

Ps 27:1
 Hy 14:4
 Ps 119:40,49
 Ps 18:9
 Ps 36:3; Hy 38:1,2
 Matthew 4:12-17; 4:23-5:16
 Ephesians 5:3-14
 Philippians 2:12-18
 Matthew 5:14a

Yarrow, September 5, 2010

Beloved Congregation of the Lord Jesus Christ!

Grade 12s graduated last spring with theme from Philippians 2:15b. These YP off to university/college this week (and so many others of congregation too). Holiday period over; we all back to regular work, but face same challenge as youth: how shine?? Daunting, despite good intentions. ∴ quickly a sense of failure....

- So do well to consider Jesus' words re being the light of the world. What He mean?? How this affect/encourage you as head off to school/work??
 - Turns out Lord gave hearers glorious gospel here.

GOD IN MERCY HAS MADE HIS PEOPLE LIGHTS IN A DARK WORLD.

1. Who needs light,
2. What being a light looks like,
3. How you can be a light.

1. Who needs light.

Some basics re light:

- Absence of light is darkness. Behind Jesus' words is notion of darkness, with 'you' providing light in darkness.
- All light requires energy. Dead battery in your flashlight: no light. Power failure: no light from your light bulb. No wax left: no light from your candle. Light requires energy.
- ∴ Qs: where does energy behind 'light' of text come from? Why is there a darkness that needs light?? Who the 'you' Jesus refers to?

Jesus' words spoken to particular audience, cf 4:25; 5:1; 7:28. Disciples form inner circle of hearers, but Jesus' audience much bigger than 12.

- This audience not Moabites or Romans or even Canadians; this audience *Israelites*.
 - Ie, *covenant* people; cf Genesis 17:7; Exodus 20:2.
- This audience not told: *should* be light (wish); or *must* be light (mandate); or *will* be light (promise)
 - Told: *are* light, ie, statement of identity, reality.
 - This audience is: *light of the world*, ie, light in world.
 - We puzzle: *how* to imagine this? Are they candles/flashlights? Light bulbs in the ceiling of life? Street lights on the roads of the world?
 - Turn to Scripture for its picture (and not our experience).

- Genesis 1:2: world God fashioned was dark, ie, absence of light. Then God *spoke*: ∴ light, cf vs 3, 4a. Point: there is no light in creation itself; light comes from God. Ie, God is source of light, supplies energy for light. Dwells in unapproachable light.
 - This point important when consider fall into sin. With fall break relation with God, ie, close door on light. Result: darkness, ie, live in the dark. See Job 12:25.
 - One can think one still sees, but in reality not so; driven home in 9th plague, cf Exodus 10:22f. This more than a plague; this a picture of life without God. Can't see way to go, can't figure out purpose of things....
 - ∴ important to note what Lord God says re Self.
 - Cf Ps 27:1; 2 Sam 22:29 (cf Ps 18:28).
 - Understand: This world dark, peoples' minds dark, ie, no light coming from selves (think of flashlight) to give light on path of life. Only Lord Himself is light, ie, source of light that lightens path before us.
 - ∴ light in tabernacle, cf Exodus 25:37; Leviticus 24:2 → reminder to Israel that God of life is source of light as walk road of life.
 - See Job 29:2f**
 - Yet Lord gives that light through means, ie, through Word
 - ∴ Ps 119:105,130; 19:8b; ibid 2 Peter 1:19 re prophets
 - But this light-from-God not limited to God/Word; it to shine in world God made. How?? Moses went in to tabernacle to speak with God, then his face shone, cf Exodus 34:29ff.
 - ∴ Proverbs 4:18; Daniel 5:14 (note: not 'insight', as NIV has, but 'light') → a heavenly light shines from Daniel on big questions of life so that he knows answer (so 'insight' goes in right direction). Ie, Daniel works with light of God (ie, God's word; it's 'light') so that show way in darkness of life. Cf Daniel 2:11: "reveal" → enlighten in darkness.
 - Where Daniel get this 'insight'? Know word = light. Ie, reflect God = light.
- So: who needs light? World does! World is in darkness because of sin, doesn't know where/how to walk. But God in mercy gives light in dark world.
 - Who then is the light? God Himself, and He gives His light in Word. This light reflected by child of God in this world. Ie, as child of God seeks guidance/answers to life's questions in Word of God, he shines light of Word (=God) on path – for own benefit and those who walk beside him. This light enlightens God's child so that he shines as light too.
 - So Darius benefits from Daniel's use of Word as light.
 - Actually, Israel received Word, so all Israel can be light – must be light, for live in God's light.
 - ∴ Jesus in Mt 5:14: You are the light of the world. Privilege! Others in darkness, you received light, ∴ are light, for benefit of others too!!
 - Don't stress first the responsibility; stress first the **privilege!!**
- Still, what being light involve?

2. What a light looks like

I mentioned before: no light has its ability to glow from within itself. It's either connected to a power source (electricity/battery/candle wax) or reflects energy it captured somehow (eg, glow, or like moon simply reflects sun).

- God's covenant people are light because they draw energy from The Light, ie, God. But that makes the 'how' of being able to be light clear: one needs to *stay tuned in* to the source of energy.
 - That energy is the Word, the light on our path.
- You say: yes, you covered that already. True. But this is what gives depth to the Beatitudes. Why is it that reference to 'light' follows hard on heels of beatitudes? More, why *these* Beatitudes instead of others?
 - All Beatitudes involve a form of conduct, a way of behaviour. Yet all this behaviour is learned not from experience or human wisdom, but is behaviour drawn from being busy with God's Old Testament revelation.
 - 5:3: poor in spirit = small within self because of awareness of creaturely-ness, sinfulness; cf Genesis 1, teaching of tabernacle. No pride: basic attitude learned from Old Testament.
 - 5:4: mourn = sorrow for sin, cf death of animal in tabernacle.... ∴ no pleasure in sin either....
 - 5:6: hunger & thirst for righteousness = what we received from God – righteous despite sin, ie, God not condemn but bless. Keen to pursue the same wrt others.
 - 5:7: be merciful = grateful for mercy received in gospel of forgiveness.
 - Point: God's Old Testament revelation re who He is and what He has done for sinners isn't simply nice theory but invariably results in lifestyle of specific flavour/colour. That flavour/colour strange to fallen humanity, cf attitude of Genesis 6:5; 19:4f, etc. They in darkness because disconnected from God, more, not reflect God's light....
- So, though privilege to be light, light invariably looks like something. Here Israel weak; ie, their light dim....
 - Cf Mt 4:12ff: Galilee in darkness(!) ∴ new light, cf 4:16a.
 - That's why Jesus calls to repentance, cf 4:17
 - But not only Galilee in darkness. Centre of Israel was Jerusalem, ie, temple, cf gospel. But know enough from Gospels to know that good news of forgiveness of sins not really *shine* in Jerusalem/Zion, ie, attitudes of Mt 5:3ff not characterize Jerusalem.
- Now who comes to Galilee? Locals "have seen a great light" – 4:16b.
 - This light is Jesus of Nazareth. Ie, LORD is light (Ps 27:1), and Jesus is LORD God. ∴ John 1:4f: He too great for darkness; darkness must give way. Cf John 8:12.
 - How Jesus light? His actions determined by Word/commands of God, cf context of John 8:12 (see sermon on that passage). So reflects accurately what God is like. Cf John 9:5; 12:46. Ie, He obedient to God, He walks in light of God – who is source of light, insight into living.
 - ∴ to cross. Yet on cross He rejected because of sin, ∴ darkness. Ie, light of God no longer for Him nor for world....
 - Yet Jesus not lose way in darkness. He knew His God so well, followed light of Word even in deepest darkness, and obeyed, ie, paid for sin.
 - Even on cross He light, cf 1 Peter 2:21ff – here attitudes of Beatitudes – and that shone brightly!
 - Suffered in place of His people. Ie, they to be light, but they so dim..., failed.... In their darkness Jesus persevered in God's way, ie, continued to walk road as God desired, and result is life for God's people – so that they can be lights again.
 - Christ triumphant! Ascended.... But not mean light gone!

- For gives Holy Spirit. ∴ 3rd point:

3. How to be lights

Holy Spirit is Spirit of Christ, ie, of light of world.

- Indwells own, changes own so that can reflect God, ie, shine
 - ∴ Ephesians 5:8ff; Philippians 2:15b; 1 Peter 2:9
 - Realize: here a manner of living
- But this nothing new. This is Mt 5:14: “You are the light of the world.” God’s covenant people, enabled by Holy Spirit, are lights in world of darkness. Specifically: attitudes come from Holy Spirit, ie, fruit of Spirit, not works of flesh.
 - Those attitudes can’t be hidden.... If present, obvious. Cf 14b. With Christian invariably obvious.
 - Putting light under bowl makes no sense; nobody does that.
 - Ibid here: God put you in world because He wants light here – for benefit of others (cf sermon re salt). So don’t be ashamed of your role, or insecure about it. Rather, vs 16, let your light shine before men, brightly.
 - How? Heavenly attitudes! Cf Beatitudes, also Philippians 2:14f.
 - Result: others praise God (5:16b) ≠ believe; rather = acknowledge something very different/special, even envious about you. Ie, you light in world of darkness.
 - Possible?? Yes, for have received Holy Spirit.
- Off to school, uni, work. Challenge. Now carry out Philippians 2:15b!
 - How?? Compromise obedience to God for sake of campus social life, reasonable mark??
 - Then have dimmed your light! Not living in careful obedience to God’s commands, skimping on obedience because can’t quite trust God’s promises, dims your light – and reduces your effect.
 - ∴ Ephesians 5:8 – context....
 - You a light, for have God’s light. Draw from it fully – then shine as stars.
- Possible?? Sure, in strength of Lord, confident in His power.
 - Place, of course, for God-pleasing talk.
 - But it begins with God-pleasing deeds, ie, attitudes from heaven. So: let others at uni see concepts caught in Beatitudes, ie, fruit of Spirit. That brings light into dark institutions of learning.