

August 9, 2015

## LIGHT

Matthew 5:14-16

*"You are the light of the world,"* therefore, you are the light of my life! Do all you can to brighten my days, to shed light on my path when my world is darkest, and to enlighten me when my mind is clouded. The *me/my* is every individual that makes up the world. The *you* is us, the Church, the disciples of Jesus, the followers of His Way. We are those who know Christ. We have the light of God shining in our hearts.

But what good is that light if we keep it to ourselves? Like salt that's lost its saltiness, it is good for nothing. But if we are to think of ourselves as the salt of the earth, then we are good-for-everything. Oh, we may think of our light, our personal enlightenment, our personal faith as being great for our own lives. It's an awesomely inspiring gift to have this glorious light. And we can dwell on the ideas of faith and feel visionary, but... if we just keep it to ourselves, it will, in time, make us self-righteous, self-absorbed, arrogant and prima donna-like, and, incompatible with the rest of the world! Even with other Christians!

A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Any Jew who heard of a city set on a hill, would automatically think of Jerusalem. The hill is called Zion, or, Mount Zion. And in Israel, a Zionist today is a Jew for Israel. They are not faithful for God's sake, they are more to be seen as national patriots rather than having a spiritual posture. It seems curious that Isaiah envisioned God telling the Jews of his day, *"I will give you as a light to the nations/the Gentiles, that My salvation may reach the end of the earth!"* (Isaiah 49:6) Israel was called on to *"open the eyes of the blind."* (Isaiah 42:7) And when Israel became self-seeking and isolationist, God gave them over to Babylon and eventually sent Jesus to save, not only Israel, but the whole world. Jesus was even rejected by *the Jews*, Jewish leaders of His day. The Jews did not let their light shine!

Do we let our lights shine? We are to *"walk in the light as He is in the Light!"* (1 John 1:7) We are to *"lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light!"* (Romans 13:12) Jesus tells us to *"Let your light so shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in Heaven!"* (Matthew 5:16)

*You are the light of the world.* You are the light of my life! I hope someone can say that about you, each one of you, not because you are passionately loved by them – the way Carol is the light of my life – but because they see light coming from you – the light of faith, of truth, of Christianity. The light of the Kingdom!

It is said that there are two ways to spread the light. You can be the one with the light, or, you can reflect the light. We need to do both. We need to hold high the light we have for others to see by, or, reflect it by our character. Let it show in our conduct, our behavior. Let it shine.

For many of us we need to fan the fires of our mind. *"God's Word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path!"* (Psalm 119:105) And yet we choose not to study it or read it, when we should be immersed in it. It should be so much a part of our lives that it warms us the way the sunshine does when we lay out, sunbathing. The truth of God's Word is such a wonderful brilliance, and God's Word is available to us so freely in our land, but we are Biblically blind and illiterate. We have Bibles but we don't let their light work in our lives!

Knowledge is light, and yet, for many, our mental pilot light is just out. We can't create heat because we don't know the truth well enough to make any sparks. Paul told Timothy to *"rekindle the gift of God that is within you.... God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline!"* (2 Timothy 1:6-7)

Until the late 1800s, the only way to have light in the darkness was by fire – lamplight, torchlight, bonfires. A lamp on a stand could give light to a large room. Individuals might have had a smaller lamp to illuminate their own space if they were trying to work or read at night. Part of the picture Christ is drawing in this passage is that of a stand large enough for several small lamps and one larger lamp. I've done a little exercise where everyone, with their own candle, is standing in a circle. Everyone can see clearly each other as they hold their candles in front of themselves. Then I ask them all to place their candles on a table in the center of the circle, and stand back in place. With all the lights together, everyone could see each other just as well if not better. The Church! The whole is greater than the sum of its parts!

One last issue. The idea of light can have a moral quality... as it is considered over and against darkness. We all know John 3:16 fairly well. Listen to John 3:17-21 – *"Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him. Those who believe in Him are not condemned, but those who do not believe are condemned already, because they have not believed in the Name of the only Son of God. And this is the judgment: that the light has come into the world, and people loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil. For all who do evil hate the light and do not come to the light, so that their deeds may not be exposed. But those who do what is true come to the Light, so that it may be clearly seen that their deeds have been done in God!"*

We are warned! Darkness or light. We choose. You are the light of my life! I pray that I can bring at least some light into yours. I know the Word of God can!