

February 3, 2013  
Light!

*You are the Light!*  
Matthew 5:14-16

**Opening words:** Did you know the sun came up this morning at 7:31? Did you know the sun will set this evening at 5:42? That means we will have ten hours and eleven minutes of sunlight today. That means we will have fourteen hours and forty-nine minutes of darkness. We will have two minutes and seventeen seconds of more sunlight today than we did yesterday. Does anyone here miss the early dawns and late sunsets of summer? I will admit it, I do.

This is sermon number three in my four part sermon series called *Light!* The word "light" is used 272 times in the Bible. Biblically speaking, there is nothing simple about the word light. Sometimes, it means an illuminating object. Sometimes, it means much more. It is those texts that we are looking at in this sermon series. For example, the first time the word light is used in the Bible is Genesis 1:3. It says, "*God said let there be light and there was light.*" In that verse, "light" meant "life". John 8:12 quotes Jesus. The Master said, "*I am the light of the world.*" In that context, Jesus, himself, is setting the standard. Today, we examine Matthew 5:14. It says, "*You are the light of the world.*" That verse reminds us that we are witnesses of Jesus Christ in our world. Has anyone ever questioned your witness?" May God give you ears to hear this morning's scripture, Matthew 5:14-16. Let me call this message *You are the Light!*

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**Matthew 5:14-16** <sup>14</sup> "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

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There is an old preaching story about man who was accused of some wrongdoing. The judge asked him if he had a lawyer. The man answered, "No!" The judge responded, "The court will get you a lawyer, a real good lawyer." The man said, "I need a good lawyer, but what I really need is a real good witness." It isn't just true of the man in the story. It is true of God, himself. He is looking for a good witness. Do you consider yourself a good witness for God? If that makes you think, say, "**Amen!**"

Before we look at this morning's Gospel lesson, let us define the word "witness". What is a witness? A witness is someone who gives evidence after seeing or hearing something. A good witness is one who brings the truth to light. Have you ever been called upon to be a witness?

Years ago, I was serving a church in the Medina area. I was sitting at a traffic light and saw an accident. It wasn't a major accident, but it was more than a fender bender. I couldn't pass because glass was thrown all over the road. A few seconds later, the county sheriff appeared with his light flashing. After checking on those involved in the accident he came up to me. He asked, "Did you see what happened?" I said, "Yes!" He said, "Good! You are the only witness." A good witness brings truth to light." That is what Jesus is talking about in the Gospel lesson for today.

We are in the fifth chapter of Matthew. It is a significant piece of scripture. We call the fifth, sixth and seventh chapter of Matthew the "Sermon on the Mount". Someday I am going to write a sermon series on the Sermon on the Mount. It begins with the Beatitudes, which means "declarations of blessedness". The next section deals with ethical issues. That is where we are this morning. Matthew 5:14-16 says:

**"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."**

To understand the text, you must understand three things. First, you must know Jesus is the true source of the light. Last week, we looked at John 8:12. The Master said, "*I am the light of the world.*" In other words, our light is reflected light. Second, you must know who Jesus is addressing. The Master is speaking to the masses that were following him. They were the group who believed Jesus had something to offer. They were his students; they were his disciples. Third, you must understand Jesus is not just talking about words. He is talking about being witnesses, not just testifiers. Jesus knew words are important. However, the Master also understood actions often do speak louder than words. Our words reflect our sincerity. You are a disciple of Jesus Christ! Do your lives witness to the fact that Jesus has made a difference? Remember, a witness sees something first hand. Understanding those three things, let me ask you this question: What are your actions saying about your devotion to Jesus? How clear is your witness?

Today, I want to help you evaluate your witness. Is your light shining for all the world to see, or is your light well hidden? The heart of this message is three questions. I hope you answer each one in your heart of hearts. Your answers will reveal the condition of your witness. These are the three questions:

**Do people see your passion for Jesus?**

**Do people see your passion for others?**

**Do people see your passion for the church?**

So if you are ready to begin say, **"Amen!"**

### **Jesus**

Question number one: do people see your passion for Jesus? T.H. Huxley, a well-known agnostic, was with a group of men at a weekend house party. On Sunday morning, while most of them were preparing to go to church, he approached a man known for his Christian character and said, "Suppose you stay at home and tell me why you are a Christian." The man, knowing he couldn't match wits with Huxley, hesitated. But the agnostic said gently, "I don't want to argue with you. I just want you to tell me simply what this Christ means to you." The man did, and when he finished, there were tears in Huxley's eyes as he said, "I would give my right hand if only I could believe that!"

Do people see your passion for Jesus? Are you able to tell someone what Christ means to you? Are you able to tell someone what Christ has done for you? I am not talking about reciting local church history. I am not talking about reciting the most current gossip. I am not talking about the details of the most recent fundraiser or the last problem with the building. I am talking about your relationship with Jesus. Remember, a witness is one who experiences something first hand. If you had to tell someone about your relationship with Jesus what would you say? Do people see your passion for Jesus? Is your light shining or is your light well hidden? If that makes you think, then say, **"Amen!"** Nearly twenty-five years ago the Gallup Poll told us only 2% of American Christians have led someone to Christ. Maybe that is part of our national problem today?

### **Others**

Question number two: do people see your passion for others? That question is important because within each person is the image of God. That means each person should be treated with dignity and respect. How would our world change if each person was treated with dignity and respect? How would your life improve if everyone treated you with dignity and respect? Through the eyes of God, money doesn't matter. Through the eyes of God, age doesn't matter. Through the eyes of God, social standing doesn't matter. Through the eyes of God, the only thing that matters is people. Everyone deserves to be treated with dignity and respect.

Several years ago, *Good Housekeeping* magazine published an article written by Lois Wyse. The article listed some helpful hints for young women, who were considering getting married. She said there are certain ways you can learn about a man. She made a list. This is the list:

- **Drive with him in heavy traffic**
- **Play tennis with him**
- **Listen to the way he talk to his mother**
- **Observe how is treats those who serve him**
- **Notice how and on whom he spends his money**
- **Look at his friends**

The thread that runs through all these things is *others*. You know it is true. The way we treat other people says a great deal about ourselves. It reveals a great deal about our faith. Do you treat everyone in your life with dignity and respect? Do people see your passion for others? And all of God people said, "**Amen!**" Is your light shining or is it well hidden?

### Church

Question number three: do people see your passion for the church? The mission statement of the United Methodist Church is "to make disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world". The mission statement of this congregation is "to develop disciples through worship, fellowship and deed". Both of those mission statements are based on the Great Commission. Matthew 28:19 is quoting Jesus. The Master said, "*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*" I always remind people that we are in the disciple-making business because we get so involved in so many good things that we forget the best thing.

Just think about all the good things there are about the church. In church, you can make some good friends. In church, we collect food for the hungry in our community. In church, we get involved in programs that improve our community. In church, you can learn about other places in the world. In church you can help solve world problems. In church, we offer wonderful programs to help children. In the perfect church, we accept everyone, the aged and the disabled. In church, we are entertained by wonderful music. In church, you hear inspirational messages (when I am absent). All those things are good, but they are not the best thing. The best thing about church is Jesus. Listen to what I am about to say. You can get all those good things somewhere else but none of those other places are going to offer you Jesus. The true church is not going anywhere, because our world is starving for Jesus Christ. Let me ask you this question:

How would this church change if everyone supported this church like you? If everyone volunteered the number of hours you volunteer, would this ministry expand or contract? If everyone used their special gift like you use your special gift, would this ministry expand or contract? If everyone gave as much money as you give, would this ministry expand or contract? Our world is starving for Jesus Christ. Do you care? Do people see your passion for the church? And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**" Is your light shining or is it well hidden?

On January 15, 1967, the Green Bay Packers of the National Football League defeated the Kansas City Chiefs of the American Football League in what was called the AFL-NFL World Championship game. If you haven't heard, the Packers won, 35-10. History tells us the first Super Bowl wasn't sold out. However, 60 million television viewers did watch it on two networks, NBC and CBS. The Super Bowl is truly American. There are 315 million Americans in a world population of over seven billion.

We are the only country that cares about the Super Bowl. The rest of the world will barely notice this American event. How much do you care about the Super Bowl?

Daisy Sundano cares about the Super Bowl! Her beloved Baltimore Ravens are playing the San Francisco Forty-niners. Several years ago her fiancé, Jim Pelligrini, proposed to her. She agreed to marry him, but not until the Ravens returned to the Super Bowl. When the Ravens defeated the Patriots, their wedding date was set. Daisy and Jim were married yesterday in the host city of the Super Bowl, New Orleans. They were surrounded by other Ravens fans. Let there be no doubt about it - Daisy is a Ravens fan. She proudly wore the color of her favorite team. Her wedding dress was purple! I tell you about Daisy for one reason. Without uttering a single word, she demonstrated to the world what was really important to her.

What is really important to you? How important is Jesus to you? Do people see your passion for **Jesus**? Do people see your passion for **others**? Do people see your passion for the **church**? In other words, is your light shining, or is it well hidden? The great missionary to China, Hudson Taylor, once said, "*The Great Commission is not an option to be considered; it is a command to be obeyed.*" And all of God's people said, "**Amen!**"