

You Are The Light Of The World.

Text: Matt 5:14-16

1) How Did We Become Such Lights?

Suggested Hymns:

2) How Should We Function As Such Lights?

232, 217, 221, 285, 224

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is Matthew 5:14–16, ¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* (NKJV)

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

From the beginning of time, light has been essential. When the creative power of God had summoned the material into existence out of which He fashioned the myriads of creatures, the predominant need was light, and He did this by His almighty command *“Let there be light.”*

God supplied this need. Light is a paramount necessity today, regardless of whether you think of the plant or animal kingdom, or of the great human family.

Light is the predominant need of mankind also in spiritual matters. The shocking darkness of ignorance which has enveloped mankind is appalling, and only divine intervention can accomplish the much needed transformation.

As we keep these facts in mind the statement of our text grows in its startling and remarkable significance.

Our precious Redeemer informs His believers, *“You are the light of the world.”* Let us consider this thought. May the Lord bless our meditation.

1. How Did We Become Such Lights?

In reality there is only One of whom we can proclaim that He is the Light, namely, our Lord Jesus Christ. The evangelist St. John declares that Jesus *was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.*¹

This increases tremendously in emphasis when we consider that in speaking of John the Baptist he stated, *“There was a man sent from God, whose name was John,”* and then felt constrained to add the explanation *“⁸He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”* Marvellous and successful as the ministry of John the Baptist was, nevertheless, not he, but Jesus is the true Light.

All human beings, even the noblest of them, yes, even the most pre-eminent Christians, are not a light in themselves. The Bible uses the very opposite language in describing our natural condition. St. Paul declares: *“⁸For you were once darkness.”²*

St. Peter, after recording the most beautiful names which may be given to God’s children, *“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people,”* adds that it was urgently necessary to remind us that it is God who has *“called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.”³* There is not even the faintest ray of light in natural man. Everything about him is utter darkness, blindness, death, and enmity against God.

We are astonished, therefore, to hear the Lord Jesus call His followers *“the light of the world.”* A phenomenal change has occurred in them. This is not mere conjecture, but a divine declaration.

God informs us that we *who were dead in trespasses and sins He made alive,⁴* resurrected. Again, that *“we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works.”⁵* Again, that we have been regenerated, or born again, of water and the Holy Spirit.

Note well that everyone of these expressions precludes even the resemblance of any accomplishment of man, but declares positively that the Christian is the product of God’s creative power. Only by such an act of God has he become the light of the world.

This is possible because the person has been brought into contact with Jesus Christ. The Christian is a light in the Lord through the Lord Jesus Christ.

The electric globe would remain utterly dark if the wire which connects it with the distant generator were severed. Jesus says in “John 15:5, *He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do*

nothing. If we are severed from the Lord Jesus Christ, we cease to be light and remain utter darkness.

Let us consider another comparison. Scientists inform us that the moon and some of the other heavenly bodies have no light in themselves but merely reflect the light of the sun. Likewise you and I as children of God merely reflect the glorious light as it is in Christ Jesus. If we do not reflect it, there is something radically wrong. We are altogether out of focus or adjustment.

The Word of God informs us that revealed truth is light. St. Peter calls the Bible itself *a light that shines in a dark place*.⁶ And knowledge of divine truth is light, for St. Paul speaks of *“the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*⁷ Christians have this light of knowledge. It is an imparted light, that is true, but it is real light. As children of God we possess positive knowledge.

We are not experts in every field of knowledge. There are those who in the field of secular knowledge, of languages, of science, of mathematics, of the arts, of music, etc., may surpass us by far.

But in one thing we excel, we are experts, we are specialists: we have *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*. In this field of the spiritual, where the profoundest thinkers and the most renowned philosophers of all times have groped about helplessly in hopeless darkness, we have positive knowledge.

Let us speak more concretely. We know that man is absolutely helpless in matters pertaining to his soul's welfare. With us this is not merely general knowledge, but touches our own life and is inscribed indelibly into our own experience, and we know that this is the precarious condition of everyone of our fellow men.

However, we know God that Himself has provided the only and the positively effective help in Christ Jesus. We know that by His absolutely perfect life upon earth Jesus earned for us an absolutely perfect righteousness. We know that by His vicarious suffering and death Jesus wrought for us a perfect redemption.

While we are thoroughly convinced of our utter hopelessness if we were left to ourselves, we are equally thoroughly convinced that in Christ Jesus we have positive hope, which will never permit us to be disappointed.

We know that we are altogether guilty, but also that in Christ Jesus there is forgiveness. We know that we are spotted, stained, and polluted with sin, but also that *“the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sin.”*⁸

This knowledge is lacking altogether with natural man. The most brilliant minds on earth have always sought for something of knowledge, some spiritual light, in man and consequently have closed their eyes altogether to the light which even the humblest and lowliest Christians might reveal to them.

Since they are forever attempting to find some good in man, they act like the person who buries his head in the dungeon of darkness and then misses the glorious light of the sun. — This holds equally true of other doctrines of God’s Word.

We positively know the doctrine of the Triune God-head, the deity of Jesus Christ, the vicarious atonement, the acquisition of eternal salvation solely by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith, and other doctrines so clearly revealed in God’s Word. Knowing these doctrines as absolutely positive facts, we are in a position to be the light of the world. God has made us such lights.

2. How Should We Function As Such Lights?

The proper function of a light is to shine. It cannot keep its brightness within itself, but must necessarily impart it to everything which surrounds it. Jesus fully recognised this principle in the two statements which He made when He emphasised how we are to function as lights of the world.

On the one hand, Christ stated in our text, *“A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.”* Every Israelite knew what this meant. Jerusalem, built on the hills, was plainly visible to the regions round about. So a true child of God, rendered a true light, will be plainly visible to those who are around him.

On the other hand, Jesus says, *“Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand.”* No one is so foolish as to hide a light. He would defeat the very purpose of lighting it. Rather we place the light on the

candlestick in an elevated position, that it may be seen and that it may accomplish the purpose of giving *light to all who are in the house*.

This principle is irrefutably established. Jesus makes the application, “*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*” In other words, His Christians are to be seen by those who surround them. They are to give the beneficial light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ to all whom they may be able to reach.

Translated into the practical language of our day and time, this means, that we are to open our mouths to confess our Saviour Jesus Christ. The very essence and effect of the message which seized and overwhelmed our hearts is such as to urge and compel us to proclaim it to others.

Since we know what the world needs to know so greatly, we feel compelled to inform them. That is the spirit which has manifested itself in the Christian Church from its infancy. Think of the disciples on the day of Pentecost. Spirit-filled and Spirit-urged, they simply were moved to proclaim the way of salvation which they knew.

Think of Peter and John, charged by the magistrates in language which left no room for doubt that they should no longer preach Christ and threatened with punishment if they dared to disobey, who nevertheless, feeling the urge of profoundest conviction, boldly informed their judges: “*We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*”⁹

Think of a Paul, whom the grace of God brought to the light as it is in Christ Jesus, who now considered himself a debtor, who owed the Gospel message to the Greeks and to the barbarians,¹⁰ and who was willing to endure anything and everything if only some people might be benefited by the precious light which he brought to them.

Friends, it is well that we consider that our light ought to shine. By God’s boundless grace we have the blessings of the untarnished truths of God’s precious Word.

We know positively that we have the teaching which is in perfect harmony with the Bible. We are proud of our orthodoxy, and we pray God that He may graciously preserve it for us.

However, we must not forget that the orthodox teaching of God's Word must necessarily be a living thing and must pulsate with life and activity.

It was so with our pioneer fathers. They burned with fervent zeal and eagerness to proclaim unto a sin-lost world that they had found the Redeemer who is able to save sin-lost men. They spent themselves and were spent in missionary activity, which ought to serve as an example to challenge the deepest consecration within the heart of everyone of us.

They were a light on the candlestick as is evidenced by the great program of expansion which, under God's blessings, was inaugurated and carried out. That we let our light shine, that we permit our orthodoxy to become a vibrant and dynamic force within us should persuade us to say with the apostles: ***"We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."***

As individuals in our contacts with the many unsaved in our communities, and as a congregation, may we become more mission minded, vitally interested in the work of teaching the only way of salvation to sinful men who are hopelessly lost without it.

It is undoubtedly one of the paramount needs in the Church. There should be a restoration of a predominant mission spirit in the hearts of all Lutherans. ***"Let your light shine before men."***

Jesus emphasises another matter connected with the diffusion of the light. He states in Matthew 5:16, ***"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."*** His disciples are to live aright. Their lives are to reflect Jesus Christ. What a lesson for us!

How often we create an entirely wrong impression of the truth which we profess by our conduct before others. Such people observe our conduct and our conversations and then fail to find Jesus in us. You and I should talk about Jesus before others and live Him before others. Let your light shine. Do not hide it. Set it on a candlestick.

You do not need to call men's attention to your good works. You do not need to advertise them. Merely go out and do them. You do not need to worry about spectators. Your good works will speak for themselves, and if they are performed in the proper spirit, namely, out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us, they will speak a proper, God-pleasing language.

They will inform the inquiring observer that Jesus Christ truly touches the hearts and lives of His people. They will glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Today we have to opportunity to let our light shine by supporting the work of the Bible Society. They print and distribute Bibles spreading the light of God's Word.

May God lead us to realise fully what His grace has made of us — *“the light of the world!”* May He bestow grace and willingness within every heart that we may truly function as a light! May He instil us with firm and consecrated determination to let our light shine before men! It dare not be otherwise.

Let us close with the words of the hymnist,¹¹

Can we, whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Can we to men benighted
The lamp of life deny?
Salvation, O salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim,
Till each remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ John 1:9

² Ephesians 5:8

³ 1 Peter 2:9

⁴ Ephesians 2:1

⁵ Ephesians 2:10

⁶ 2 Peter 1:20

⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:6

⁸ 1 John 1:7

⁹ Acts 4:20

¹⁰ Romans 1:14

¹¹ Hymn 224