

~ Let your Light So Shine ~

Text: Mathew 5:14-16

Theme: The Christian who isn't shining is a Christian who is hiding.

Intro:

1. In Mathew 5:13-16 we have two pictures given by the Lord Jesus which help us to understand the impact that we ought to have on the lost through our Christian conduct and the Gospel message.
 - a. Verse 13 gives us the picture of salt which give flavour to a meal but if it has lost its savour then it is good for nothing but to be thrown out and trodden under foot.
 - b. Verses 14-16 give us the picture of a candle which gives light that permeates the darkness around it and can be seen from a great distance. However, the picture includes a warning against hiding the light and rendering it unprofitable.
2. We won't be looking at the picture of the salt this evening, but we will take the picture of the light in a dark place and apply that picture to the testimony that we ought to be, as Christians, for the Gospel's sake.

Main:

- I. **The Picture in the Light** (Vs 14-16)
 - A. The context for the picture of light
 1. The beatitudes of the sermon on the mount.
 - a. The sermon on the mount contains some wonderful instructions for those who would be disciples, or followers of Jesus Christ.
 - i. "The first sixteen verses of Matthew 5 describe the true Christian and deal with character. The rest of the Sermon on the Mount deals with conduct that grows out of character. Character always comes before conduct, because what we are determines what we do."¹
 - b. Verses 3-12 have been called the beatitudes which means "blessing."
 - i. These instructions, then, are for those who desire a life of blessing.

¹ Warren W. Wiersbe, [*Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1992), 27.

- ii. It has been said that the beatitudes describe the beautiful attitudes that ought to characterize the life of every true Christian.
- 2. The beatitudes teach us 8 lessons about good character.
 - a. The 8 lessons of good character.
 - i. “The poor in spirit” (Vs 3)
 - This mean to have a humble disposition, recognizing our dependence upon God.
 - ii. “They that mourn” (Vs 4)
 - This speaks of those who endure hardness because of their godly living and testimony for Christ.
 - iii. “The meek” (Vs 5)
 - Meekness is not weakness but strength under control. Meekness speaks to the individual’s self-control and humility in their conduct toward others.
 - iv. The “hunger(y)” and “thirst(y)” (Vs 6)
 - These are Christians who thirst after God, a closer relationship with Him and to be more Christlike themselves.
 - v. “The merciful” (Vs 7)
 - This speaks of a loving and forgiving spirit toward others.
 - vi. “The pure in heart” (Vs 8)
 - These Christians desire to keep themselves pure and clean from the world’s pollutants.
 - vii. “The peacemakers” (Vs 9)
 - This speaks of a peaceful disposition and a desire to live peaceably with all men, as far as is possible.
 - viii. The “persecuted” (Vs 10)
 - This is a reminder that everyone who seeks to follow Christ can expect to suffer persecution somewhere along the journey, for his name’s sake.

So, as we come to the sources of light it is important to remember that the Christians who are shining as lights in a dark world are the Christians who are exemplars of the godly living that has just been described.

B. The sources of light in the pictures

1. A City on a Hill (Vs 14)

- a. The picture of a city that is set on a hill is easily recognisable.
 - i. The logic here is easy to follow. If you don’t want your city to be discovered by others, then the last place you would build your city is on a hill where everyone can see it.

- ii. When we were driving from Adelaide to Broken Hill, we had to drive through an area where the land is really flat and dry. For quite some time you would see some fairly mild undulations but it was mostly just flat land. When Broken Hill came into sight it stood out from the surrounding geography and made you wonder who on earth would build a town out in the middle of nowhere.
 - iii. A city on a hill stands out from the surrounding terrain and catches your eye.
 - b. A city that is built on a hill cannot be hid and a Christian who is living a life after the pattern of the beatitudes of verses 3-12 cannot hide it either.
 - i. The world is bound to notice such a Christian. They can't help but have their attention drawn to such a Christian because that sort of Christian stands out from the surrounding terrain, as it were, they don't blend in with the crowd.
 - ii. That is what a Christian ought to be in this world, like a city that cannot hide its true location, the true Christian cannot hide their Christlike character.
2. A Candle in a House (Vs 15)
- a. The second picture we have is of the candle that is lit in a house.
 - i. We have some limited experience of this due to the semi-regular power outages out at Yanchep which have meant we sometimes have to light candles in the evening so that we can go about our usual evening activities, getting the kids ready for bed and so forth.
 - ii. It's amazing how much light a single candle can give and the more candles you light the greater the effect upon a dark home.
 - b. The challenge in the verse is, "Why would you light a candle and then hide it under a bushel?"
 - i. Imagine that we had one of our power outages and I lit 2 candles and then I grabbed a couple of buckets and put one over each of the candles. What purpose would those candles be serving then?
 - c. A worldly Christian is a Christian who is hiding their light under a bushel.
 - i. They have the Holy Spirit living within them, they are possessors of the heavenly light of the Lord Jesus Christ and his gospel message but they have hidden that light under a bushel of ungodly, worldly living.

II. The Necessity of the Light (Vs 16)

A. The challenge to be a light bearing Christian.

1. Verse 16 puts forward the challenge to every Christian to live in such a way that people can't help but notice the light of the Saviour shining through you.
 - a. "Let your light so shine before men." Like a city on a hill cannot be hid and like a candle in a dark room we are to shine as lights in the world, attracting the attention of sinners and pointing them to the Saviour.
 - b. When you have learned to live verses 3-12 of this chapter you won't be able to help but to fulfill verse 16.
 - i. Once again, when we have learned to live as a godly, Christlike Christian ought to live, we won't be able to help but be noticed by others.
 - ii. I've experienced this personally both at work at while playing sports. People soon pick up on the fact that you are different, that you don't swear like the others do and that you don't waste the boss's time at work and so on.
2. The purpose in living a godly life is not to glorify yourself but to bring glory to God.
 - a. When men see your good works, your godly character, it brings glory to the God you serve.
 - i. When people notice that we, as professing Christians, are honest, humble, peaceful, merciful, meek, self-effacing, godly people it brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ and to our Heavenly Father.
 - b. The reverse of this is true also. When professing Christians live wicked lives it brings shame to the name of Jesus Christ.

B. The problem of light hiding Christians.

1. One of the greatest tragedies of today is that the Devil had managed to convince churches to import ungodly behaviours and un-Christlike character into the church and thereby hide the light of the gospel.
 - a. If Christians won't be light bearers for the Lord Jesus Christ, then who will?
 - i. Who is going to spread the light of the Gospel in the local community when all the professing Christians are importing the worlds darkness into their own lives, placing bushels over the candle light they are supposed to be?
 - b. As kids we used to sing that Sunday School song "This Little Light of Mine" which goes:

- i. “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine. This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
 Won’t let Satan hwoo it out, I’m gonna let it shine. Won’t let Satan hwoo it out, I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.
 Hide it under a bushel, No! I’m gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel, No! I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”
 - ii. How many of us end up hiding the light under a bushel of sin and selfishness?
2. To give you a final example of the light a Christian ought to be I want to read for you the story behind hymn 371, “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning.”

“In 1869 there appeared a story in the newspaper in Chicago of a ship that had been wrecked on the shores of Lake Erie near Cleveland, Ohio. The account told of a place called Lorraine, which was situated on the lake shore west of Cleveland. There was built a special harbor for relief of the ships that would most certainly be wrecked if they tried to ride out some of the intense and dangerous storms that can hit our large inland lakes. This harbor had a channel running from Lake Erie into a large basin — an inner harbor. Once ships reached this, they were safe. At the entrance to this channel were rows of lights which were lit at night and would show the ships where to enter. At the inner harbor there was placed a large lighthouse. This was to help the ships which were far out. It seems that on the very day the tragedy happened, the man who had the job of lighting the lower lights and keeping the lighthouse said to himself, ‘I’ve been on this job for several years and to date, not one ship has had to find the harbor at night. I just don’t feel up to it today, to go out and refill the oil reservoir of the lamps along the shoreline. I think I’ll forget about them, just for today. I’ll feel better tomorrow and anyway, I just know that no one will need those lights tonight.’ And so, when night came, he went to bed — little dreaming that in a matter of a few short hours his unconcern would cost many lives and burden his conscience for the remainder of his life with something he would never forget. For that very night a turbulent and destructive storm swept across Lake Erie. Some of the ships were able to ride out the storm, some were not.”²

Consider this testimony from a survivor of the wrecked ship mentioned earlier.

“(In the) dark, stormy night, when the waves rolled like mountains and not a star was to be seen, a boat rocking and plunging, neared the Lorraine Harbor at Cleveland. ‘Are you sure this is Cleveland,’ asked the captain, seeing the light from the lighthouse. ‘Quite sure, Sir,’ replied the pilot. ‘But where are the lower lights?’ ‘They’re out, Sir.’ ‘Can you make it?’ ‘We must or we’ll perish, Sir!’ With a strong hand

² Al Smiths Treasury of Hymn Histories; Pg 182-183: Copyright 1981 by Alfred B Smith

and a brave heart, the old pilot turned the wheel; but alas, in the darkness he missed the channel, and with a crash upon the rocks, the boat was slivered and many lives were lost in a watery grave.”³

3. The Hymn “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning” captures this picture very well.
 - a. The hymn pictures the Lord Jesus Christ as being the great lighthouse within the harbour of the His saving love and grace.
 - b. The lights along the shoreline are the Christians whose purpose it is to point lost souls into the harbour, when they can find shelter in the Saviour.

Vs 1) “Brightly beams our Fathers mercy from His light-house evermore. But to us He gives the keeping of the lights along the shore.”

Vs 2) “Dark the night of sin has settled, loud the angry billows roar. Eagers eyes are watching, longing, for the lights along the shore.”

Vs 3) “Trim your feeble lamp, my brother! Some poor sailor tempest tossed, trying now to make the harbour, in the darkness may be lost.”

Chorus) “Let the lower lights be burning! Send the gleam across the wave! Some poor fainting, struggling seaman you may rescue, you may save.”

Conclusion:

1. Is your light burning or are you hiding? Lost souls depend on it, don't let the lower lights go out!

^{3 3} Al Smiths Treasury of Hymn Histories; Pg 182-183: Copyright 1981 by Alfred B Smith