

# Living As Light in a Dark World

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**Text:** Matthew 5:14-16

**Series:** King of Kings

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**Living Hope Bible Church of Roselle, IL**

**Introduction:** I invite you to turn in your Bibles to **Matthew 5:13-16**. We are in a series through the book of Matthew entitled: "King of kings!" Today's we are looking at: "Living as Light in a Dark World".

## Reading of Scripture

**Matthew 5:14-16**, "You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Last week we learned that when **salt** is applied, it dissolves inward and disappears. The salt speaks of the inward part, **the character of the Christian**.

Jesus also described His people as being like **light**, which is on the outside. The light speaks of **the testimony of a follower of Christ**, revealing and illuminating the truth.

## 01 - Lamps of the Universe

The great Rabbis of the Jesus' day were called "Lamps of the Universe". But Jesus is calling these ordinary people, townsfolk, fisherman, even the rif-raff of his day who had come to know Him – He's calling them: the "light of the world".

Jesus was speaking to a crowd of just ordinary folks. He didn't assemble the Sanhedrin or the Scribes and Pharisees and say this. He assembles the common people, the broken, the hurting – those who come to him as meek children, and He says to them, "You are the light of the world." And today, **you** are the light of the world. That's how God intends to get his work done on earth today: through you!

And that's how God intends to get his work done on earth today: through you! This is God's plan. He says to us, "You people of northwest Chicago – you are carrying the only hope for this world of sin and death. You have the riches of eternity for people in darkness". What you have will set people free of an eternity of thick darkness in hell. **YOU** are the light of the world." There is no "Plan B". God has chosen **YOU**. It's not just pastors and missionaries who are the light; it's everybody who loves the Lord.

You see, the world doesn't understand. The world looks at Christians and thinks, "They don't count." God takes an ordinary person and uses them to share His message to people who needed Him. When we share our faith, we spread His light.

## *Adoniram Judson*

Have you ever felt invisible? Have you ever thought your life was not having that great of an impact? I think of Adoniram Judson. After his wife and child had died in

Burma (Myanmar) he thought his ministry was over. He went into a year of deep depression. He thought he was forgotten not only by his family and friends and church, but by God Himself.

He wanted to be a great light to Burma. He thought if he could see 100 people saved in Burma by the end of his life that would be amazing. At the time when he buried his wife there was just a handful of converts.

When Judson began his mission in Burma, he set a goal of translating the Bible and founding a church of 100 members before his death. When he died, he left the Bible, 100 churches, and over 8,000 believers.

### ***Cathedrals - No One May Ever Know Your Name***

Our family used to visit some of the great cathedrals in Spain. Do you know who built them? The vast majority of the architects are unknown. Yet they are some of the most brilliant and towering edifices of all time. These builders completed things not knowing anyone would notice.

You may be a mom at home with your children. You may be one who prays fervently for souls. You give out tracts where ever you go. You live a godly consistent life. No one may seem to notice your godly life, but you are building an edifice that is changing the world!

God notices and the world notices. They see your good works, and though you may not see them come to Christ, there are many we have an influence on and God hides our eyes from it.

### **02 - Jesus is the Light of the World**

Jesus said in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Yet He tells His followers: YOU are the lights of the world. This light is Christ in us, the Hope of Glory. Every true Christian is sealed with the Holy Spirit, so that it can be said that the very presence of Christ is with us. He told His disciples that the Comforter was with them, but would be IN them. We are the light of the world because of the very presence of Christ, by His Holy Spirit in us.

### **03 - We are “light in the Lord”.**

Listen to how Paul describes Christians. Ephesians 5:8, “for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.” We’ve had a nature change. We are no longer darkness, but we are light in the Lord. Paul tells us “walk as children of light”. We are “partakers of the divine nature”. In other words, there has been a radical change when conversion took place. That heart of darkness was taken out and a heart of light was put in its place. We used to be those who lived under the power of our old nature, but we now have a new nature.

### **04 - Collective Light Shines Brighter**

**Matthew 5:14-16**, “You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden.” Jesus also talked of the strength of collective light. Each house in a city with its lights on cast a glow across the sky. As Christians come together, there is a glow for the Lord that we cannot create individually. We shine brightest when we shine together.

**Application:** What you do in your private life affects the testimony of Christians everywhere. Think about the importance of the testimony of Christ in this culture.

### **05 - Light Needs Oil to Burn**

Christ says in **Matthew 5:15**, “No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house.” In Jesus’ day, the lights or candles were not like they are today. They were mainly OIL LAMPS. They were enclosed **jars of clay** that had precious oil in them that would be lit on fire.

The Bible says that we are all clay pots that hold a very precious substance. “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (**2 Cor. 4:7**). What is special about us is not us. We are just clay pots—earthen vessels. We are special because we are the Temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul said, “I am what I am by the grace of God” (**1 Cor 15:10**). It is God and His Word and His presence that is our oil. “The entrance of Your Word gives light” (Psalm 119:130).

It has been said that the Roman Empire ran on olive oil. It was used in cooking, bathing, medicine, ceremonies, lamps, and cosmetics. For decades, olive oil from southern Spain was shipped to Rome in large clay jugs. Those jugs, not worth sending back, were discarded in a growing heap of broken shards known as Monte Testaccio. The fragments of an estimated 25 million clay pots created that man-made hill, which stands today on the bank of the Tiber River in Rome. In the ancient world, the value of those pots was not their beauty but their contents.

Because of this, the first-century followers of Christ would have clearly understood Paul’s illustration of the life of Jesus in every believer. “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us” (2 Cor. 4:7).

Our bodies, like those clay pots, are temporary, fragile, and expendable. In our modern world that highly values outward beauty; we would be wise to remember that our greatest treasure is the life of Jesus within us. By God’s grace and power, may we live so that others can see Christ in us. We are just the clay pots. Jesus is the true treasure within us. We need to keep our lamps trimmed and bright! We must always be in God’s Word, practicing God’s presence, and shining brightly!

### **06 - Light Reflects**

What is this light? We could say it is the outward display of holiness resulting from the inward change we have in regeneration.

Since Jesus is the Light of the world (John 8:12; 9:5), so also his followers should reflect that light. Like lights from a city illuminating the dark countryside or a lamp inside a house providing light for all within it, Christians must let their good works shine before the rest of the world so that others may praise God.

Someone said:

*We are the only Bible a careless world will read;  
We are the sinner’s Gospel; we are the scoffer’s creed;  
We are the Lord’s last message, given in deed and Word;  
What if the type is crooked; what if the print is blurred?*<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>David Jeremiah. *Signs of Life: Back to the Basics of Authentic Christianity* (p. 32). Kindle Edition.

Someone's eyes are on you, and you may be the only Gospel that person will ever see. If they keep watching for evidence of your Christianity, will there be enough evidence for them to convict you?

This dark world is starved for the light of that which reflects Jesus: are there radiant beams of God's love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, simplicity, honesty, and compassion coming from your life?

### **07 - Light is Useful**

What is more useful than light? The light of the first day of the world was useful, when it shined out of darkness; the chaos and disorder and confusion was cleared up in the earth that was "without form and chaotic" as soon as God said, "Let there be light!"

And so we are to live in the power of the Gospel. As we do, the disorder of our lives is put into order. Depression and anger no longer control us. We still struggle, but the joy of the Lord strongly shines through our lives.

The world was perishing in darkness and Christ came and brought light to those who sat in darkness. So now, we, the disciples of Christ are to bring light to those who sit in darkness.

We are God's beacons. We point people to the true Light of the world, Jesus Christ. We are to take action. We are to bring the light to the world.

I think of the words of Jesus. He compares the sheep and the goats, and he tells us that the difference between the sheep and the goats is what they did and did not do.

I was hungry, and you formed a humanities club and discussed my hunger. I was imprisoned, and you crept off quietly to your chapel in the cellar and prayed for my release. I was naked, and in your mind you debated the morality of my appearance. I was sick, and you knelt and thanked God for your health. I was homeless, and you preached to me the spiritual shelter of the love of God. I was lonely, and you left me alone to pray for me. You seem so holy, so close to God, but I'm still very hungry and lonely and cold.<sup>2</sup>

We are called to be active and useful. We are to "serve the Lord with gladness". We ought to be involved not only in each other's lives, but also in sharing the kindness and love of Christ with those near us.

- When is the last time you had a lost neighbor over to get to know them and share the love of Christ with them?
- Have you ever gone out with the evangelism teams? What a joy it is to shine the light.

### **08 - Light Can Offend**

Have you ever turned on the light in a dark room where someone was sleeping?

The human heart is dark without Christ, but what a difference Jesus makes! Light is stronger than darkness. Light is distinctively different from the surrounding darkness. The true disciple of the Lord is visibly different than the world around him.

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<sup>2</sup> Charles Allen. *You Are Never Alone* (Old Tappan: Revell, 1978), 143-144.

“Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil.” Today, Christians are the light of the world. The tragedy is that men actually prefer the darkness. They prefer to remain in ignorance and sin. The world sits in darkness.

Many people love iniquity so much they'd rather revel in their sins and wallow in the darkness than to turn on the light of Christ. And sometimes when we turn on the lights, people don't like it.

### **09 - Light Can Attract**

Jesus says, “You are the light of the world”. Have you seen people gathered around a fireplace on a cold night? I love it! Is your life warm and attracting to people? Is your life a comfort when they see your love and godliness?

Think about someone who has been in solitary confinement for a decade. His first day when the sunlight touches his skin is like paradise.

God is in the business of drawing sinners to Himself through the light of the Gospel. **Romans 1:16** – Paul said, “I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes...”

It is the piercing light of the Gospel that is going to draw sinners to Christ. Jesus said, “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself” (John 12:32).

### **10 - Light Illumines**

One tiny candle can be seen across a huge room. You don't need remarkable credentials to share the truth about Jesus Christ. You simply need the light of Christ in you. Light makes things visible that were not visible before. The least spark in a dark room can be seen at once. The light of the Spirit of God can always be seen in the child of God. A true Christian is always identifiable.

The **carpet and furniture** in most houses look really good until you turn the light on. **2 Peter 1:19**, “And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.”

We must pay attention to the Word of God or we will be lead astray. It is the more sure prophetic word – more reliable than even the dreams and visions of the Old Testament.

Do you have oil for your lamp? Are you lighting the lamp? That is are you filling your lamp with oil by meditating on the Scriptures? Are you seeking to light your lamp by living out the Scriptures?

### **11 - Light Helps the Growth Process**

Light has an amazing life-giving property. **Photosynthesis** is a process used by plants and organisms to convert light energy, normally from the sun, into chemical energy (oxygen) that can be used to fuel the organisms' activities.

Therefore we see that light is necessary for life. The earth would certainly change very rapidly if there was no longer any sunlight. The power of photosynthesis would cease and we would lack oxygen. We see what this might do when we see that a forest full of trees with very thick canopies of foliage high above has very little plant life on the ground except for moss, which needs little sunlight.

Plants will never move away from the light – they are said to be positively phototropic, drawn to the light. In the same way, spiritual light is necessary for spiritual life, and this can be a good test of our standing in Christ. The believer will always tend towards spiritual things; he will always tend towards fellowship, prayer, the Word of God, and so on. The unbeliever always does the opposite (John 1:5, 3:19-20). He hates the light. “Men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil”. Indeed, no man can come into the true spiritual light of Jesus Christ, unless He is enabled and drawn by the Father (John 6:37). God wants to use Christians to draw people to Himself.

God also wants to use you to fertilize and grow other brothers and sisters in Christ in your life. We are to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18).

## 12 - Light Points the Way

A lighthouse guides ships through treacherous waters. A lantern illuminates a path at night. Ask God to give you opportunities to counsel other believers or share the plan of salvation with those who haven't been enlightened. **Psalm 119:105**, “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” “How shall they hear without a preacher?”

People can see light from miles around. One day I'd love to put a steeple on this church. If you light up the steeple at night, people can see it for miles around.

In the early part of last century, liberal theology began to penetrate the churches and seminaries of America. Church authorities began to doubt the truthfulness of Scripture. They asserted that only *part* of the Bible was inspired by God, but that it contained some errors. They also taught that it was outdated.

As a result, sermons grew weaker and less convicting. Pastors compromised the truth to keep from offending those with wealth or position in the community. Children raised to doubt the Bible learned not to trust the Lord. Later, as adults, they had no place in their lives for God. Our generation is reaping the awful harvest of years and years of liberalism. Even today, many pastors fail to send a clear message about the holiness, judgment, and power of our awesome God.

## 13 - Light Cheers

What blessings Christians are to the world. How awful it is to look for something in the dark. To be blind is a cruel thing. Satan's lies and darkness are severe and cruel. How gentle and loving the light of Christ is.

Christians ought to enter each day with a joyful attitude. Our Christian faith should show up on our faces. Remember the exhortation in **1 Peter 3:15**, “in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to give an answer to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.”

I've seen people when they are at the end of their rope walk up to me and ask me “What's different about you? Can you help me? I'm lost and confused and I've lost my way.” Jesus says, “You are the light of the world.” Be ready to give that answer with “gentleness and respect”.

## 14 - Light Protects

There is a certain safety with light. Like the glory cloud in the Old Testament, the people were sheltered by that light.

Amidst the darkness of our age, each of us is called to be like a lighthouse. In foggy weather or on dark nights, lighthouses warn ships of danger and help guide them safely through treacherous waters.

A malfunctioning lighthouse can mean danger and destruction for ships seeking safe harbor. What causes a lighthouse beam to grow dim or go out completely? If the glass is dirty, the light will be muted. If there is no power, there can be no illumination.

A store that wants to protect their merchandise will leave some of the lights on and make sure the store is on a well lit street. Like a city set on a hill, a Christian's refulgent reflection of Christ is unmistakable.

Peter wrote, "It is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (1 Peter 4:17). The church must begin by repenting—turning from the direction we are headed. I challenge you to ask yourself,

- *Am I in the center of God's will for my life?*
- *Am I in some way contributing to sin in my home, my church, or my nation?*
- *Is there something about my life that God would like to change?*
- *As a Christian parent, ask, does my parenting style need to adjust so that my children will have the foundation to be godly, Bible-believing, devoted, obedient Christians?*
- *As a single, am I putting myself in a place of service or in a place of temptation or distraction?*

## 15 - Light Can Injure

If you lead in the wrong direction with your life, you can injure those following you. If you are a leader and you've been given more light, you are held to a higher standard because you are a light bearer. Be careful that when you put your lamp on a lampstand that you are leading in the right direction. This is not just for church leaders but for fathers and mothers and children's workers. Every Christian here needs to know that you are carrying a light, and you could injure someone if you lead in the wrong direction.

We have to be careful of false teachers and spurious, distracting doctrine that does not promote holiness. We can sometimes become self righteous rabbit hunters.

We have to be careful that our study of the Word of God edifies. Light can injure. Be careful.

## 16 - Don't Hide Your Light

**Matthew 5:15**, "No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand, and it gives light for all who are in the house." Light hidden is useless and ineffective. Lack of service will hide your light. A lack of seeing your part in the Body of Christ will render your light useless. Sin will cover your light.

Your **comfort zone** will kill the light. A candle under a bowl has its light hidden. Put it on a candle stick so that it can give light to all! In the same way, you are to be the light of the world, not under the shell of a church building!

We are not told that we are the light of the church. Now we ought to be a good testimony of encouragement and love and truth telling among the saints. But we are not called the light of the church. Jesus said, "You are light to the world."

It's not enough to serve Him in secret with our acts of private devotion. We must proclaim Him to the world. But that alone is not enough. We **must back up our proclamation of Him** with a life of devotion. Is your life separated from the darkness of this world? We are to display the lifestyle of our Lord in the midst of our corrupt culture. Jesus called it letting our “light shine before men that they might see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.” The apostle Paul said, “Do all things ... without complaining ... that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world” (Philippians 2:14-15).

What kind of impact are you having? Are you being light in your community? Is the impact of your life diminished because of **sin, compromise, or worldliness**? Your conduct, character, and conversation either draw people to the Son of God or drive them away. The Lord calls us to purity. When we seek to please Him with our lives, we become salt and light to the world.

Is there anything in our life that is hiding your light?

### **17 - Good Works Give God Glory**

**Matthew 5:14, 16**, “You are the light of the world... let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Doesn't this contradict chapter 6? He says don't do your works to be seen of me. Let's clarify. Letting our light shine does not mean the light is intrinsically in us. We shine when we yield to the Lord in total surrender. Even our faith and repentance are gifts from God. It is God's light. Our choice is whether to hide it or let it shine!

### **18 – Let Your Light Shine**

**1 Peter 2:12** (NIV), “Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” He's saying when Christ comes back he wants to show those without Christ that you were the real thing.

Christ says we are to “let” our lights shine. In other words, when you get right with God, when you are filled with the Holy Spirit, He will simply shine through you. You can't help it; light just pours forth. God shining through you will be automatic, and people will be naturally attracted to the light, just as a man in darkness is drawn to a candle.

People who are stumbling in the darkness of sin and despair can look at believers and see hope. From within us glows the truth of Jesus Christ—the gospel message of salvation through forgiveness of sins. We allow Him to shine forth when we model His ways in our conversation, conduct, and character. A righteous lifestyle gets attention because it is so different from the selfish, unsatisfying ways typical of the world. Many who see our light will want Jesus for themselves. Reflecting Him to the world is the believer's God-given job, so we must keep our flame bright. That means protecting our relationship with the Lord by spending time praying and reading His Word. Otherwise, we'll make unwise decisions, our fervor for God will begin to lessen, and unbelievers won't be able to see contentment or joy in us. We must also keep our lantern spotless by resisting temptation. Sin soils the believer's testimony. However, when we do sin, our “slate” is wiped clean through confession and repentance.



You have been given a great honor to reflect Jesus Christ to the world. Don't allow negligence or wrongdoing to dim your flame. Someone in your sphere of influence needs your "lantern" to guide him or her toward the true Light of the world.

### **Conclusion – Black Outs**

In **Philippians 2:15**, we're described as "children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world."

Have you ever experienced a black out in your neighborhood. We've never had a total black out but can you imagine? No traffic lights. No refrigerators. It would be chaos.

Can you imagine if the switch for your whole city was located in your house, and anytime there was a blackout you had to turn the switch?

That's how it is for you displaying the light of Christ. No other group has the light that will point people to eternal life. Let your light shine. It's your choice!

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