

The Commands of Christ

Sermon # 4

“Let Your Light Shine”

Matthew 5:14-16

We are now in our fourth in our series based on Christ’s Commands.

The first command to *“repent”* tells us how to restore fellowship with God and become qualified to enter his kingdom. The second command to *“follow me”* calls for a total change in goals and priorities so that we can become *“fishers of men.”* The third command to *“rejoice”* in persecution is the secret of becoming bright lights so that people will be able attracted to our love and God’s truth. After passing the test of persecution, reproach and having evil spoken of us, we will have the brightness of light to be noticeable to others.

Continuing in the Sermon on the Mount the next command is found in verse sixteen but let’s begin reading in verse fourteen, *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Nor do you light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

The truth is that the influence of the church is not being felt in our society the way that it should be. It has been reported that as high as 25% of the population claims to be born again, yet based on the impact we are having this can not be true. *“George Barna (the church statistician) has shown that the average Christian in the average evangelical church is almost indistinguishable from the rest of society. ... When our teens, supposedly saved, get pregnant and do drugs at the same rate as the general teenage population – when our marriages end in divorce at the same rate as the rest of society – when we cheat in business, or lie or steal, and cheat on our spouses at the same statistical level as those who they are not Christians – something is wrong.”* [J. David Hoke. “Salt and Light” Sermon on Matthew 5:13-16. www.horizonsnet.org]

There are those today who would have us to believe that our religious faith is a purely personal thing; that is that we should keep it to ourselves. While I agree that our faith is personal in that it requires a personal decision on our part, as to whether or not we are going to believe in Jesus, Jesus taught that we are not to keep it to ourselves. The words *“let your light so shine”* (v.16) are the translation of a single Greek verb (*lampsato*) which is an imperative, meaning that it is a command. The question that we must ask ourselves is *“What must I do to let my light shine?”*

1. I Must Have A Connection To The Source Of Light.

Jesus is the light. Mankind as a whole is in darkness. Jesus is the real light of the world. In John 1:1 we are told, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God.(3) All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. (4) In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. (5) And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.... (9) That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world."*

But the world did not welcome that light because Jesus in a specific way exposed the nature of the darkness in a way that it had never been done previously. And the world hated Him for it. John 3:19, *"And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than, light because their deeds were evil. (20) for everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."*

Those who follow Jesus actually become reflectors of the light. Just as the sun in the source of light in our universe and the moon reflects the light of the sun; Jesus is the source of light in the world and we his followers are to reflect that light.

"A Hindu trader in India once asked a missionary, "What do you put on your face to make it shine?" With surprise the man of God answered, "I don't put anything on it!" His questioner began to lose patience and said emphatically, "Yes, you do!" All of you who believe in Jesus seem to have it. I've seen it in the towns of Agra and Surat, and even in the city of Bombay." Suddenly the Christian understood, and his face glowed even more as he said, "Now I know what you mean, and I will tell you the secret. It's not something we put on from the outside but something that comes from within. It's the reflection of the light of God in our hearts." {Keith Edwards. "This Little Light of Mine." Sermon on Matt 5:14. www.sermoncentral.com

We are not source of the light, but we are called to be reflectors of the light. The only way that we can be reflectors of the light is to have a connection with the source.

"What must I do to let my light shine?"

2. I Must Realize That Letting My Light Shine Is An Intentional Choice. (v.16a)

In Isaiah 45:7 God says, *"I am the LORD and there is no other; I form the light..."* The Hebrew word translated *"form"* is (*yatsar*) and it carries the idea of "squeezing into shape and means "to mould into a form; especially as a potter." So the process of becoming light involves allowing God to shape us a potter would clay. In Isaiah 64:8, *"But now, O Lord, you our Father, We are the clay, and You our potter; and all we are the work of Your hand."*

One can no more escape having an influence in this world than a city on a hill can be hidden.

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. (15) Nor do you light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men” Notice that the verse says *“let the light so shine.”* Underline the word *“so”* in the text. In reality it is not a question of whether your light will be seen, whether your life will have an influence, but on the manner of it.

“A young boy about nine years old went with his parents to Europe one summer. Part of their tour was visiting the great cathedrals of the past. As he would visit cathedral after cathedral, he saw the massive stained glass portraits of the disciples and of other saints. He was impressed as he stood in these great empty halls looking through the beautiful stained glass windows. Upon their return, he was asked by his Sunday School teacher what about the Great churches of Europe he like the most. He thought for a moment and said, ‘I loved the sense of awesomeness and the hugeness of who God must be.’ His Sunday School teacher then asked what was his definition of a saint. As his mind went back to those massive beautiful stained glass windows, he said, ‘A saint is a person that the light shines through.’ [J. David Hoke. “Salt and Light” Sermon on Matthew 5:13-16. www.Sermoncentral.com] That pretty profound,. Don’t you think?

Are you allowing the light of Christ to shine through you?

“What must I do to let my light shine?”

3. I Must Realize That Like It Our Not My Life Is On Display.

Paul warns the believers in his letter to the Philippians (2:12-16) *“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is God who works both to will and to do His good pleasure (14) Do all things without complaining and disputing. (15) 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, (16) holding fast the word of life.....”*

Those that know the Lord are to shine in the midst of the darkness.

Let me give you two things to think over in connection with the fact that our lives are on display.

First, over the years in the ministry I have heard people make the statement, *“I’m in an work place where there are no other Christian’s, and it is rough. Things are disgusting. Pray that I will be able to get another job.”* This is what I want you to consider! Have you ever considered that God may have put you in that position? The greater the darkness the more difference even the weakest light will make.

Secondly, let me give you something else to think about in connection with the fact that our lives are on display; *“Have you ever considered that people who allow others to think that they are worse they are, are just as much a hypocrite as those who represent themselves as better than they are?”* We recognize the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who performed their religious acts in an attempt to make others think that they really better than they were. Yet Peter was just as guilty when in a moment of weakness denied that he was a disciple of the Lord. He was also being a hypocrite.

We cannot live light-filled lives in our society without standing out, without having people notice us. They may not like us, and they may reject us; but they will know that we are there. If your faith does not make a difference in the way that you live your life you either need to get saved or you need to repent and allow the light of Jesus to shine through.

“What must I do to let my light shine?”

4. I Must Realize That My Light Is To Be Seen Through My Works. (v. 16b) *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Do not shy away from the phrase *“good works.”* This phrase is used over twenty times in the New Testament and always favorably. While it is true that *“good works”* do not earn us salvation; once we are saved it is the sign of the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. In his letter to the Ephesians (2:8-10) Paul reminds the believers, *“For by grace you have been saved through faith and that not of yourselves; it is a gift of God, (9) Not of works, lest anyone should boast. (10) For we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works...”*

It is not so much what you *“say”* you are that counts – but what your actions *“prove”* that you are. It does little good to shout from the housetop, *“I am a Christian”* when the way that you react to your family and those around shouts something else entirely.

“What must I do to let my light shine?”

5. I Must Realize That My Works Are To Bring Glory To God. (v. 16c) *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

Jesus did not say live our lives in such a fashion that people will see our good deeds and say what marvelous, outstanding people we are.

A lamp does not call attention to itself. It is simply placed on a lamp-stand from which it will give the best illumination. It is not always easy to perform *“good works”* in such a way that people will always praise God rather than the one performing the act, but it is still commanded.

So What Must I Do To Let MY Light Shine?

1. I Must Realize that I Must Be Connected To The Source

2. I Must Realize that Letting My Light Shine Is An Intentional Choice.
3. I Must Realize That Like It Or Not My Life Is On Display.
4. I Must Realize That My Light Is To Be Seen Through My Works.
5. I Must Realize That My Works Are To Bring Glory to God