

## **Sermon Draft**

**Text: Matthew 5:13–20**

**Sermon: “Let Your Light Shine”**

Our text is our Gospel lesson, mainly verses 14-16. *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:14–16)

We all need light, it's hard to see our way around in the dark. We learned way back in school how we need light to live to grow things, not much thrives in the dark. Our text tells us we are the light of the world. In my study Bible it says: “Words without deeds are like salt that has become useless or like a light out under a basket. The words we speak in praise of our heavenly Father need the support of our deeds. Jesus wants us to witness by both our words and our deeds.”

So, the question we need to ask ourselves is, “what kind of light are we?” There is daylight, soft white, or bright white, fluorescent or incandescent? Not all lights are the same. Some light bulbs can no longer be made legally, because the government says they’re not efficient enough.

I hope God doesn’t run an efficiency test on us. That thought occurred to me in hearing again the words of Jesus to his disciples, ***“You are the light of the world.”*** How much light have we shined lately, compared to the energy God invests in us? While that question may make us squirm a little, God’s Word today is really good news. It doesn’t say we should be light, or we must shine brighter, or God will replace us. It says we are the light of the world. It helps us see that we who follow Jesus also brighten up the world.

Jesus had just described how blessed are those who have faith in him. Now, he talks about how bright we are. When God created the world, the first command was ***“Let there be light”*** (Genesis 1:3).

Three days later, he created the sun and moon and stars to provide light by day and by night.

God is turning the lights on anew in Jesus. The sun and moon are still doing their jobs, of course, but there's a job they can't do. When a person is going the wrong way, we say we hope he or she will see the light. They might be in darkness in the middle of the day.

There's only one way to pierce the darkness of sin and unbelief. God turns the lights on by bringing us to trust in Jesus. Jesus is the Light of the world, and his Light scatters that darkness. When Jesus said to the disciples "*follow me,*" his Word turned on the lights for them. They were changed.

And Jesus changes us. In Baptism, we are taken out of the kingdom of darkness. We are made followers of Jesus, who is the Light of the World. Ephesians 5:8 says, "*For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light.*"

Have you ever had someone turn a light on in the middle of the night when you were fast asleep? The first thing that comes out of your mouth is “Turn it off!” That was how many reacted to Jesus when they heard him speak. Sin loves darkness. No wonder many crimes don’t happen in broad daylight, but at night, or in the shadows.

Jesus has plan to drive out darkness. Remarkably, to turn on the lights for us meant that Jesus, the Light of the World, would be snuffed out like a candle. On Good Friday, it looked as though they’d succeeded. His lifeless body was laid in a cold, dark tomb. There were no windows in that tomb, for the eyes of the dead cannot see light.

But in the bright light of Easter, Jesus threw open the door of grave and death! He’s opened wide the doors and windows to our graves, too, promising that we will live, even though we die (John 11:25)! We will dwell with him in eternal light forever (Revelation 21:23)!

But forever may seem like a long time from now. And forever was not the focus for Jesus on this particular day. Light Living means living now in the light of Jesus. Light Living means living out what we really are: forgiven children of God. Our lives are designed to have tremendous impact in the world.

Followers of Jesus do not just believe differently than others; we live differently. Truth is, if we can't be easily distinguished from unbelievers, it's either because they're becoming like us or we're behaving like them. If the latter, there's as much wrong with us as with them.

***“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works,”*** Jesus said (Matthew 5:16). Following Jesus is about more than personal enlightenment. Shades in the windows are good for privacy, but don't draw down the shades of your faith as you live through the week. A covered lamp is a waste of light, and so is concealed faith.

After all, ***“You are the light of the world.”*** That is both a blessing and responsibility. Following Jesus is not just for our personal benefit. It calls us to be the hope of the world. It’s easy for us to find fault with society. It’s common for us to complain that things are going from bad to worse and that evil seems to be spreading everywhere. No doubt, Jesus could see that also in his time. But instead of hand wringing and complaining, Jesus one-by-one brought people out of darkness into the light. Then, the ones he brought to the light of faith he sent to make holes in the darkness wherever they went. God’s people are God’s force in the world, a force to be reckoned with.

Our God says, ***“Let there be light where my people live.”*** Peter says it well: ***“Keep your conduct . . . honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation”*** (1 Peter 2:12).

Today we have all kinds of “light” foods and drinks with less calories. But Light Living as Jesus described is not about less, but more. For those who are in Christ, there is more joy, more power, more hope, and more purpose for living. The Word that brought the light of faith to us is also the Word that enables us to bring that light to the world.

The electricity that causes lights to shine is invisible until it stirs up and excites electrons and particles that are otherwise invisible. Faith is invisible to people until it brings light by stirring up Christians to love God and our neighbor. Faith that saves also energizes.

And how does our light shine? Not through heroic acts or feats of superhuman strength. Not through brilliant insights or miraculous powers. But by following Jesus, living like he did. Jesus came to fulfill God’s Law, which shows concrete love for other people. And though we do it imperfectly, loving our God and our neighbor makes faith visible.

Most would consider a mission trip to Haiti to build a school a good work. So is clearing your neighbors' walk, or taking your children to church, or having devotions with them, or holding your temper, or not lying, or forgiving, or confessing your sins and asking for forgiveness instead of blaming or excusing. This shares the light given to you.

The light of Christ shines in the ordinary life of a Christian, but we are not called to live in an ordinary way. Because the Spirit of God is moving us, and Christ is dwelling in us, Christians can be extraordinary husbands and wives and parents, remarkable neighbors and employees, powerful citizens and friends.

The disciples were often dim in reflecting the love of Jesus, and so are we. Thank God he is patient and does not quickly discard us when we fail. He leads us to repent, to renounce the ways of sin and darkness, to be forgiven for the sake of Jesus' cross, and to strive anew to follow him. When we love as God loves, people will take notice.



That may well lead others to see a light of hope at the end of the tunnel of darkness and that light is Jesus. We can do no good thing apart from him.

Light bulbs come in all different kinds, and Christians do, too, but whatever our shape or color, because of Jesus, we are the Light of the World and will dwell in eternal light with Him forever. May someone this week, or this day, see the light of Jesus in our light living and all glory be to Christ.

Amen