

40-05-10.wpd —People of Light
 testimony, witness, evangelism, light, influence
 Mat 5:14-16
 God is light, and seeing His light in us leads others to Him.

INTRODUCTION:

--"The day is not at war with night.
 It simply says 'So long!' with light.
 Just so, confusion from a lie
 Must go when truth tells it 'Good-bye!'" (DLH)

–Christians are to be children of truth, dispelling the *lies* that keep people in *darkness*. This is why Jesus said, in Mat 5:14-16, "*You are the light of the world. A city 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 men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*"

–Darkness is defined as "*the absence or lack of light.*" In other words, light is something, and darkness is really nothing. There's no way to put darkness "in a positive light," because if you do, darkness immediately disappears. [One night, six-year-old Robert Louis Stevenson saw a lamplighter at work, lighting lamps one by one as he walked down the street. His nurse, fearing the boy's silence meant that he might be up to some mischief, called out and asked what he was doing. Young Stevenson answered, "*I am watching a man making holes in the darkness.*"] That's a good *job description* for Christians: "*making holes in the darkness.*" **HOM.idea.**

I. God Is Our Light Source

- A. To make holes in the darkness, we need a good light source, and God is that source– 1 John 1:5-7, This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light**; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (Our salvation and our testimony are dependent on light...)
1. Our connection to God is *our connection to light*.
 2. Our connection to each other is based on *our connection to light*.
 3. Our effect on darkness depends on *our connection to light*.
- B. It might intimidate us that Jesus said in v.14a, "*You are the light of the world.*" But it's *encouraging* that, *as God's Son*, He's our *light source*, and *as a real Human*, He's our example (in 3 verses from

John's Gospel, He says that He's "*the light of the world.*")

1. Jesus said in John 12:46, "I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness." (Faith in Christ brings us personally out of the world's darkness. That's the first step.)
2. In John 8:12, ...he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (*Following Christ not only keeps us out of darkness, but gives our lives His indwelling presence*, for Jesus Himself is literally "the light of life.")
3. Jesus said in John 9:5, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (Does that mean that when He leaves, it's over? NO! His indwelling presence makes His ministry as "*the light of the world*" an ongoing ministry through us: we are "*the light of the world.*")

TRANS: This makes sense, if we understand why the Church is called both "the Body of Christ" and "the Bride of Christ." When Eve came from the wounded side of Adam, she was *physically* part of his body as well as *relationally* "one flesh" with him *through marriage*. The Church came from Christ's wounded body, making us an *organic* part of His Body, yet also in union with Him as His Bride. This is why, when the Church is persecuted, Christ is persecuted. When we bless or fail to bless other believers, we bless or fail to bless Christ. So, because our Husband is "*the light of the world,*" then we, His Bride, are "*the light of the world.*"

II. God Wants Us to Shine

- A. God is light, and seeing His light in us leads others to Him. So, Christ's words in this passage are mainly about our visibility:
1. Jesus did not establish "a secret society"– v.14b, "*A city on a hill cannot be hidden.*" (Persecution in church history shows how seriously Christian believers have been about *shining for God.*)
 2. God doesn't want the visibility of His light in us blocked– v.15a, "*Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.*"
 - a. Satan uses false thinking to block our light– 2 Cor 4:4, The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. [I'm big on logical argument, but some people are gripped by ideas that logic cannot dislodge.] (Prayer and patience and the power of the Holy Spirit are the only ways that will open their minds to God's light.)
 - b. Others might "*see the light*" if our actions match our message–

1 Cor 15:34, Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

- (1) This is what Jesus is getting at in v.16, ...*let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*
- (2) God's light led us into salvation, and if it shines from us, it will lead others to find Christ. But we must "walk in the light, as he is in the light"—otherwise people might say, "*What you are speaks so loudly I cannot hear what you say.*"

B. If we are "*the light of the world*," and ***seeing His light in us leads others to Him***, then we need to let our light shine— v.15b, ...*put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.*

1. It costs to shine light [In biblical times, whenever a lamp was lit, it burned up *olive oil*. Later, when candles were invented, they shined only at the expenditure of *wax*. Nothing has changed. Whether it's *kerosene*, or *natural gas*, or *electricity*, the price of light is the consumption of energy.] In the same way, if you are to "let your light shine before men," there's a price you must pay (in *finances, time, effort, even relationships*).
2. Finally, what's the proper "stand" on which to place the lamp we've lit? (Some think the *lampstand is the church building*, but it is not. It's the **lives of Christians**, who live most of their time each week *at home, or at school, or at work, or amid hundreds of other situations* where they interface with the rest of the world. That's where "*everyone in the house*" can have a chance to see and respond to the light, because we are not the light of the church, but "*the light of the world.*"

CONCLUSION:

—[When Robert Louis Stevenson grew up, he published *A Garden of Verses*, in which there's a poem about Leerie, the lamplighter, whom he used to watch as the evening darkened. In the middle stanza, he says, "*Now Tom would be a driver and Maria go to sea, // And my papa's a banker and as rich as he can be; // But I, when I am stronger and can choose what I'm to do, // O Leerie, I'll go round at night and light the lamps with you!*"] Is that our ambition, to see how many holes of light we can put in the darkness? God is the real Lamplighter, and He wants to shine His light in us, so that others will see it and come to Him, too.

Matthew 5:14-16 (NIV)

- 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.
 15 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.
 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.