

A City on a Hill

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"Ye are the salt of the earth," verse 13, I said, "Please pass the salt" we called that little miniseries. Now we're in verses 14 through 16, "Ye are the light of the world." I've called this little series, I call it, "Please turn on the light." And I want to look particularly at this one phrase, verse 14. I'm kind of ringing, I think, Dave, a little bit at least in my ears.

He says, "Ye are the light of the world." And then in verse 14 he says, "A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." And that caught my attention for this part of our study, "A city that is set on a hill," and when I got studying this, I never really actually got to that section so I'm going to give you the introduction to this third part of the series that's part of a series of the Sermon on the Mount. So let's pray. If that made any sense to you, let's pray.

Father in heaven, I ask you to bless our study tonight. Thank you for the word of God and, Lord, the depth of your word, so I pray you would bless as we look at this one little phrase here. I pray you would challenge us, speak to our hearts, and have your way, I pray, in Jesus' name. Amen.

Maybe because this isn't on. There we go. That phrase, now I'm way too loud. A little bit strong.

That phrase, "a city on a hill." Has anybody ever heard that phrase used outside of Scripture? Does anybody ever recognize that? It's pretty famous. It's pretty key in American history, that phrase. Does anybody recognize the name John Winthrop? John Winthrop. He was a Puritan preacher and came over to Massachusetts Bay. In route from England to the New World in 1630, he preached a sermon on this passage to the Puritans there on this passage, particularly on the phrase "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," and what his message was was this: is that this new community that they were anticipating starting was going to be a city on a hill. And the thought was this: the whole world is going to be watching what the Puritans do when they get there. The whole world is going to be analyzing the success or failure of this great adventure to set up a distinctively Christian colony. And he said they were a city on a hill. The whole world is going to see whether they succeed or fail. If they succeed, then they would see that the principles of Scripture work. This was their idea. And if they failed, then the whole world would know that they failed in their efforts of implementing the principles of Scripture.

He also meant by that that this new colony here, this new community that they were establishing by being a city on a hill, would have a positive influence in the world and particularly in the New World for the Gospel and for Christianity in general. The city that they envisioned eventually became the city of Boston and Boston, I don't know if it still is but for a period of time was known as the city on a hill. Did you know that, Brian? And you've got more information. ("And the name of the hill where the state capital building is located was called Beacon Hill.")

How about that? For Christianity, the truth. Isn't that an amazing thing? So the nickname for Boston for a while was a city on a hill. So this little phrase here, when Jesus says, "You're the light of the world, a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," had a profound impact on the beginning of our country.

It was used throughout our history various times. Another famous event that this phrase is associated with was on January 9, 1961. J. F. Kennedy gave a significant speech up in Boston on that phrase, "a city that is set on a hill cannot be hid." I think the most famous speech from this apart from the message the Lord Jesus preached here initially, Ronald Reagan, actually he spoke from this passage twice. On January 25, 1974, he was at some conservative political thing, but in 1984 when he received the Republican nomination to run for President, he gave a famous speech and it was entitled, "A city that is set on a hill," and his point was this: that the United States of America is a city on a hill. In other words, the world looks to us for leadership, for enlightenment, for freedom, for defense. His other idea was that we have profound influence throughout the world. And I'll tell you this: I've seen that firsthand. In Mongolia, seeing little kids running in and out of their little yurts that they live in wearing Michael Jordan T-shirts and Boston Red Sox hats you see the influence of the United states of America. In New Zealand and even in Kazakhstan, we saw some American type things.

So these guys are referencing, particularly the Presidents, the politicians like this phrase, they are referencing the fact that America can be and should be an influence for good in the world. Now, my little comment on that, the city that is set on a hill as far as the United States and I hate to be negative, I hate to be critical, but the facts are facts, this city is deteriorating and the light is going out as far as the United States is concerned. But when we read this here, Jesus Christ was not speaking about the United States of America. He was not addressing that. In fact, Jesus was not even addressing the nation of Israel. He wasn't saying that Israel is this city that is set on a hill that cannot be hid. Israel, if you know, in the New Testament time and what we're living in, Israel has been set aside. They are not God's institution for working in this world today. Israel has rejected their Messiah and God set them aside. God now works through the what? The local church. And God is now working through us.

So when Jesus addresses his disciples and he says, "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid," he's addressing his disciples. He's addressing those that have accepted him and have made the decision to be followers of him. He's addressing you and I. He says we are the light of the world. We are like this city that is set on a hill.

I was reading different folks and different comments they made on this passage and some have suggested and I don't know, there might be something to it, but some have suggested that in verse 14 when he says that a city is set on a hill that he's referencing the church particularly as a collective body of believers, a city, a collective body of believers. Then on the next verse when he says he references a candle, there he is referring to individual believers. And that may or may not be the case but the fact of the matter is, every one of us is a light. We've been talking about that.

Now, as I was working on this and that phrase, I got thinking about this matter of the light, "Ye are the light of the world." And I want to give you tonight a fourfold response to the light of God. Now, when we're talking about the light of the world, we talked about this before, we are what gives the information about the Lord Jesus Christ. We give the Gospel out, the light of the truth of the Gospel. And so how do we respond to the light? There is a fourfold response every person should have to the light of God's word, the light of the Gospel. Here is the first one I put down, I put this down first, 1: we need to be exposed to the light. We need to be exposed to the light. Now, we're going to use our Bibles a little bit so if you would, turn over to John 3 with me. The very first thing every person needs is to be exposed to the light. We already pointed out in depth and at length that we live in a dark world: dark spiritually, dark morally, dark as far as the spiritual understanding is concerned. So a person needs to be exposed to the light.

Look at John 3:19, "And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved," what? "Darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd." Now, what is he saying here? Let's stop right there. Jesus is saying that light has come into the world. Who is he talking about in this phrase when he says light has come into the world? Who is he referencing? He's referencing himself in this point, John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." So he's referencing himself here. So he's saying, "I have come into the world. I have come. I am a light to the world. I'm spiritual awareness. I'm spiritual enlightenment. I'm the truth." In fact, he says, "I am the way, the truth and the life." He says, "I've come into the world," but how do men respond? It says men love the darkness rather than light because they don't want their deeds to be exposed; they don't want to be told they are wrong; they don't want to be shown that their actions are sinful. The Pharisees perfectly illustrate that. They raised their hackles, they fought the Lord Jesus Christ. He's pointing out their sin. I mentioned this Sunday morning, I mean, he just lambasted them. "You guys are hypocrites. You put on this show. You are whited sepulchres. You look good, inside you're as rotten as a dead corpse." And he goes on and on. He says, "You clean the outside of the cup, the inside of the cup," and I'm putting my own words here, "but inside of the cup is all rotten and moldy and nasty." And I mean, he just laid it on them and rather, the Pharisees rather than saying, "Jesus, thank you for coming and pointing this out to us. Thank you, this needs to be taken care of, this needs to be dealt with," rather than do that, what did they do? They hated him and they ended up killing him.

So that's what he's pointing out here. He says, "Listen, I've come in here to deal with the truth," and deal with the situation that he finds himself in so that it can be fixed and made right and people didn't want it made right. I've known folks go to the doctor and get mad at the doctor. I'm thinking of one person in particular that is not around here, but every time they would go to the doctor the doctor says, "You need to lose weight." So they quit going to the doctor. In fact, they told me, they said, "I can't stand that guy." I said, "Why?" "Every time I go in there he says I'm fat." I say, "Does he say it that way?" "No, but he tells me I'm overweight. I ain't going there no more." And so that's what he's saying here.

But look at verse 20, "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light." They don't want to be shown for what they are. They don't want their sin pointed out. They don't want their disobedience to God confronted. "Neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved." You know, another way to say that, they don't want to come to the light because if they do, they're going to have to make it right. They're going to have to change things. They're going to have to make some hard decisions. They're going to have to make some changes in their life. "If I'm going to be right with God, if I'm going to live in the light and be what God wants me to be, then I've got to deal with my sinful heart and I've got to deal with my sinful actions and I don't want to be reproved." That's a sad picture.

But look at the next verse, "But he that doeth truth," what? What's the next phrase? "Cometh to the light." Complete opposite response. "That his deeds may be," what? "Made manifest, that they are wrought in God." He's saying, "Now, light came into the world. I came into the world. I'm the Savior of the world." Man has to see their sin. They have to confront their sin. It has to be dealt with. But man doesn't want it to be dealt with. They love their sin. They love to do wrong and so they'll stay as far away from the light as they can; like rats at night, they'll hide when the light comes on. They don't want to be around it. They don't want to be around the Lord Jesus. They don't want to be around the preachers. They don't want to be around the people of God. They want to stay away from it because they like their sin.

But, he says, there are some folks that come to the light. They want it. They want to be made right with God. They want their heart pure. They want to be forgiven. They want their life to be what God intends for it to be. Listen, we paint an awfully dark picture but I'm telling you, there are some people in the world that really do want to be right with God. There are some people in the world that in their hearts they really do want their life to please God. They really are thinking that some day when I stand before God, I want him to say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." And he says those people, they come to the light. They come and they expose themselves to the light.

Now, if you've been saved any length of time, if you've tried witnessing or whatever, you maybe even tract month, and you'll come across folks and it depends how you approach it, but you'll come across folks and you offer them a Gospel tract, it's like you've got a cobra snake in your hands and they want nothing to do with it. Can I get a witness on that? Does anybody know what I'm talking about? I mean, it is like, "Ah! What, are you

crazy? Are you some kind of fanatic?" Do you know what that tells me? That makes me think of John 3:19 and 20. They don't want to read that. They don't want to be exposed to the truth of who they are and who God is and what needs to take place to be made acceptable to God, turn from my sin, trust Christ and all of that. They don't want that. They don't want to be exposed to the truth about their condition.

So when light comes into the world, this light that the Lord is talking about and that he references throughout the New Testament, the very first thing we need to do is we need to just get honest with ourselves and say, "I need God to help me. I need God to show me what the deal is and help me make the decisions and do those things that need to be done so that I can be accepted by God."

As I was studying, well, that word "cometh" there, look at verse 21, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light," the word "cometh" there has the idea of approaches it. Or, I like this one definition: opens himself up to it. It's kind of like this idea: here's a person and they say, "You know, I know I'm not right with God. I know there's sin in my life. I know I have failed God and I want God to show me what I need. I want God to correct me. I want God to deal with me and convict me and challenge me and do what he needs to do in my life." That's the idea behind that phrase "he cometh to the light." He is opening himself up to it.

I think I mentioned this but when I was preaching up in Connecticut, a young fellow came Sunday night with a gal. She didn't come Monday or Tuesday but he came back by himself, a first-time visitor at the church. He came back by himself and we were all stirred up about that and Pastor Steve talked to him for a while Tuesday night. Wednesday night he came back again. The gal was with him again but he stayed after and he came up and he thanked me and we talked a little bit and I asked him and he said he was saved. I didn't really get to press him much, there were people around, but we talked a little bit and he made this statement. I said, "I noticed you've been coming back. You came back a couple nights by yourself." I said, "That encourages me. I'm glad you came back." He said, "You know," and I think I've told you this but he said, "I was going, I got in my church I go to," and Brother Steve told me it's a real contemporary, just party time church, he said, "But I come here," he said, "I came Sunday night, Monday night, Tuesday night, and I'm back again tonight." He said, "When I come here, I'm convicted." And I wasn't sure exactly at first what he was saying if he was upset about that or what and so we talked about it and I started to say, "You know, that's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit takes the word of God and applies it to our hearts and that's why we're convicted." And he goes, "Yeah, yeah, I know that." He says, "It's a good thing." Do you know what he was doing? He was coming to the light. He was exposing himself to the truth of the word of God and he was opening his heart and his life up to the word of God and he was basically saying this and I may be reading more into it than what he meant but I think this is what he meant is, "Hey, I know I need the Lord. I know things aren't what they ought to be." And we talked a little bit and he, "I want God. I want to open my heart up. I want to open my life up to God. I want God to show me, shed his light on me, show me those dark corners, show me where the cobwebs are, show me

where the old rotting moldy food is in the back of their refrigerator, so to speak. I want my life to be right."

So when it comes to the light, the very first thing we need to do is expose ourselves to the light. That's why we come to church. That's why some people, you can't drag them to church with wild horses because they don't want the light. They don't want to get convicted.

I was thinking when I was preparing this, I thought about the prodigal son and he's such an example in so many ways. This guy takes off and he wastes his father's living, father's finances that he gives him, he wastes it on riotous living. He is living in sin, and he could care less about the light; he could care less about what's right or wrong; he could care less about what God says. He's doing his thing. Well, of course, that only works for a while and his world starts falling apart which it always ends up doing. And the Bible makes this phrase and for the sake of time we're not going to turn there but the Bible has this little phrase: and when he came to himself. Oh, do you know what he's doing? He's starting to open his heart up and he's trying to say, "Hey, do you know what? I ain't what I ought to be. I ain't living like I should be. I ain't right." And he starts reasoning, he gets thinking, "You know, my father's servants are living better than I am. I'm going to go back." He says, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you." Do you know what he's doing? He's opening his heart up. He's exposing himself to the light and, of course, he made everything right.

Nobody gets saved, I like this phrase, verse 21, "But he that doeth truth cometh to the light." This is the way I see it, what he's saying here is that he that is honest with himself, he that says, "You know, this is, Jesus is right. I need him." He that is honest with himself comes to light, and I put this down: nobody ever gets saved who isn't first of all honest with themselves. We go soul winning and we take our Bibles out, we always start with the same first truth. Now, there are a lot of different verses that address it but we always start at the same place spiritually, "For all have sinned," because a person is never going to get saved until they are first honest with themselves about their condition as a sinner. And by the way, no Christian ever gets right with God, ever has the blessings of God in their life until they come clean with God as a Christian and say, "Lord, I'm not living for you like I should. I need revival in my heart and life."

So whether it's for salvation or whether it's for revival, the beginning point is exposing ourselves to the truth of God's word, exposing ourselves, opening up our hearts to the Holy Spirit to apply God's word and then just being honest with ourselves, "Lord, you're right. This is what my condition is." I've thought before, I wonder, maybe we have something a little backwards. I wonder if we shouldn't start our sermons with the invitation and start at the altar and say, "Lord, I'm opening my heart up to you. You speak to me. You show me what I need to do. God, I'm exposing myself to the light of your word." Wouldn't that be something? I've done that on occasion, especially with the teens. I used to have an opening prayer and I'd say, "All right, before we pray, I just want to invite you, how many tonight," and don't do this but I would say to them, "How many tonight say, preacher, I'm going to open my heart up to God's word and I'm going to be

willing to do whatever the Spirit of God applies God's word to my heart about." And I'd have kids raise their hand and pray before we even did it that God would help them. That's exposing ourselves to the light.

So 1, a fourfold response to the light of God, 1: expose myself to the light. 2, now this is kind of a corny phrase but it fits 2: embrace the light. Embrace the light. It's one thing to be exposed to the truth of the Gospel, to be exposed to the word of God and say, "All right, God show me what I need. Show me where I'm at. Show me what needs to take place. God, I'm opening my heart up." It's one thing to do that, it's another thing to say, "Okay, I'll do it." Do you follow what I'm saying?

Turn to John 1. It's one thing to be exposed to the truth of God's word, it's another thing to embrace the truth of God's word or to receive it. John 1, look with me at verse 12; the Bible says, verse 11, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as," what? "Received him," as many as accepted who and what he was, accepted the truth of Jesus Christ, "as many as received him to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." So there is not just an exposure to the light, exposure to the word of God, exposure to the truth of God, but there must be an embracing of it. It has to be, "Yes, that's correct. God, you're right. I'm wrong. God, you are true. What you are saying is correct. What your word tells me I need is true. What your word tells me about myself is true. I accept what you're saying." Embracing the truth. Simply knowing the truth is not enough. I've got to accept it and take it into myself.

I thought about the two thieves on the cross. We referenced one Sunday morning, but there were two guys crucified with Jesus Christ, one on the right hand, the other on the left. I can't help but believe, as far as we know, and I can't help but believe both those thieves had the same information about Jesus Christ. As far as we know, both these guys had the same information about who Jesus was and who he claimed to be. One of them embraced who Jesus was, embraced the truth of what Jesus was saying, the other one refused it. So when he says, you know, they are mocking and apparently they are both caught up at the beginning and finally the one guy says, "You know, we're wrong here. We're dying, we deserve this. We're sinners. We have failed completely in life. This guy has done nothing amiss." They had to of had the information who Jesus was. The other guy doesn't say this but I can see it, "I don't care what he says. I don't care who he says he is. I'm not buying it." So they both were exposed to the light of Jesus Christ, I have no doubt about that. They both know who he was. They both know the truth about Jesus Christ. One embraced it, the other one rejected it.

So simply having the fact, you know, there are a lot of people dying and going to hell who know the plan of salvation. There are a lot of Christians that are not right with God, living in sin in direct disobedience to God and they know what is right, they know what God says, the difference is some embrace the truth of God's word and they say, "Yes, I want this to be true. I accept what he says. I will respond to it." Others say, "I don't care what God says." So, first of all, we need to be exposed to light, we need to know what it says. 2. We need to embrace it. We need to embrace it.

Number 3, I put this down: we can't stop there, we need to endure in the light. 1, expose; 2, embrace; 3, endure. And what I mean by that, we need to progress in it. Once we accept Jesus as our Savior, once we make things right with God, once we accept what God has said and we start living in that light, then we need to go on.

Turn with me to Ephesians 5:8, and then when we're done there, we're going to go to 1 John. They both address this. Ephesians 5:8, the Bible says this, "For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord." It kind of goes along with Matthew 5:14, you are the light of the world. He goes, "All right, listen, you used to be in darkness. You didn't know or you didn't care what God said. You didn't care about salvation. You didn't care about any of that. But now you're in the light. You've exposed yourself to it. You've been exposed to the truth of the Gospel. You've embraced it. You are in the light." Now look what he says, "walk as children of light." In other words, go forward in that. Don't just, to simplify what I'm trying to say is, don't just hear the Gospel and believe it and get saved, now go on and live for God. Go on in that light. Go on in the truth. Let it lead you and guide you and direct you in your life.

Come back to 1 John. He kind of expands on it a little bit more there. 1 John 1. Is everybody with me? 1 John 1 and I'm going to start reading in verse 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." All right, we all understand what he's saying there. God is absolute pureness, goodness, holiness, absolutely no darkness whatever. "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth." Listen, if I'm living in disobedience, I'm not living in obedience to God's word and what I know God wants me to live even as a Christian, he's addressing Christians here. Don't tell me you're in fellowship with God. I can't go around and tell people, "Oh yeah, I'm in fellowship with God," while I'm living in disobedience to God; when I'm doing what I know God says is wrong and I'm not doing what I know God says is right. It doesn't mean I've lost my salvation, it means I'm not in fellowship with God. "We lie and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin."

So that word "to walk" what are you doing when you're walking? You are making progress, right? You're going from one point to another. That's why I hate treadmills. The stinky thing about treadmills, I always say this, the stinky thing about treadmills is you get off the same place you got on. I did all that walking and I'm at the same place I was and the scenery doesn't change. So I'd rather get out and walk down the road or something. But he says, make some progress. Grow in your understanding of what you know God's will is. Follow along, go on doing and let God lead you and direct you from his word, showing you what to do and how to live. And listen, you never outgrow spiritual growth. We're always growing.

I'll tell you something I've observed in 21 years pastoring the same church. This is something I've observed. I've observed this: when a person stops making progress spiritually, they begin to regress. You never get to a point in your Christian life and this is sobering and this is a warning we all have to heed, if I don't keep growing in my

Christian life, it's not like I get to a certain point in my spiritual growth and I say, "All right, I'm okay here," and I stop there and that's just where I stay the rest of the time. As soon as I stop progressing, it's like that treadmill, as soon as I stop progressing, I start what? Going backwards. Did you ever stop...somebody left their phone on. How about that. I wonder who that was? Man, that's the first time in my life I've done that. Oh, I'm regressing. I am so disappointed in myself. I'm discouraged.

So anyway, what was I talking about? Regressing. Treadmill, yeah, I've found and in the years of pastoring, I've found you don't get to a plateau, you don't outgrow your spiritual growth, but I've got to keep growing, I've got to keep pressing because as soon as I stop and say, "All right, this is good enough. I'm fine here in my spiritual life," I immediately begin to go backwards. I think I started to say this: if you stop walking on that treadmill, what happens? Zing, you shoot out the back. Did you ever see those little YouTube video clips of people? Wow, and I've seen it spiritually and it's true and I'll tell you, you can bust a nose and scrape yourself up on a treadmill if you stop going forward, but in your Christian life, it destroys you. I've seen it over and over and over and over. I've experienced it. I hate to say this, I have experienced it in my life. Somebody says, "Well, I'm good with just Sunday morning and Sunday night," and they quit going to church Wednesday night. Now, I'm talking to a Wednesday night crowd. So do you know what I've seen? 99 out of 100 times, now if they work or whatever work schedule, I understand that, but when it's just like, "I don't want to go. I don't care to go. I don't feel like it." Do you know what I've found out? They keep that up and soon it's Sunday night. And they keep that up and it's Sunday school. And for some reason, usually Sunday morning is the last to go. They keep that up and Sunday morning is gone. I could write a list as long as my arm of in the 20+ years I've been here folks that followed that exact pattern over and over and over and over.

The Bible says you need to endure; you need to press on; you need to go forward in your Christian life. Don't get to a plateau. Listen, you and I never get to the point where we know the Bible so good I don't need to read it every day. I never get to the point where I'm so strong spiritually I don't need to pray and ask God to help me and direct me. Now, this is me personally, I'm telling you as your pastor: I've never yet gotten to the point in my spiritual life where I don't need to hit that altar every now and then and do business with God. You've got to endure. He says, "Walk in the light. Keep going on. Keep pressing on because if you stop going forward, you immediately start going backward." It might not be outwardly obvious I'm going backward, but I immediately go.

So 1, we said what? I need to be exposed to the light. 2. I need to embrace it, I need to accept it. 3. I need to endure, go forward, go on in that, let God keep growing and developing me. Salvation is the starting point, it's not the goal. So when I get saved, it's the start of a whole new life. Walking in the light, living in the light, letting God lead me and direct me and change me and mold me and conform me to the image of Christ until the rapture or I pass away and go on to be with the Lord. Then last of all, the fourth response I need to the light is to emit the light. Emit the light.

Let me give you one more passage, Philippians, and this is where my message, I intended to come back to our text which we'll have to do that later. Philippians 2, would you turn over there real quick with me? That's in the New Testament for the deacon's team. Philippians 2, look at verse 14. Let's try 1:14. I hate it when I write the wrong verse down. 2:14. It says about shine, let your light...somebody find that for me real quick. Man, my phone goes off and I write the wrong... Where is at? 2:15, all right, are you still with me? I don't know where I'm going. I know where I'm going, I'm just not sure how to get there. Look at verse 15, "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation," there is the darkness, "among whom ye," what? "Shine as lights in the world." That's tying right back into what he's saying in Matthew 5, you are the light of the world. He says, "Listen, we live in a dark world, a spiritually dark world." They are ignorant of the Gospel. They are ignorant of what's right and wrong. They're trying to figure it out and they're stumbling around here trying to figure out what's right and wrong. And he says you and I as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we've been exposed to the light, we've embraced it, we're trying to live and walk for the Lord and let God lead us, and we need to emit that light. That word "shine" means to shed forth. It means to be seen; to be visible.

What he's saying is you and I are to be a city on a hill that can be seen and visible from a long way off. When a Christian doesn't stand out in a dark world, something is wrong. When you and I as Christians, if our testimony is not in contrast to this old wicked world, something's wrong with our testimony. You know, even a tiny little light in a dark room stands out right or wrong. I can't stand, I hate pitch black bedroom at night I can't stand it. I've said this recently and I've said it before but I don't. Did you ever get up in the middle of the night, a pitch black bedroom and you're trying to stumble around to get to the bathroom? Anybody know what I'm talking about? And if you've got little kids in the house, it's even worse. I mean, walking into stuff. Stubbing your toe. Stepping on Hot Wheels cars. Man, I hate that. And what? Cats. Yeah, we didn't step on the cats, we did other things. Jacks, oh yeah. I guess now it would be stepping on video games and stuff like that. But do you know what? All you do is get a little tiny nightlight and you stick it down in the corner of the hallway or the corner of the bathroom and you flip that little thing on and boom, it changes everything, doesn't it? Would you agree with me? If you have a little nightlight and you get up at two in the morning and that nightlight doesn't stand out from the darkness, it just blends in the darkness, would you agree something is wrong with that light? It's not working. For whatever reason, it's not working. Hey, and listen, when you and I as Christians and it will have to be next week or something, but I was going to go down a list of the ways that we ought to stand out in the world. When we don't stand out, when we're not a contrast this old sinful wicked world, something's wrong with us because this world is darkness and we need to emit the light of Christ. We need to emit the light of the Lord.

I've got a little illustration here. Woodrow Wilson told the story of an encounter which reflected the light of a changed life. I'll just read it to you, he said this, "I was in a very common place, I was sitting in a barber chair," President Woodrow Wilson. This is back in the day when the Presidents would mix in with the normal people. "I was sitting in a barber chair when I became aware that a powerful personality had entered the room."

This is what the President is saying. "A man had come quietly in upon the same errand as myself – to have his hair cut and sat in the chair next to me. Every word the man uttered, though it was not in the least moralizing, showed a personal interest in the man who was serving him. And before I got through with what was being done for me, I was aware that I had attended an evangelistic service. Because Mr. D. L. Moody was in that chair. I purposely lingered in the room after he had left and noted the singular effect that his visit had brought upon the barbershop. They all talked in undertones. They didn't know his name but they knew someone had elevated their thoughts and I left that place as I should have left a place of worship." What was he saying? He was saying D. L. Moody came in that place and he emitted the light of God and people became concerned about their spiritual well-being; people's thoughts were elevated. I think what he was saying is their thoughts were directed to God. He was a light in that place.

Now, that's what God wants you and I to do. That's what he says, "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid," and we're to stand out. We're not to go around blow our trumpet and say, "Hey, look how good I am." We're just go around doing good. We're not to talk about how great a Christian we are, we're just supposed to be good Christians and share the Gospel and live the word of God and be a light in this world. Reagan and Kennedy and different people referenced America as the city on a hill. Jesus isn't talking about America or any other country, he's talking about our church and he's talking about you and I. Be a light in this old sinful world. We cannot let that light go out. If we're not distinct, if we don't stand out, something's wrong. Something's wrong.

Let's pray.

Father in heaven, I pray you could use these thoughts, Lord, in our Christian lives that we be a testimony. We're trying to be a light, Lord, with these Gospel tracts. We want to point people to Christ in every way we possibly can so we ask you to help us not just with a tract but with our life, with our personal witness, through our activities, our appearance, everything, that we be a testimony to the glory of God and the holiness of God.

With our heads bowed and eyes closed, how many would say, "Preacher, I know what God's word says and I have trusted Christ as Savior, I have embraced the Gospel, I'm trying to grow and live." Or would you say, "Preacher, I've got some areas in my life that really need God's help. I need to get completely thoroughly right with the Lord, completely manifest by God's light." Or maybe you say, "Preacher, I'm not being a testimony that I ought to be. My testimony isn't distinct in this old world as it ought to be." And you'd say, "Preacher, pray with me that God will help me be that light that God wants me to be." Any like that by the uplifted hand? "Preacher, pray with me. My hand is raised. I don't want to get stagnant. I don't want to be satisfied. I want to press on." Maybe tonight, midweek service, we just take a moment and pray and ask God to give us victory, give us courage to make the decisions we need to make, make the changes, surrender the areas that need to be surrendered and just let God have his way.

Father, bless us, I ask. And Lord, as we just do a homemade invitation here, God, I pray that in our hearts and at our pew you would just help us do business, surrender and trust you and respond. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

All right, if we could have the ushers come on down we'll have to do our invitation that way.