be like Peter at the fire in the high priest’s courtyard on the night of Jesus’ trial—“I don’t know the man; and he began to curse and to swear.” *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.* Do you know the privilege you have to be the light-bearer to the lost? Wouldn’t you count it a privilege to help, really help, people stuck in heavy snow near the end of your driveway? Certainly. Only the “Scroogiest” person would not. But are you nervous and afraid? Jesus encourages His disciples, every pastor, and you. In Luke 12:11-13, He says, “*When they bring you to the synagogues and magistrates and authorities, do not worry about how or what you should answer, or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say. (Luke 12:11-13).* God is with you.

It’s not your light at all. It’s Jesus’ light shining through you. Consider the beautiful moonlight. It’s not from the moon; it’s light from the sun reflected to you. It’s not as good as the sun, crops don’t grow by it, moonlight doesn’t warm the ground; but it’s valuable, by God’s design. Your light, which is really Christ’s light, has been given to you by God also. Maybe we should compare it to early pioneer days, the 1700’s, before there were any friction-strike matches (invented in the early 1800’s). Did the candle or the lamp on the table light itself? No. A sliver of wood, or stick was ignited in the fireplace, carried to the table, and used to light the candle or the lamp. It was the fireplace’s fire and light! Your light is Jesus’ light, intended to lead gloomy, guilty sinners to their forgiveness and salvation in Christ!

Peter tells us, *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy (1 Peter 2:9-10).*

Therefore, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* Forget about self. The Father’s will is to point souls to Jesus. He is the most amazing light! Jesus is The Light That Is in You.

Amen! So be it!

---Pastor Kanzenbach