

February 6, 2011
Matthew 5:13-20

Epiphany 5A
Let Your Light Shine

Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As I read this text over and over this week, my mind kept coming to two different themes. The first is the power of light and the second is vocation, discipleship, and servanthood. I sat and pondered how these two themes merge together and you know what they do very well.

I was sitting with my peewee campers on a Friday evening down by the lake during devotions, and the song that they could belt out was the popular camp and Sunday School song, "This Little Gospel Light of Mine." The second verse "Hide it under a bushel NO. I am going to let it shine." The young 6 and 7 year olds shouted no like they meant it. They knew what they had to do with the light, the light of the gospel, and by golly they were going to do it. Camp was always such a wonderful time to share my faith with these youngsters from the ages of 3 on up. I can tell you their childlike faith was amazing.

And Jesus Christ comes to us in this Sermon on the Mount and says, "*You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*" He calls us the light of the world. And what does light do, it shines up the area that it is. Light is very powerful, light can light up a room. Light can direct our ways, light can protect us. Light is good a powerful thing. It's even the first thing that God created. In a sermon not too long ago I stated how winter is quite dreary, and not because of the cold or the snow, but because of the darkness. It also seems that our lives are like that as well, when we lack the gospel light we are very down in the dumps. This brings to mind another camp activity that we did with our Jr. High kids.

It was a simulation called "Lights." You see, us as counselors would put on characters, perhaps someone with cancer, a teenager that their parents were going through a divorce, someone who recently lost a close friend, alcoholic, and the list would change each time. We then asked the kids to come around and witness to us and some of these kids were right on, they knew their stuff, they were spreading their light and you could tell, but then there were the others that didn't know anything or if they did, they didn't share it, they didn't share their faith. They weren't excited about it, they weren't. It seems as though in our Christian walk we are more like the young teenagers that were afraid to share their faith, even in a safe environment.

Christ tells each of you, "You are the light of the world." You are the light by the sake of your baptism. You are the light because Christ calls you the light. You have all been given a job to do and so have I.

Being the light of the world is 24/7 responsibility, it's not just Sunday morning from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM for most of you, it's even more than the 9:30-11:30 AM light it's a Monday-Sunday responsibility. Being the light of the world is showing the light that God has entrusted to each and every one of you. A lot of times, we do put it under a bushel and hide it. We're afraid to live it. What scares me is the fact that there are very few times that I need multiple hands to count the number of High Schoolers, let alone my confirmation kids and other young people. We are not doing our job in putting the faith into the hearts of these young people. We need to a better job sharing the light that God has entrusted to us. For it is a 24/7 vocation of discipleship. It's a lifelong commitment. It's our job to live it so that our young people and those that don't have faith in Jesus want it.

Being the light of world is not easy. It's not easy because Satan is coming to pfff it out. You know another stanza to This Little Gospel Light of Mine. Satan is trying his hardest to use everything else to get at you and blow out your gospel light. He uses your busy schedules; he uses the kids sports, whether it's basketball, football, powerlifting to take your time. He uses your work. He uses the gifts that God has given you against you at points, so that they become more important than the gospel light that we are called to share.

Jesus Christ, the one who calls us, "You are the light of world," is also called the same thing. In John 8:12, Christ says, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus Christ is THE light of the world. He is the light of the world that came out of heaven so that we can be granted life eternal.

Jesus Christ knows how hard Satan is working to blow out the light. For Satan tried to blow out his light. For Satan tempted Jesus and we know that Jesus was tempted in every way that we are, but we also know that Jesus was without sin. Satan tried even harder to blow out His light when Christ carried the weight of the world's sin on His very own back and died. Remember how that Good Friday was described for three hours "Darkness came over all the land from the 6th hour until the 9th hour." Darkness was reigning supreme or so we thought. Everyone though that when Jesus died, it was over. Perhaps even Satan started a preliminary Super Bowl victory dance.

But something grand happened, something big and drastic that changed history happened on a Sunday Morning, JESUS CHRIST ROSE FROM THE DEAD. Jesus Christ lives again. Jesus Christ burst forth showing himself to be the true light of the world, the light that if we follow after him, we will receive the gift of life.

Jesus Christ is the reason that you can be called, "The light of the world." How many of you when you lose power would blow out your candle or throw away the batteries to your flashlight or even unplug the generator so that you would not have light? I am guessing none of you. Then my question is how can we fall into the temptation of

letting our light go dim or even out and not let our friends, family, coworkers, and other acquaintances see the good works that the Holy Spirit enables us to do.

So as God's chosen people whom he has entrusted the Gospel Light too, let it shine around the neighborhood and let it shine till Jesus comes. Let your friends and your neighbors see that you are different than the world. Let the way you live cause the people you encounter to ask, "What do you have that I don't, whatever it is I want it."

Let's live out the gospel calling in our very lives, and not just here inside the walls of the church. But let's go out and be the church in our community. Let's show our communities that we are Christ's disciples. Let's be that city on a hill that cannot be hidden. Let's be the light of the world and the light to the world. For by the grace of God, "You are the light of the world." Amen.

Now may the peace of God which passes all human understanding, guard your hearts and your minds and keep them focused in Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.