

## Ye Are the Light of the World – Matthew 5:13-16

### I. Introduction:

- A. Probably all of us have heard messages from these words of the Lord Jesus – perhaps more than one.
  - 1. Why should we have another look?
  - 2. Well, I believe that it is the Lord will for us tonight.
  - 3. Monday, as Judy and I were having our devotions, these words came up, and the Spirit planted a thought which I had never considered before.
  - 4. It wasn't exactly what we had been reading, but it flowed out of them.
  - 5. It seems that my mental and spiritual *"down load speeds"* are rather slow, so you have probably already seen what I saw that day. But still it won't hurt us to think about this again.
- B. Does the Lord Jesus contradict himself when he says, *"YE are the light of the world?"*
  - 1. Of course not. But still it **does** sound rather contradictory.

### II. Because Christ Jesus is the light of the world.

- A. In **John 8**, after He forgave the woman taken in adultery, Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."*
  - 1. This is repeated, reiterated and reemphasized throughout the New Testament, by Christ and His apostles.
  - 2. **John** said in the opening paragraph of his gospel, that the eternal Word, the Son of God, is *"the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"* – **John 1:9**.
  - 3. Jesus said to Nicodemus, *"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world..."* speaking of Himself
  - 4. Just before healing the man who was born blind, Christ said, *"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*
  - 5. There are several other scriptures which tell us that Christ Jesus is the light of the world.
- B. But as His ambassadors Christ says that His saints have been given the **reflective title** – *"light of the world."*
  - 1. **Ephesians 5** – *"ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: a. (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) b. Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. c. And (therefore) have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*
  - 2. I won't belabor the point – you, as a child of God are one of Christ's lights in this dark world.
- C. And obviously, this is metaphorical.
  - 1. Whenever I walk into a dark room, and I want to see something in that room, I turn on a light.
  - 2. I am not a physical light, like a flashlight; I don't brighten the corner where I am in any luminescent way.
  - 3. But I may, and should, reflect the light of the Saviour's holiness, love and joy, in real but non-tangible ways.
  - 4. And with the position of *"lights in the world"* come responsibilities and privileges, some of which I'll come to in a minute.
- D. But first I'll digress just a bit, because it pertains to my objective.
  - 1. God created light before He created the bearers or physical sources of light.
  - 2. Light was created on day #1 – the first of all things.
    - a. Some poet once said that light was *"God's eldest daughter."*
  - 3. Light was created on day #1, but the sun and other stars were created on day #4, and candles eve later.
  - 4. An appropriate application is this: Christ is the light, and you and I came along four days later.
  - 5. We are nothing and nobodies without the light, but being granted the light, **we** may rule the day.
  - 6. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote: *"God and nature met in light."* That's an interesting thought.
  - 7. The Christian finds his life and his true purpose – walking in the light of the Lord Jesus our Saviour.
- E. Now thinking about Jesus' declaration that you and I are lights in the world...

### III. Does the Bible give us any **TANGIBLE** examples of human “**LIGHTS?**”

A. And if it does, what can we learn about ourselves?

1. Wasn't **Moses** a physical illustration of this spiritual truth; wasn't he one of the Lord's bright lights?
2. Yes, and he was a light in more than one way.
3. **Exodus 34** – *“it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him.*
  - a. *And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him.*
  - b. *And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them.*
  - c. *And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai.*
  - d. *And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face.”*
4. Is this really true?
5. Did Moses' face become so bright that others couldn't look at him without hurting their eyes?
6. Yes, of course it was true.

B. My question for you is this: how did Moses become that particularly bright light to the world?

1. It didn't come from his **secular Egyptian education**.
  - a. It didn't come from his **Christian heritage** and **godly parents** – going to Sunday School and church when he was a baby.
  - b. It wasn't even from his **personal Bible study**; it didn't come directly from his prayer & devotional life.
2. Moses became the light of world by spending time with the One who is *“the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”*
3. Yes, Moses was holding the Word of God in his hands, and that was a very good thing.
4. But he **became** Christ's light when his heart and soul were filled with the living Word of God.
5. He became Christ's light by spending a few hours, then a few days, then many days in God's presence.

C. The chapter goes on with two more verses –

1. *“But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out.*
  - a. *And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded.*
  - b. *And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses' face shone:*
  - c. *and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him.”*
2. If I am not mistaken **Exodus 34:35** is the last time we hear that the face of Moses shone like this.
3. It is not that, metaphorically, Moses no longer was the Lord's **“light of the world,”** but the physical brilliance of that light diminished over time.

D. What dulled Moses' light?

1. Might we extend the metaphor to say that he wasn't bringing his spiritual lithium battery to the Lord for recharging as often as he should have been?
2. The cares of the world and the responsibilities of his pastoral leadership didn't give him the time he needed at the recharging station.
3. This is something which applies to all of us.

E. As I was searching my memory I could think of only three other cases of God's creatures becoming physical illustrations of this light.

1. Of course there was the **transfiguration** of **Christ**, which doesn't really pertain to our thoughts this evening.
2. And we could talk about **the angel** who was at **Jesus' empty tomb** and who spoke to Mary.
3. But again, that doesn't really apply to us.

- F. However, there is one other possible **human** example.
1. And yet, there is enough ambiguity that I'm forced not to put too much stress on it.
  2. Before **Deacon Stephen** was martyred for his faith in Christ, he was brought before the Jewish council.
  3. And they *"set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law:*
  4. *For we have heard him say, that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us.*
  5. *And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel" – Acts 6:13-16.*
- G. Now I admit that different people might have different definitions of **angelic faces**.
1. But to my mind, Stephen didn't have a **peaceful** face, or **joyful** face, or a face **free of wrinkles** and **warts**.
  2. I personally think that his face began to glow just like the face of that angel which sat in Jesus' empty tomb.
  3. And if my assumption is correct, how and why was that so?
  4. Wasn't it because, like Moses, he was near to heart of God – near to the throne – near to Heaven itself?
  5. He had *"set his affections on things above; he had considered himself as a dead man, and yet his life was hid with Christ in God.*
  6. *Furthermore, he believed – he knew – that Christ who was his life was coming for him, and that he would soon appear with Him in glory – gloriously."*
  7. And the face of Stephen, the countenance of that man, caught and reflected the light and glory of the One who is truly the light of the world.
  8. Isn't that somewhat what the Lord was saying when he said of us, *"Ye are the light of the world?"*
  9. We have no business trying to draw attention to ourselves. It is not about us.

#### IV. Now, consider some of the properties of light as we know them in the physical world.

- A. What happens when something physical, like a human body, steps between the sun and a wall?
1. Isn't there a shadow cast upon that wall?
  2. If you and I, as Christians are the light of the world, what is our church, when we come together?
  3. Shouldn't the Lord's church be as bright as all the little candles which sit upon that candlestick?
- B. But is that really the way things are? Is that reality?
1. For example, right now, it is about 6:45 p.m.
    - a. The sun passed its zenith a long time ago, and our church building is casting a shadow out over the lawn on our east side.
    - b. Soon that shadow will extend out onto Spokane Street.
  2. It is the nature of physical things to create shadows when in the presence of the sun.
- C. And metaphorically isn't that also true of us 98% or 99% of time?
1. Don't we, more often than not, cast shadows rather than light?
  2. **Ephesians 5:8** – *"Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord; walk as children of light."*
  3. The problem with our lighting responsibilities is that we don't nearly as often as we should – walk as children of light.
  4. More often than not we are consumed with ourselves, our problems, our shadows and not with the One who is the *"light of the world."*

**D. Acts 5** sheds some interesting “light” on the early days of the church in Jerusalem.

1. It tells us that by the hands of the apostles *“many signs and wonders were wrought among the people.”*
  - a. *“And believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women.*
  - b. *Insomuch that they brought forth the sick into the streets, and laid them on beds and couches, that at the least the **SHADOW** of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them.”*
  - c. And apparently people, for a short time in church history, were healed by the apostles’ shadows.
2. But that is not the way the Lord is working today.
3. It is not our shadow which the Lord blesses and uses, it is our light.

**E.** I said a moment ago that physical things create shadows – bodies and buildings create shadows.

1. But there are a few physical objects which do not cast shadows.
2. Glass, for example lets the light of the sun shine through it, and what a blessing that can be.
3. How might we be the light of world? By becoming translucent, transparent.
4. I think we can say we lights in the world, by permitting the light of the world to be seen in us or through us.

**F.** And I’ll take that image one step farther, probably hurting my illustration in the process.

1. When certain crystals are struck by light, they break that light apart into it various component colors.
2. Not only should we let the light of Christ pass through us... it can become a part of our ministry to share with the world, various beauties of our Saviour – His love, His deity, His eternity, even His wrath and judgment.

**G.** But if we are grimy with sin, cloudy with unbelief or simply dusty from our secular lives, we do little more than cast a shadow in the world.

1. And there is a sense in which when the Lord is at His brightest, if we are not the saints we were meant to be, we will create an even sharper shadow.
2. Again, when we are living in sin, we cast shadows.
  - a. When we are living like the world, we cast shadows.
  - b. When we are so filled with our problems, our woes, our worries, we will not be available for the Lord to pass though us.

**V. Conclusion: I’ll close with the Lord’s concluding words:**

- A.** *“Let your light – your life – so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”*
1. It is the Lord and His glory that should be our greatest concern.
  2. It is not our job to boast about ourselves or our “lightness.”
  3. It is our job to magnify the one who is *“the true light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.”*
  4. We should strive to draw the attention of the struggling flowers in this gloomy world toward the Son.