

You Are Light; Let Your Light So Shine

Confession of Faith

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Our Scripture reading this evening comes from Matthew 5. Matthew 5. In the last two verses of chapter 4, let's read them first.

24 And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. 25 And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.

1 And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: 2 And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, 3 Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. 10 Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. 13 Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

And here is our text, these three verses.

14 Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. 15 Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. 16 Let your

light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

We stop in our reading of God's word at that point.

"Where are you going tonight?" I'm going to go to Grace Protestant Reformed Church. There is a Confession of Faith of a young man named Luke S. "Who's Luke?" Well, he's the son of Matt and Cindy. "That doesn't help me. Who's Luke?" He goes to Covenant Christian High School. "Maybe I've heard of it but that doesn't tell me much. Who is he?" Well, his grandpa, K. Dykstra. Have you ever heard of that? "Nope." Well, let me tell you about his aunts. No, that's not gonna help you either. "Who is Luke S.?" Luke is light. Luke is the light of the world.

Now that may be a unique way to make a point but the point is this: the real identification, that which really tells others who and what we are is not our name, not our family, not our accomplishments, not our failures, but it's what God has done. This identifies us. "Ye are the salt of the earth. Ye are the light of the world." And it's almost as if, "You need to know more?" That says it, but is that the way that we would identify ourselves and is that the way we would identify each other? Is that how you look at Luke, classmates? The light of the world? Is that the way you look at each other? Is that the way you see the others about you? This is truth. This is God's way of identifying us. So Luke's confession of faith is a public declaration that he understands that that's what and who he is.

What does that mean? That's what we want to consider this evening. "Ye are light. Let your light so shine." First of all, let's explain that identity and when we do that, then we're going to right away hit something that is almost impossible for our earthly and sinful minds to get. Light. Light is a description of the awesome radiating glory that emanates from goodness. Light is what radiates from goodness.

What's good? How would you answer that question? What's good? God is good. Goodness is God. God is good. How many millions of miles away is the sun and yet look at what it does to the earth, and if we could go beyond the earth and then we would see the sun as one of the millions of stars that fill the heavens, burning, shining, it's a light. What the sun is to us and what it does for us is a picture of the glory that emanates from God so when we start and we want to understand light, then we start by looking at him who is light. I must be careful. Don't believe me. 1 John 1:5, "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." None. There's no shadow of turning, James 1 says. There's no hint, there's not less than perfect glow, perfect radiation. He never slips. There's not heights and then depths. There's not waves to God's goodness. Perfect goodness.

God's perfect goodness is that with regard to every virtue, he is it. He doesn't possess virtues, we do. Luke has virtues. God is every virtue and he is every virtue perfectly, immeasurably, and eternally. That's why he is light. It radiates from him, from that perfection, and when we say that light is that radiation that shines forth from his perfect

goodness, then we mean then is this, that we are more moon than being light because as God is light, he is the source of all light. If there is light anywhere else, it is because he is the source of it. He's the only source. There's no other stars out there, no other sources of light but God and if there is light anywhere else, we reflect his light, we don't become sources of it in ourselves.

He gifts us with goodness. He did that most of all with Jesus. Hebrews 1 speaks of Jesus coming forth in these last days, listen to the description of him, he is the "brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Jesus is the brightness of God's glory so that in those familiar words of John 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God." Then this, "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men." And the life was the light of men. God is good and a part of that goodness is he lives, but God's life is that there's always constant activity of communion and fellowship, perfect harmony, absolute bliss, wonderful peace. That's in God eternally, unchangeably. Our love rises, falls. His is there in perfect fellowship.

God is life and that life is light. Jesus possessed life, that fellowship with God, that fellowship that's in God, and that life was the light of men. He was displaying what life is. Remember Jesus in John 17:3 as he's beginning his prayer on the night in which he was betrayed? What is eternal life? "This is life eternal, to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent." Jesus knew God. He is God. He was light. As the perfect reflection of God in all of his being and all of his works and every one of his words, he reflected God. He showed that he knew God and he knew God's will. That's key. He knew God's will. "I come to do thy will." He knew God and therefore what God wanted. He knew God's way and in that way he shone forth God's goodness. Jesus is not told to be light, become light, he is light.

Now the next verse in John 1 after saying that in Jesus, in the Word was life and the life was the light of men, this says, "And the light shineth in darkness." The light shineth in darkness and the darkness didn't get it, "the darkness comprehended it not." The world in which we live is in darkness. "The natural man receiveth not the things of God for they are foolishness unto him, neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned." He doesn't have what it takes to know. He's dark. That darkness of the world is this: an absence of goodness. Darkness is no light, no goodness. Satan's kingdom, listen to its description in Revelation 16:10, "the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast; and his kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain." They chewed their tongues to pieces for pain because they were full of darkness.

Jesus after declaring God's love that he gave his only begotten Son, in John 3:16 says in verse 19, "this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light," they loved darkness rather than light. Why? "Because their deeds were evil." Their deeds were evil. 1 Thessalonians 4 declares that they don't like light, they do their deeds in the darkness of night. They want to be covered. They don't

want to be found out and they don't like lights shining on them, spotlights, because those lights enable them to see the darkness of their hands, of their minds, of their souls. "Turn the light off. Don't shine on me."

Ephesians 5:11, "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness," have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, "but rather reprove them." Tell them, "That's wrong. Don't do it." Have no fellowship. Don't be in the same room. Don't be around the same bonfire. Walk away. Let them know not that you disagree but that God disagrees. This is not God's way. In Luke 1:79, Zacharias said of John the Baptist and his message about Jesus Christ, that their unbelief is spiritual darkness.

Now God is light, Jesus is light, the world is darkness and Jesus said, "Ye are the light of the world." But prior to our becoming the light of the world, Jesus said this about himself in John 8:12, "I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life." Be really alive. Have real life to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. "He that followeth me shall not be in darkness. My sheep hear my voice and they follow me."

Jesus being the light of the world was that because he displayed God's goodness. He was the display of God's goodness. He showed forth God in everything that he said and in everything that he did. In his whole conduct he displayed the glory of God.

Now when Jesus says to us, "Ye are the light of the world," and that's very interesting. It's not you, that's the plural, but it's ye, the singular. Ye. Don't you, you individually, are the light of the world. Why? How? Because the Spirit of Jesus makes his dwellingplace in an amazing work of unbelieving grace, unbelievable grace in us. He enters. He gives us the ability to know. He turns the light on. He gives us the gift of faith. What does faith do? It holds for truth what God has revealed in his word. "If he says it, I believe it. The Bible tells me so. That's all I need."

Faith takes a hold of the truth of God's word and says, "That's right. He is goodness and he lives within me." The Spirit gives goodness. Name the nine fruits of the Spirit, one of the nine fruits is goodness, that moral and spiritual excellence with an emphasis on generosity in action.

We have the light of life. That's why just as Jesus doesn't have to be told, "Be light," you are, so he says that to us. God does not tell us, "Become light. Make the decision for Christ. Become light." Or, "Be light." No, he says this, this is fact, "You are light." You are. A work of his unbelievable work, grace, works in us so that you are light. So the church of Jesus Christ which is the collection of all the individual elect, make up the body of Christ not only but of us individually as well as collectively, it is to be said, "You are the light."

Now, second point, what does light do? Light shines. "Ye are the light," verse 16, "let your light shine." We take care of that first. Why in the wide world if we are light, do we have to be told to let it shine? Can't help but shine. Well, in verses 15 and last part of 14

and then the first part of 16 he explains. Why do we have to be told to shine? We have to be told to shine because it is possible to, now in Jesus' day no light switches so then you had your lights, but candles. You don't put a candle on a candlestick, sometimes lifted up high, sometimes just a vase and it's low, and you light the candle so that it shines and you can see where you're going, but you don't do that and then take a big bushel or a barrel and set it over top so the light is shining, it's on, it's glowing but you cover it up. We really would say, "Duh, pretty stupid. Why light it and then cover it? Are you an idiot?" Yes, sometimes I'm a fool. Sometimes I don't want to say I love Jesus, I am a Christian, I am one with him. Sometimes we're so angry, whatever it may be the occasion, we're so upset, we allow ourselves to be so irritated by other people and other things that we take a big bushel and we cover the light.

I admit, I confess that I don't like to have, sometimes I think, do I want to have something on the bumper of my car or on the back window that identifies me as a Christian? Then I think a bit and I think, no, no, I don't want anybody to know because I would shame my God sometimes. I'd rather that they didn't know.

He says you may think you can cover it, but you can't. For protection purposes militarily, they would want to build their cities on hills so they'd put it on a high hill so that anybody who wants to attack them, they can see from a great distance coming at them. He says, Jesus does, "Can you hide a city on a hill?" Especially nowadays with lights, street lights, you can come from Muskegon and you can see the lights of Grand Rapids glowing in the sky. No, then they didn't have lights like that but on a hill, you could see that city from a great distance away. Can you hide a whole city? A bushel over top the whole thing? No. What a fool to think that you can hide what God has put in you, what God has made you to be.

How do we shine? "Let your light so shine that they may see your good works." That they may see your good works. The nature of the light that God gives to us is that he, in that work of justification and sanctification, he not only makes us holy, he makes us light, but he is continually working on us all our life long to make that light shine brighter, but he also enables us to walk in all good works. Now he gifts us with those good works but he enables us to do good works, to strive to do good works, to do that which is right because we are motivated not to become light, we are light. We don't have to do good works to be light, we are light, but we do it to thank him and just as if I think that if I don't put anything on the back of the window or the back bumper of my car people won't know, God knows. God knows and we know each other.

God not only in his great wisdom brings the word to us, but the Canons of Dort says he powerfully illuminates our minds by his Spirit. He powerfully illuminates, he gives us the ability to understand his word. There's times, there are times when those verses, they're hard to get but there's always verses that we can get and this is one. You don't have to go to seminary to be able to understand these three verses. As soon as I read them, all of you knew even the young children could understand, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that's set on a hill cannot be hid, neither can you men put a light on a candlestick, light a

candle and put it under a bushel, but they put it on a candlestick and it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light shine."

When God irresistibly performs his work of sanctification in us, then we shine. How do we shine? We shine when we love him. We shine when the knowledge of his love, how much he loves us, what he did in his love for us, so that we say, "I love him." He commands me but we don't need a commandment because the knowledge of his love evokes grateful returns of ardent love to him who first manifested so great a love toward us.

We shine when we fold our hands and close our eyes and tell him, "I'm sorry. I know what I should do but there's so many times when I don't want to do what I should do. Forgive me."

We shine when we pray, "Work in me. Give me the powerful grace irresistibly to know thee better. Work in me so that I want to do what's right. I do but the good that I would, I do not, and the evil that I would not, that I do. Forgive me. Help me to do what I would and not to do what I would not."

We shine. We shine when we say, "I'm not my own. I belong to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ. And while there may be all kinds of things that trouble me, when I lay my head down on my pillow at night, my comfort is that he's in control and that I am his, and he is mine."

We shine when the way is really really hard. Mr. S. doesn't want to be unable to attend church, he doesn't want to sit in a nursing home, but he is learning to be content and when he says, "I'm learning," he's shining.

We shine when we make it our declaration that, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."

You see, good works aren't necessarily things we do as much as just displaying our faith, what we believe, what he's done for us, what he's doing for us. We shine when gratitude to him controls and motivates us more and more in our lives.

Light illuminates. It cannot help but shine and when it does, it does two things: it shows who and what we are, and it exposes the darkness that still is in us and it exposes the darkness about us.

Now, last thought, and it's found in just a tiny word: so. Light shines but so shines, shines in such a way. The church and believers are not like candles or flashlights or light bulbs, we're not passive. We're active, rational, moral beings. A candle can be covered so we can hide and cover the light that's there, but we can be willing shiners of light or we can deny that we are light and we don't want it to shine.

Young people this morning, sometimes we don't want to tell our classmates, "That's wrong. Don't do it." We are such fools. We take a bushel and we think we can cover ourselves and hide the light. But we want to, we don't want to be goody-goody or they're going to think we're holier than them, so we're going to cover our light. We hide the light when our old man says, "Party? Yeah, I want to have fun, but I don't want the elders to know. I don't want Reverend Van Overloop to know. I want to do it in the darkness. I want to do it with friends, then we can drink as much as we want and we can use marijuana. It's legal." Put a bushel over ourselves. Can you do it?

That's why God comes or the Lord Jesus Christ comes and he stands in front of us just as much as I in front of you, and he stood in front of that multitude of people, his disciples, and he says to them, "Let your light so shine before men." Sometimes that means you reprove them. Sometimes your very presence will make them say, "Oh, we can't do that now. He's here." So shine that they may see your good works with this end, that they will glorify God.

Now one other thing. It is possible just because we are such sinful people yet, that we can say, "I'm gonna let my light shine, I'm gonna let my knowledge of the word of God shine, I'm gonna let everybody know I know the Bible. I'm a great Christian. I'm holier than everybody else. I'm best." Sometimes we shine that way but who gets glorified? Not him. If our display of our choir or our abilities to sing or play or do anything with which we've been gifted makes us want to display it so that we get the thanks, that's not shining so our Father is glorified. Wrong way to shine. The right reason for shining and now notice, notice the text, notice Jesus' words, he doesn't say, "So that you may glorify God." He says, "So you can glorify your Father." Your Father. Can any one of you deny your Father? You may want to. You may be embarrassed at times. No. Can any of you really deny your Father? No. Can you deny your Father? Never. Never. Shine so that he is glorified so people will declare, "What a God. What a relationship. What a living relationship. They love each other. I can see that they love each other. God loves them, they love him. It's evident. You can't hide it." To him be the glory. So shine.

How many times have you been told you're the oldest one in the family, you've got to be an example? Don't tell me. But it's true. You have to shine in such a way that Meghan, Tyce and Chad see what's important to you. Not so they'll say what a great brother they have, but so they'll say what a great Father he has, the perfect Father. That's the way we are to live.

God brings the Gospel to us for the preaching but he works through the parents so that that preaching is extended to the little children, and he so works through the preaching in each one of us that each one of us extend the Gospel message by the way in which we conduct ourselves as employers, as employees, as husbands, as wives, as parents, as children. As members of a community, we show who our Father is by the way in which we conduct ourselves, by the way we respond especially to adversities. That's something that darkness doesn't get. "How can you be happy when somebody dies? How can you go through that trial and still sing?" Because I've got a Father, a fantastic Father who holds my soul and life and never let's my feet be moved, who's got me, who says, "You've got

to go through the fire, I'm going to be with you. You go through the water, I'll be right there. I'll dry it up. I'll make the way." He upholds me with the right hand of his righteousness and he holds my right hand all the time.

Sometimes our Father is glorified now but he certainly will be glorified in the judgment day when the books are opened and the ungodly are seen to be more accountable because they refused to give God the glory when they saw us and the way we conducted ourselves in our relationship to our Father, when the wicked will reluctantly admit in the judgment day and acknowledge that the cause of Christ and of the Christians, that's light, and they may have hated it now but they will see that it's right then, and then our Father will be glorified when together we not only see, this is the judgment day, how many sins he covered, but we're also going to see how much righteousness and good works he gifted us to be able to do, and it won't be what a great person, no, it'll be what a great Father, and it'll take an eternity for all of us together to glorify him for what we see him do in creatures, mere dust, and sinful creatures, but he still could use them to glorify him. What a Father. Amen.

We thank thee, Father, and again, it seems not enough simply to say it, but thou knowest what thou hast worked in us, thou hast performed a work so that our eyes are open and we love the light and we want the light to shine in such a way that thou art glorified. Thanks for commanding us. Thanks for admonishing us. Thanks for pricking us. Thanks for encouraging us that thou wilt never fail. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Matthew 5:14-16
YOU ARE LIGHT; LET YOUR LIGHT SO SHINE

- I. Our identity.
 - A. The Biblical concept “light” describes the awesome glory emanating from perfect goodness.
 - 1. “God is light” (1 John 1:5), i.e., perfect goodness with regard to every virtue, and He is so eternally.
 - 2. Jesus is “light,” for as the Word made flesh He is life (the life of God) and the life was the light of men (John 1:4).
 - B. This world is in a state of spiritual darkness, i.e., absent of any goodness, unable to know God and truth (1 Cor. 2:14).
 - C. It is in this world that Jesus’ church and His people exist; in it but not of it.
 - 1. When the Spirit of this Jesus dwells in you and regenerates you, then you are “light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8).
 - 2. Thus the church of Jesus Christ and every citizen of Jesus’ kingdom is “the light of the world.”
- II. Every citizen of Jesus’ kingdom and the church of Jesus Christ is light and is to “let your light shine.”
 - A. First, we are admonished not to cover the light, but let it shine.
 - B. When we shine, then we speak, walk, and live as Christ, walking in all “good works.”
 - 1. We shine when we proclaim and confess Him and the truth of His Word.
 - 2. Light, by its very nature, illuminates, so we cannot help but illuminate – with two results:
- III. We are admonished to shine “so,” i.e., shine in such a manner that God is glorified.
 - A. The church and believers are not passive light-bearers (like candle or flashlight), but active, rational beings.
 - B. Sinful reasons for letting our light shine:
 - C. The right reason for shining in good works is so God is glorified by others who see our life and how we live out of Christ.
 - 1. God is glorified when the church is gathered, defended, and preserved.
 - 2. God is glorified when the ungodly are made more accountable when they refuse to give God the glory.