

### Matthew 5:13-16 (NKJV)

**13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.**

**14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.**

**15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house.**

**16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

Last week we looked at what scripture means about **being salt**. We discussed the **influence** that Christians are to have in the world and on the world. Salt and light are describing **INFLUENCE**.

We talked about how very blessed we are to be **counted as worthy** to carry the **taste** of Jesus into the world. And it is nothing we need to **try to be**. It is something we **are** as **we simply live** at the feet of Jesus obeying the word of Jesus. We cannot **help** but taste **different** to this world.

Well now Christ is using another example of influence. Last was the metaphor of the influence of **taste**. Now is the metaphor of the influence of **light**. I like this text because I think it is **much easier** to know we are applying it **correctly**. Scripture tells us about light in great detail. Salt was a little trickier. But light is much **easier**.

When we hear the word light, we **know** what physical light is. And we know what **darkness** is. We have all stumbled into things in the night.

Well we don't go three verses in Genesis before we know where physical light **came from**.

### Genesis 1:1-5 (NKJV)

**1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**

**2 The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.**

**3 Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.**

**4 And God saw the light, that *it was* good; and God divided the light from the darkness.**

**5 God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.**

God created physical light. We probably don't think about it much, but light did not just exist. It was brought into existence for our benefit. We have **light**

in our universe because God created it for us. Just one more thing that we aren't usually **thankful for** but we **should** be.

But God did not just create and reveal physical light. God created physical light in such a way that it would help us **understand** spiritual light.

### **2 Corinthians 4:6 (NKJV)**

**6 For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to *give* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**

Just as **physical** light reveals the **beauty** of God's creation, spiritual light, spiritual revelation of truth, reveals the beauty of God Himself. By **spiritual** light we see the truth of the **beauty of God** and God's best presentation of Himself in this world, Jesus Christ. If we have seen the Son we have seen the Father.

Let's look at this some more.

### **Psalms 36:9 (NKJV)**

**9 For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light.**

I really like this verse. How do you and I **know anything** about **anything**?

How do we really **see** anything other than physically just **seeing** it. How can we **know anything** about our physical world other than that which we can see with our eyes?

Well in the same way as **physical light**, it is only until we have **knowledge of the truth of God**, it is only until we have **spiritual light**, the light that only God can provide to us, that we can really **make sense** of what **physical light reveals**.

It is only the light that **God gives us** that allows us to see our world properly and accurately. We sometimes bemoan the craziness of our world. One current example is what even our scientists have revealed as facts. There are x and y chromosomes and that reveals one's gender. That is a reality of God's creation. But our world would prefer for **one's perception** of that reality to **overrule** that reality. We look at that and say, how can people think that? But Romans 1 explains it. When you dismiss **who God is** and **what God says**, you are only left with **madness**. There are no alternatives. It is **God's light** that allows us to **have** light. If we **throw out** that light, all we have are our **perceptions** about reality and our **limited reasoning** to guide us. **It is God's light that gives light. It is God's truth that displays truth.** Apart from that, while our physical eyes might be able to see, and our heads may be able to think thoughts, our hearts are as **blind as bats** to the **spiritual reality** of this world.

Even we, as Christians, fall into that trap when we **trust our perceptions and assumptions and expectations and emotions** to make sense of our reality. Pretty soon we assign labels to what we **are**, based on things **we feel**, instead of assigning labels to **what we are** based on **what God says**. That is the trap of flesh. And even as Christians it is easy to abandon the truth of **what God says**, real light, for the **darkness of our own thinking**.

Now how do we get this light of God?

**Psalm 119:105 (NKJV)**

<sup>105</sup> **Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.**

**Flesh says**, I must go this way because of what I feel so strongly. Surely God would expect nothing else from me. I need this thing. I want this thing. I cannot control this thing.

But the psalmists said **I won't trust any of that**. I don't know **anything** in comparison to the words of God. I am **clueless** about what path to choose **in my own flesh**. But there is this incredible light that God gives. Now it is not a spotlight that lights up the path **10 years into the future**. It does not even light up everything about **that which is going on around us**. It doesn't even tell us **every other human's** proper choices on various difficult decisions that they must make by faith. But this light tells us which step **we should make by faith** today. That is what God's word does. It lights up the faithful path for the decisions in our **immediate future**. It tells us how to **live righteously** in our **current** circumstances. If we want to **worry**, if we want to go out beyond that **light for today**, if we demand answers that this light is **not intended to reveal**, scripture calls that **sin**. It is a lack of trust in the character of God. Oh we can call it lots of other things. But God forbids it. We are given this wonderful light to **live faithfully for today** in God's word. What an amazing gift that is. The psalmist in Psalms 119 was absorbed with that light. He loved it. He delighted in it. And he walked by it. A large portion of Psalms 119 has to do with **affliction**. And maybe that is why He loved that **light** so much. It is because he **needed it so badly** and would have **crashed so severely** without it.

God gives us this **light** to live our lives. He gives us the supernatural vision to walk through our **current reality** with **another reality** in view. It is so good of God to provide us with this.

And look again at what our brother Apostle John shared with us a few months ago.

**1 John 1:5-7 (NKJV)**

<sup>5</sup> **This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**

**6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

**7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

In God is the **perfection of all truth**. There is nothing **not true** about Him. There is no moral imperfection. There is nothing that needs hidden, other than that which needs hidden **for our sakes** because we could not see Him in His holiness and live.

Now what John tells us is very applicable to our text this morning.

Christ said- **You are the light of the world.**

Well how does that happen? How do we become the representative of God in this world, shining **His** light?

John tells us that we display light by **walking** in light. We take that **Word** that is a light to our path and we **live** in it. We **walk** by it. And when our flesh displays darkness, we don't say **I can't help it**. That is just me. We say **forgive me God** because I was trusting something or someone **other than you to give me what only you can give me**. Forgive me because that is not a **spiritual reality** that I was living by. Forgive me because I have failed you and there is no excuse for that.

**6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.**

**7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.**

Here is light walking. Here is bushel basket removing. Here is the road to the purest influence we can have of Christ to the world around us.

Luke told us more about this as well. He said this.

**Luke 1:76-79 (NKJV)**

**76 And you, child (Christ), will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,**

**77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins,**

**78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;**

**79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace."**

Here is our peacemaker practicing the ministry of reconciliation. And He is doing this by telling us the **truth** about **Himself** and **ourselves**. He is giving

**spiritual reality**, He is giving **KNOWLEDGE** to those who cannot see spiritual reality. We sat in darkness. And He not only showed the light, He **WAS** that light.

### **John 8:12 (NKJV)**

**12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."**

When we learn the truth about Christ, we **see the light**. But when we **have** Christ, we **have** the light. Christ IS that light. And when we **have Christ**, we **have** that light that we need to discern spiritual reality and spiritual deception. We **have** what we **need** to **live** a godly life. Again, no excuses. If Christ is who He says He is, if we try to blame our spiritual failure on what **He failed to provide for us**, we are calling Him a liar. We have no excuse for walking in darkness except that we prefer it.

So when Christ tells His true disciples that they **are** the **light** of the world, what it means is that they **are able**, due to their relationship with the **true light** of the world, to **reflect** that light to the world around them. They are not the **source** of the light. But they should be a **strong reflection** of that spiritual goodness, that spiritual trueness, that absolute trust in the character of God.

**14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.**

**15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house.**

**16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

Simply put Christ is saying, you are the light to this world, and, well, a **light lights**. Have you ever seen a light that does not light? We may see a light **BULB** that is supposed to give light but doesn't. We might see a battery that is going dead so it does not produce **much** light. But if you see **light**, it **lights**. The nature of light is to light up things. It just is. It is the nature of light to light, to reveal reality.

Now have you ever seen a house that has its lights installed under the floor boards? Why? It would be stupid. It would be a waste of a light. Why even turn it on if it is not going to produce useful light? No one is that absurd. We put lights where they will light things.

Well so does God. He put us **in the world**. We are **light**. He **wants** stuff lit. That is not a hard concept. And if we are light, we cannot **not** light.

It is important we get this concept. We often think of evangelistic efforts as programs that we carry out, or assignments that we perform. And I am not

saying those activities are wrong or uncalled for. But that is not what Christ explained as being **the source** of the most pure evangelism. He explains evangelism as what happens when you put **light people** in **dark places**. He doesn't say try to be light. He doesn't even give them a list of **light things** they should do at this point. He just explains you **are** light. Light lights things. You will light things. You don't need to train light to be light. By its very nature it is light.

Now when Christ gives us the great commission He **does** give us **something** to do. We have a message to proclaim and there are activities that light bearing people should do. But at this point He is talking about who we are, before He ever tells us what to do.

Now there is one thing you can do to a light. You can intentionally and willfully cover it in such a way that its light does not get exposed. Well how would we realistically do that? How could you or I cover our light?

It seems to me that there are two ways, by what we **do or don't do** and by what we **say or don't say**.

Paul is speaking to believers in Romans and look what he says about darkness.

**Romans 13:11-14 (NKJV)**

**11 And do this, knowing the time, that now *it is* high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation *is* nearer than when we *first* believed.**

**12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light.**

**13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry and drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy.**

**14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to *fulfill its* lusts.**

Basically Paul is telling Christians that there is a way to live darkly. There is a way to live that will display no light. There are works of darkness that believers can do. If we live in a way that does not reflect what God says about sexuality, about money, about worry, about sobriety, about body life, about authority, about trust in what God is providing for us, we could go on. If we live in a way that **goes against what God says**, we are actively and intentionally **putting a cover over the light**. When we make **dark decisions**, it will not influence the world for **light living**. It will not **draw people** to the character of Christ. We will be an **obstacle**. Dark living does not represent Christ. And dark living is ultimately **covering what we really are with something that is contrary to what we are**. Instead of displaying light we are displaying the absence of light.

So we can cover light by what we do and do not do.  
We can also cover light by what we do and do not say.  
Look at what Paul said in Eph 6

**Ephesians 6:19-20 (NKJV)**

**19 (Pray) for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel,**  
**20 for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.**

Now if Paul was praying that he **speak as he should**, that means there was the possibility that he would **not speak** in such a way. He wanted to. But Paul knew the pressures against him were often very great. And there is always the temptation to **withhold** some truths. It would be easy to tone down the truth so that he would be **more likeable**, or at least not **as offensive** to others. Is that not the temptation **we face** too? How bold are we at speaking clearly that which we are certain of? How **quickly** will we lay out the gospel? Are we looking for opportunities in our conversations to **squeeze the gospel in**? Or are we looking for ways to **avoid** those conversations? Isn't it odd that some people seem to have opportunities **all the time** and some seem to **never** have them? What do we really think **the difference** is? I doubt it is the circumstances. We usually **get** about what **we look for**. We **gravitate** to that which we **want most**. If we want most to be liked, we make decisions accordingly. If we want most to see people come to Christ, we make decisions accordingly.

MacArthur says this

Whether we **hide our light** because of fear of offending others, because of indifference and lovelessness, or because of anything else, we demonstrate unfaithfulness to the Lord.

If we were simply to speak truthfully in all of our conversations, it is impossible that Christ will not come out. After all, isn't **He** the "**why**" behind all of our decisions? Everything we do comes back to a life that is based on trying to please God, living according to that light for my path? How can we have **in depth** conversations with the world and not **start speaking** about Christ. There are only 2 possibilities. Either we are not Christians. Or we are having "basket placing" conversations. We must intentionally cover light to have in depth conversations with the world, but not speak about Christ to the world. Now maybe we are not having in depth conversations with the world. But if we are the light has to come out unless we are hiding it. And that is the heart of what Christ is saying.

He is saying I put you in the world because **you and only you** are my representatives in the world. **You and only you** have true spiritual light to give. And no one puts a light out to provide light and expects someone to cover it so it does not provide light. Christ is wanting us to **fulfill our purpose** in the world. He put us in this world as an **influence**. And He **wants us** to influence. He does not expect for us to **undo** what **He is doing**. He does not expect us to **live darkly** or **hide light** in our conversations. No. We are to **walk in the light** and **speak honestly** about what part Christ plays in our lives.

But I want to emphasize this. Our influence does not come from a carefully scripted speech or a perfectly orchestrated public persona. That is the beauty of it all. There is no concern for public image needed. Nor is there need for perfect oration. It is not about that.

Christ is already saying you **ARE** salt and light. You don't have to try **to be** salt and light. You **ARE** salt and light by your very new nature. He is essentially saying- **live congruent with what you are**. Speak **the truth** about what you are. Relax in the superficial **exterior**, but be **seriously intentional** about how you live and think and speak. Reveal truth and live in the light. Everything else will follow. He is saying **BE WHAT YOU ARE IN THE WORLD**.

Oh that is so wonderfully freeing. It is both easier and harder than what I grew up believing. It is **easier** in that I do not need to **act** at all. I do not need to pretend to be something that I am not. I do not need to live an act to impress non believers around me. I do not need to hide who I am. I can be totally honest.

It is **harder** in that I must walk in the light, think in the light, and speak only the truth. That is wonderful. But it is wonderfully difficult.

Now let's look at our last verse again.

**16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

**Let** is a million dollar word in our text. **Let** your light so shine. It is like I have been saying. We cannot possibly **make** our light shine. We are only reflecting light. We are not generating it. So we **let** it shine. We do nothing to stop Christ from shining through in our lives. We simply live congruently to who Christ says we really are.

Now what happens when we do that?

We are **saying** good things because we **believe them** to be true.

We are **living** in good ways because **what else can we do** as a child of Christ. It is all about **congruence**.



The word for **good** in Good Works doesn't so much emphasize **quality** as it does **beauty**. The emphasis is that we should show off the **beauty** of what God is doing in us.

We all know this. When we display our impatience or envy or fretting or temper or pride or discontent, Christ is not going to be honored. The world knows all about this stuff. They accept it as being the **worst part** of themselves as well. But when we display love, patience, kindness, gentleness, grace, love, long suffering, now we are speaking a language **the world does not know what to do with**. That is the **beauty** Christ expects us to display to show the world **His** beauty. And as a result they will **persecute Him** or **glorify Him**. And both are the expected results of representing Christ well. I want to close with an example. It is an example of how true Christlikeness can **influence** a culture, how it can light a world. We expect this light in a person to change **the person**. But look at how it can actually change **the world** it is lighting.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones writes, "Most competent historians are agreed in saying that what undoubtedly saved [England] from a revolution such as that experienced in France at the end of the eighteenth century was nothing but the **Evangelical Revival**. This was not because anything was done directly, but because masses of individuals had become Christians and were living this better life and had this higher outlook. The whole political situation was affected, and the great Acts of Parliament which were passed in the last century were mostly due to the fact that there were **such large numbers of individual Christians** found in the land" (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], 1:157*).

Believers should influence our culture. We can do nothing but that. But I believe it is important we stick to doing it the method Christ commanded it done. We are to be salt and light and stick to the ministry of reconciliation. That, ultimately, is the only chance for true cultural reform from the inside out.

Do you want to be used by God? Then **believe Him**, surrender every moment to Him, and **trust Him**. You will smell like Christ. You will taste like Christ. You will display the reality of Christ. You will be used by Christ. And there is no higher purpose in life than this. Nothing will glorify Christ more than living a life of trust and service to Him. That is light living.