

Let Your Light Shine

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Matthew 5:14-16

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS AN INVISIBLE BELIEVER

Last Sunday we talked about the reality of the world's spiritual darkness. Just as this world is decaying and in need of believers to be salt, so it is in darkness and desperately in need of believers to be light. Every Christian has been called out of darkness and into light. Peter says, "But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who *called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*" 1 Peter 2:9. We have been called into marvelous light that we might reflect it and shine in the world in which we live. Paul encouraged the Philippians, "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you *shine as lights in the world*, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain." Philippians 2:14–16. God has made us *visible*; He has enabled us to *illumine* life; and He has *placed* us where He wants us to shine. There is no such thing as an invisible believer.

A FEW THINGS TO REMEMBER

1. The purpose of light is to be light!

The business of salt is to be salt... The business of light is to be light... We are to act in the way that God desires for us to act. A city on a hill can be seen in the darkness for miles and miles away. There is no hiding it. What is Jesus saying here? He is saying, "If we have been truly set aflame by coming to know Christ, there is no hiding it. The purpose of light is to shine and that's it!

- A. Your gospel light exposes the dirt of sin. John 3:19
- B. Your gospel light warns of danger.
- C. Your gospel light shows the way to eternal life.
- D. Your gospel light warms and welcomes.

2. To conceal our light is contradictory to the purpose of light.

It is contradictory to the purpose of a candle to light it and then hide it. We need to recognize that this must be an obvious temptation for each of us if Jesus uses such an illustration in this teachable moment. There is in each of us, for a variety of reasons (fear of man, fear of failure, feelings of inadequacy, fear of offending others, indifference, etc.) a temptation to cover our flame as to better blend in with those around us. Jesus is saying, "No, you are light and light shines." I am the light of the world and I have designed it such that your union with me would reflect my glory." When we conceal our light, we demonstrate unfaithfulness to the Lord. Are you concealing your light? If so, why?

3. To conceal our light is to render ourselves useless.

Just as salt without its savor is useless, so light, if it cannot be seen, is of no value. Martyn Lloyd Jones says, "As I understand it, and it seems to me to be an inevitable piece of logic and interpretation, there is nothing in God's universe that is so utterly useless as a merely formal Christian. I mean by that, one who has the name but not the quality of a Christian." Paul seems to be talking about this when he speaks of some who, "[have] the appearance of godliness, [but deny] its power" 2 Timothy 3:5.

The true Christian can't be hidden; he can't escape being noticed. A true believer will always stand out. A person who realizes what it means to be a Christian, who realizes all that the grace of God has done for them, and understands that, ultimately, God has done this in order that they might influence others, is a person who cannot conceal it. If we find in ourselves a tendency to put our light under a bushel, we must begin to examine ourselves and make sure that it really is light." Jones says:

The next time I find myself with any sort of tendency to cover over the fact that I am a Christian, in order, maybe, to ingratiate myself with somebody else or to avoid persecution, I am just to think of the man lighting his candle and then covering it with a bushel. The moment I think of it like that and see how ridiculous it is, I shall recognize that the subtle thing which offered me that bushel is the hand of the devil. I shall therefore reject it, and shine still more brightly.

OIL AND A WICK

You need two things in order for a lamp to give light. You need oil and a wick. Metaphorically you and I are the wick that is to burn brightly for Christ in this dark world. But the wick is useless by itself. It needs to be infused with the oil in order to burn. Oil is the life of the lamp. We need to ask ourselves if we have the "oil" of new life in Christ. Have we been born again? Do we have regenerate hearts by the power of the Holy Spirit? That is the oil for our lamp! Paul's prayer for the

Ephesians was, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, *that you may be filled with all the fullness of God*” Ephesians 3:17–19.

While there is an initial filling when we come to Christ, we need to understand that the oil in our lamps continually needs to be replenished. By what means are our lamps filled? Prayer, intake of the word, fellowship with likeminded believers. As we take advantage of the means of grace, as we live in close fellowship with Christ, the oil for our lamp is replenished. This is a continual process. Remember that we as believer are to be hungering and thirsting for righteousness. We are in a perpetual need for Christ. To the degree that we hunger and thirst for the righteousness of Christ, we will never lack in receiving his supply!

Not only is the oil essential in order for our lamp to burn brightly, but we must also tend to the wick. Without care for the wick, specifically trimming the wick, the lamp burns inefficiently. How are we to care for our wicks? Jones suggests a couple things:

1. We need to remind ourselves of the Beatitudes daily.

Jones says, “There is nothing that is better calculated to keep the wick in order and trimmed [as] to remind myself of what I am by the grace of God, and of what I am meant to be.” In everything we do, say, and think, we are to be like the man we see in the Beatitudes.

2. Not only do we need to remind ourselves of the Beatitudes, but we need to live accordingly.

Remember that as Christians we are entirely different than the world. Unfortunately some Christians try to live as close to the world’s line as keeps them free from persecution, relevant, liked, popular, etc. There should be a marked difference in our lives and the life of a non-believer.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY TO SHINE

We have been entrusted with a great responsibility as Christians. Jesus said, “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” Matthew 5:16. This is not a suggestion, it’s a command! If we are light, it’s not an option not to shine. That’s what light does. What is the mode of our shining as believers? Jesus tells us that it is by our good works that we shine. It’s interesting to note that Jesus uses the Greek word *kalos* here for “good” instead of the more common word *agathos*. *Kalos* has the idea of attractive or beautiful. Our lives are to be full of beautiful and attractive service to God and others. Why? So that those who are not in the light might see our light and in turn glorify our God who is in heaven. Our

prayer ought to be that of David in Psalm 115:1, “ Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory...”

Letting our light shine before men allows them to see our good works, the beauty the Lord has worked in us. To see good works by us is to see Christ in us. When the lost around you see your life, do they see a person who has purpose, joy, contentment, and God-confidence or do they see a person full of ego, who talks about themselves constantly, prides themselves on the accomplishments, and excuses their failures? To shine is to display a concern for sin and its offensiveness. It's to have humility of heart and a continual hunger to please God. It is to be unimpressed with the world's glitz and glamour, but rather to seek first his kingdom and righteousness. It means that you desire to live for Christ in every circumstance. Remember Paul told the Corinthians, “For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” 2 Corinthians 5:14–15.

God did not give the gospel of His Son to be the secret, hidden treasure of a few but to enlighten every person (John 1:9). Many reject the light and reject those who bring it, but just as God offers His light to the whole world, so must His church. It is not our gospel but God's, and He gives it to us not only for our own sakes but the entire world's. True believers are salt and light, and must fulfill that identity.¹

THE PURPOSE OF IT ALL

We are to do all that we do for Christ and His glory. So our pursuit of righteousness is first for God's glory and secondarily that others may see our good works, and not praise us, but praise our Father who is in heaven. We should pray that our lives would be so honoring to Christ, so salty and so aflame for the things of God that it leads others to see the glory of God and the goodness of God and give Him praise. The Psalmist said, “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord” Psalm 150:6. Here is a question – Are we living in such a manner as encourages others to praise and honor God? Does our manner of life encourage this response in the lives of others? Not only are you to glorify God, but you are to live in such a way as encourages others to glorify Him as well. That truth ought to drive us to our knees.

Have you ever noticed how people would often times praise God after Jesus' miracles? They would say, “We have never seen anything like that before.” You and I are to live that same way! The

¹ John MacArthur, *Matthew 1–7* (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary; Accordance electronic ed. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 245.

purpose of letting our light shine is not to bring attention or praise to ourselves. A part of what it means to be poor in spirit is that we forget about ourselves – at least we are to forget about the way we used to think about ourselves (puffed up and starving for attention). Our desire should be that, in what we are and in what we do, others may see God in us and glorify [our] Father who is in heaven.

Jesus uses some intentional language here in verse 16. He refers to God as Father and His heavenly dwelling place. Jesus' speaking of the Father emphasizes God's tenderness and intimacy, and speaking of His being in heaven emphasizes His majesty and holiness. Our lives are to magnify both God's grace and power. This is the supreme calling of life: glorifying God. Everything we do is to cause others to give praise to the God who is the source of all that is good. The way we live should lead those around us to glorify God. Peter encourages us in 1 Peter 2:12, "Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."

SHINING IN ETERNITY

Jesus in Matthew 13:43 tells us that in eternity we will be a part of the shining light! He said, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." It is interesting to note that the heavens are said to reflect and declare the glory of God, but as Christians we have the incredible hope of one day *sharing* in the glory of God. We will shine with Him for all eternity. But as for today, this side of eternity, let us determine by God's grace to shine as brightly as possible in this dark world. Light is unashamed, bold, and clear. Let's get about the business of shamelessly proclaiming Christ backed up with a life that honors Him!