Sermon on the Mount, part 10

“You are the Light of the World”

You Are the Light of the World

Matthew 5:14-16

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."

A magazine once carried a series of pictures that depicted one of the saddest stories imaginable.

• The first picture was of a vast wheat field in Kansas; it was a farm in Western Kansas. From horizon to horizon, all you could see was the wheat waving in the wind.

• The second picture was of a mother in distress inside her farmhouse in the middle of that wheat field. She had a small boy who had somehow wandered away from the house into that wheat field. The little fellow was so small that he couldn't be seen; she couldn't find him. She had called for her husband, and the two of them had searched all day long for that little boy, and they finally decided that they should call the neighbors, who began to search frantically all over the wheat field with no success.
They knew the boy was too little to see above the wheat and find his own way out, so the picture showed her in great distress.

• The third photo depicted all the people who had heard of the little boy being lost. They gathered in the morning, joining their hands, hand-to-hand, and in a great, long line of humanity, linked only by their hands, swept from one end of that wheat field to the next.

• The last picture was a heartbreaker; it was a picture of the father standing over the body of his little son. They had finally found him, but he was dead. It was too late. A cold, cold night had claimed its victim. Underneath the final picture of a weeping father were these words,

  • "Oh, God, if we had only joined hands sooner."

What a heart-searching story that is.

Listen, people, Jesus said, as He looked out over the fields, "The field is white unto harvest, but the laborers are few."

I really believe there is a world of lost men, lost women, lost boys and girls, way out in the field of the world.

They can't find home, they can't find the Father's house, they can't see above the wheat of the world.
They are perishing in the night of sin, and when the cold morning
dawns, it will be too late.

I believe the Lord Jesus Christ, here in Matthew 5, is saying to us,
"Join hands. Be salt and light; sweep through the field of the world
to find all of those who are desperately in need of your influence
and your message."

I don't think one or two can do it. I don't even think a handful can
do it. I think the whole church has to join hands and be collective
salt.

Salt is useless as far as one grain is concerned, and light is a
combination of fluorescence.

We've got to take hands and sweep through the world, and that's
the message that Jesus is giving us right here.

We are salt and light to reach the lost with the Gospel of Jesus
Christ, and this is the vital message contained in our Lord's
words. He has followed up the Beatitudes.

In the Beatitudes, He says, "Here is the character I expect you to
have, and if you have this kind of character, then you are a child
of My Kingdom."
If you have this character, and are a child of my Kingdom, here is your job: sweep through the world as salt and light and make a difference."

Jesus is calling on us, to influence the world for His glory, to find the lost before it's too late.

The key is what has gone on in the verses before.

Having magnificently come to know the principles and the qualities that render us effective for God, that bring us into His Kingdom, that make us distinct from the world, He now tells us, "Move out into the world with that marvelous distinctiveness, find those that are lost, and bring them to Christ."

The supreme matter in the Kingdom is character; character is the issue.

The character described in the Beatitudes makes it possible for us to affect the world.

You know, I really worry a lot in my own heart about Aldersgate Church in this regard.

I think we can get to the place where we are so in love with each other, if you will, where we are so thrilled about everything that
goes on here. We can be so happy about it all, and sit in little
groups and disciple each other, pray with each other, counsel
each other, talk to each other, but the fact is, we're always in
danger that we won't link hands and sweep through the world. We
are in danger of never crawling out of our ivory tower of the bliss
of our Christian fellowship.

The Lord is saying that's something that we have to do.

The emphatic is here - we are the only salt and we are the only
light the world will ever know.

To better understand this concept, let's examine what Jesus
meant when he said, “You are the light of the world!”

1. First, Light is something which is meant to be seen!

   • Story of visiting outhouse in Papua New Guinea.
     Without a guiding light, I got lost.
     The next time I went to the outhouse, I left a small light on so
     I
     I could see how to get home.
   • So the primary duty of the light of the lamp is to be seen.
   • So, then, Christianity is something which is meant to be
     seen.
   • There is no such thing as secret discipleship.
• Our faith in Jesus should be perfectly visible to all, both within and without the church.
• Our light should be seen in the ordinary activities of everyday life.
  o The way we treat people in the work place, the way we treat our fellow coworkers, the way we treat our families, the way we play games, the way we drive our cars, the way we speak…
  o We are the light of the world in the factory, the marketplace, the school, and our families.
• Jesus did not say, “You are the light of the church!” He said you are the light of the world!” and our faith in Jesus is to be seen in everyday life.

2. Next, a light is a guide!

• On the estuary of any river we may see the line of lights which marks the channel for ships to sail in safety.
• On the shoreline of great ports are famous lighthouses, shining their light to guide the ships safely along the shores.
• A light is something to make the way clear.
• So too we as Christians must of necessity be a guiding light, a living example.
• One of the things the world desperately needs more than anything else is people who are prepared to be the guiding light for others.

• There are many people in this world who do not have the moral strength to take a stand by themselves…but if someone gives them a lead, they will follow; if they have someone strong enough to lean on they will do the right thing.

• It is our duty and responsibility to take the stand which the weaker brother will support, to give the lead which those with less courage will follow.

• The world needs its guiding lights and Jesus said, “You are the light of the world.”

3. A light can often be a warning light!

• Warning lights signal danger ahead! Caution! Slow down! Watch out!

• It is sometimes our duty to bring to our children, our friends, our coworkers the necessary warnings.

• Teachers and parents and friends sometimes have to say to the ones we love…caution! Slow down! Danger! You are headed in the wrong direction, but we do it with our arms around them…
• If our warnings are given, not in anger, not in irritation, not in criticism, not in condemnation, not in the desire to hurt, but in love, they can be the warning light that keeps them from crashing and burning on the twists and turns in life.

4. Men are to see our good deeds!

• And what are our good deeds?
  o Good deeds are simply the love of God practiced in everyday life…good deeds are all acts of compassion, mercy, kindness, and sacrifice.
  o The Bible repeatedly exhorts us to let our good deeds shine
  o Ephesians 2:8 says, “We are created in Christ to do the good works Christ has pre-ordained for us to do!
  o James says in Chapter 2 – Faith in Christ and Love in Action go hand in hand!
  o Good works can be as simple as driving a friend to the Dr. appointment.
  o Good works is mowing a neighbor’s lawn when they can’t mow it themselves.
  o Good works is visiting the sick and elderly
  o Good works is visiting those in prison – “Kairos Ministry”
o Good deeds that Jesus has in mind require love in action that includes some kind of sacrifice on our part!

o **Sacrifice and service move people!**
  - They melt people
  - They stop people in their tracks and make them ask, “Why?” Why would you go out of your way for me?
  - What would motivate you to put my interests before your own?
  - Sacrificial acts are rarely forgotten
  - Sacrifices impact people for a lifetime.

- **Becoming a Contagious Christian** – Bill Hybels
  o Tells a story about his colleague Mark
  o Mark went to the store to purchase flowers for his wife.
  o While checking out he struck up a conversation with an elderly woman who was waiting in line in front of him.
  o “I remember when my husband used to bring me flowers,” she said pensively, “But he died many years ago.”
  o It was obvious to Mark how much she still missed her husband, even after all those years.
  o As Mark was ringing up his flowers he had a moment of inspiration. He ran out to the parking lot, found the lady
walking across the parking lot. He held out the bouquet of flowers to her. “You husband isn’t available to do this, so I’d like to give you these flowers.”

- Well, as you can imagine, this small gesture and sacrifice made a deep impression.
- In fact, she invited Mark home for tea and they had a wonderful time getting to know each other.
- Since that time, Mark and his wife Heidi have lived in five different places, but that dear lady recently took the effort to find out where they live now, and sent them a package that included gifts for their kids and a letter telling how even now – ten years later – she talks to her friends about Mark’s act of kindness and how it encouraged her.

- **Do you see how the smallest acts of kindness and sacrifice on behalf of others stands out in a sharp contrast and leads people to glorify our Father in heaven?**
- **Do you see how sacrifice – good deeds motivated by love and concern is extremely difficult to discount.**
- **It just screams for a response of some kind – Praise God, He does care for me!**
Which leads to our last point of the powerful effects of being “light to the world.”

5. Our good deeds are meant to draw attention, not to ourselves, but to God.

- The Christian never thinks of what he has done, but of what God has enabled him to do.
- He never seeks to draw attention to himself, but always to direct the attention to God.
- We must shine with the reflection of God’s light.
- The radiance which shines from us is lit by the presence of Christ and the Holy Spirit within our hearts!
- When we allow the Holy Spirit to shine through us to a darkened world, the radiance of Christ shines…the darkness cannot overcome it! And ultimately God is glorified as human hearts are moved by God’s love and sacrifice in Jesus Christ.

And finally – The incentives for living as salt and light are three fold…

1. This is the way we ourselves will be blessed!
2. This is the way the world will be best served!

3. And third, this is the way God will be glorified.

- Right at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry Jesus tells us that if we let our light shine so that our good works are seen, our Father in heaven will be glorified!
- At the end of his ministry, in the upper room, he expresses the same truth: “By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples.” (Jn 15:8).
- This is the grand purpose and desirability of the Christ-life and the Christian counter-culture.
- It brings blessings in ourselves, salvation to others, and ultimately glory to God.”

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!

This is precisely why we need to be Born again and FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT! – So we can be shining stars of the light of Jesus Christ in a darkened world!

So let me ask you – have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal savior?

Have you made the wonderful discovery of the Spirit filled life?