

THE LIGHT SWITCH

Matt. 5:14-16

INTRODUCTION:

This is one of the most astounding and extra ordinary statements about the Christian that was ever made by our Lord.

We consider the setting and remember that the people that he was talking too were to be leaders in the Christian movement.

Jesus is speaking to his disciples in the hills beside the lake of Galilee. We know there is only one true light. And here is the great possibility -- you are the light of the world. Jesus give his conception of the Christian life. To be a Christian is to be a light bringer, thrilling breath-taking word.

Sunday night before last we talked about Jesus using salt. And describing the Christian. Now he describes with a different illustration.

It helps us to understand something about the possibilities of the light switch in your attic or cellar. There is a button or switch. And it may be the most important light in the house. Now Jesus is telling these people not to over-look the fact that they were to be light.

We need to realize the importance of the light. H. G. Wells used to tell a strange story, about haunted houses. It seemed that a man had been challenged to spend a night in a haunted house. This place was shunned by all of the people of the community. He took a hand-ful of candles and after lighting them and placing them around in a room, he had chosen, he took his seat in an old

out - one by one.

And how tragic it is when the candles of faith and hope are gone. And the lights are growing dimmer. There is much darkness in our world today. There is even darkness in the realm of religion. Men do not like to retain God in their knowledge. Men are like Pharaoh - they can listen to the voice and the plea of Moses, and then say - who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice.

Now John the Baptist could claim to be light - but he did not. He said that Jesus was the true light.

I. The Christian As Light - V. 14

Ye are the light of the world. Now our Lord looked down on these simple plain people and unimportant people from the standpoint of the world, and he simply said, you are the light of the world. This is a most remarkable thing.

Ye, referred to in this statement means, simply ourselves. The great danger always is when we read a statement like this we think that it has to do with somebody else. But here is a contrast between the disciples of Christ and himself.

The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. (Prov. 20:27). By nature we are like so many unlighted candles. As the candle is adopted to fetch the light - it stands dark and cold until the wick is lighted. So has our nature been.

We need to catch the precious light of which others are destitute - the Pharisees and the Scribes seemed to be handsome specimens of the kind of candles that were burning in their day.

As you light a birthday cake, you strike a match or you put the end of a lighted candle -- and you immediately get a glow of light.

You light a candle in the home - you turn on a switch that enables the housewife to find the lost coin. This is the same way in contrast that a lost soul can be lighted.

When Jesus said, ye are the light of the world - he meant that you alone -- here is the implication that this world is in a state of utter darkness. Here is a striking contrast, between the Christian life and the life according to the world.

The world is always talking about enlightenment. During the 15th and 16th centuries when men began to take a new interest in knowledge, there was a great turning point in history. A great war divided the history and the civilization of that time in a kind of rebirth, and of learning, and the great classics the world rediscovered.

Their knowledge and their teachings were emphasized in the 18th century. There was revival known as the enlightenment period.

Note this - it was also the beginning of any attack upon the authority of the Bible. It put philosophy and human thought in the position of the authoritative divine revelations. It always represents itself in terms of light. Knowledge, they say, is that which brings light. In so many respects, it does. It would be foolish to dispute that the increase in knowledge does not bring about light on physical illness and disease, etc. New knowledge has uncovered different aspects of life. That is why people come and talk about being enlightened. It is the result of knowledge and culture.

Yet the Scripture still proclaims that the world as such is in a state of gross darkness. This is a simple truth. The tragedy of our country and of our century has been that we have concentrated solely upon knowledge. The knowledge of things -- mechanical things. The great struggle today is the knowledge about scientific things, biological things, etc. And we have failed to discover the most important things of all -- what to do with our knowledge. The whole problem of the atomic power at this moment is what to do with this knowledge which we have about this power.

In the realm of personal life, personal conduct, and behavior in these relationships, the moral problems of society -- we have multiplied our institutions and our organizations. We have marriage guidance and marriage counselors that have been set up during this century. Great information is given to the questions on how to live. How to avoid this or the other.

Yet man is still in darkness when it comes to how to live a clean straight pure wholesome life. This is the thing that baffles men of philosophy. They have all sorts of knowledge. But this was a simple truth nearly 2000 years ago. That Jesus spoke - and this applies to every age. The darkness of the world has become more evident. We go back to the implication "ye" - which explains the ordinary Christian. The greatest experts that have studied all of the books of this book for wisdom - yet Paul said, it is therefore pleasing to God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. So the things that seem utterly ridiculous to the world is the pure wisdom and knowledge of God.

And on one occasion Jesus said, I am the light of the world. Now you attach these two together - since he said the Christian is light, the Christian is the (only) light in the world today. He, and he alone, give us this vital light in respect to life.

Eph. 5 says - for ye who are sometimes darkness, but now ye are the light of the Lord. You are made light. You are transmitters of that light. The mystical union which you have with Christ. God is light and in him there is no darkness at all.

So the effect of the Christian on the world is a general one. Here is a man who becomes a Christian He lives in a society - his office, his workshop, wherever he is - his Christianity has a controlling effect. The function of light. The emphasis is therefore on being. Before it speaks of what he does.

He must get the truth here. The Christian as the light. He is not just a reflector - just to reflect something, but you are light. He did not say, ye possess light or you control light. Now light is something the figure expresses. Light is something which you are. Now you are light.

Some will say well reason is light in the world. It is in the world of the mind. In politics some will say enlightenment. In reason is the light of the world. In education others will say intellect is the light of the world. But Jesus was talking to these Galileans and they were the light of the world. Now today when we talk to our children we tell them what they ought to be. We tell them how to be a successful banker, businessman, or politician. Am I right or wrong? I mean generally speaking - with few exceptions. You do not tell your children that a Christian is the best possible person in the world. That they should be imitators of Christians. Or do you hold up the example of Mr. Rockefeller. And so much money.

Dr. Hershey Davis once said, parents tell their children success stories like George Washington. He is the great man to imitate. He only lied when it was necessary.

Now Jesus did not say its reason. He did not say that the Old Testament was the light of the world either. He did not say that the Bible was the light of the world. He did not say that the church was going to be the light of the world. What did he say - he said, his disciples were the light of the world.

II. The Quality Of This Light

John 1:4 we notice these words - that life was the light. Christ was the light of men. Not primarily because he brought miracles. The people sat in darkness and this great light came. And we shine by what we are.

The Bible says in John 5:35 that John The Baptist was a burning and a shining light. The light that costs you nothing is hardly worth the giving. John's light burns down in the socket. John was passionate, devoted, burning light.

Another thing about the quality of this light I want you to notice - he said it was like a city set on a hill. V. 14. Jesus always used good illustrations. These Jews were looking across the Sea of Galilee. There were a number of cities, towns across there. And they were placed on hills. Well, there is a suggestion about that. Your light - or you are not light. Now a city set on a hill - you can't hide it. Well, neither can you do that with a lamp. You light a lamp and you don't hide it - you put it on a lamp stand, and it gives forth light.

III. Where Is The Light To Be Placed - V. 15

He says you do not put it under a bushel - but you put it on a lamp stand. The hint here is that the light will reach a larger circle - even out to the streets and to the strangers.

It is like the watchmen in the old city who used to move through the streets

at nightfall. And cry "hang out your lights -~~hang out your lights~~".

So Christians are admonished everywhere to ~~hang out their lights~~ so that people might find their way to the Saviour.

First of all this (exposes darkness.) The room may be dark - but you cut on the light switch. The road may be dark, but you cut on the headlights of a car on a dark country road. And it makes manifest the things that are. We are not truly aware of darkness sometimes until light appears. Matthew says the people that sat in darkness saw great light. That is the coming of Christ - the Gospel. Expose the darkness and the life of this world. This provides a contrast and the Gospel does that. Everyone who is a Christian does that - the light exposes the hidden things of darkness and the whole world then is divided between children of light and children of darkness. Light exposes this and it is inevitable.

Every true revival has always had this effect. The number of people in any area will discover that the light will shut out the darkness in their hearts and lives. They thrive in darkness and somehow or other they cannot stand the light.

John 3 - this is the condemnation that light is come into the world. And men love darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

Now this was the ultimate cause of the Pharisees with the Lord Jesus Christ. There were those who claimed to be experts at religious life. And yet they really hated him and persecuted him because he was pure and clean and he revealed the darkness that was in their hearts.

When a Christian lets the light shine and places it in the right place - it will explain the cause of the darkness. That is where it becomes so practical

The great thinkers of today are baffled at what is wrong in the world. Christians have the light which explains the situation. The sole cause of the trouble in the world at this moment is man's estrangement from God. Every difficulty in the world can be traced back to sin. Men love darkness rather than light. Man has a consciousness that warns him - he knows things are wrong. Why does he do it - because he likes it. The trouble with the man is not intellect but it is nature - the whole passion - the dominating thing in his life. He is subject to the passions, lusts, desires - and these things bewilder and bring about frustration. And cause men to give up in despair.

When you think about where to place this light and how to cause it to shine - you do not stop there because we know that light not only exposes darkness but it shows and provides the way out of darkness. This is where every Christian should be thrilled about his task. Light brings about the need of man getting back to God.

IV. Bushels To Avoid - V. 15

We are instructed not to put the light under the bushel. That is it would be foolish for us to think about lighting a lamp and covering up its rays, and placing it beneath a bushel. You are familiar with a bushel basket in which you have corn and potatoes. Now the purpose of lighting the candle is frustrating if you are merely lighting it to cover it up.

How many of God's children have placed bushels on the light on their daily testimony.

What are some of the bushels that you have covered your testimony with.
Uncharitable speech, murmuring complaints, unforgiving spirits, etc.

Once in awhile we say - he was a good man. ..but. Or, she is a good woman
....only -- and then they mention some of the bushels in their life that have
covered the light.

Now Jesus said, let your light shine.

The contrast with the bushel is the lamp stand. It is not under a bushel
but on a stand. It is a good thing for a man to take the bushel off of his light.
And to get rid of that bushel. Whether it be strong drink - let him conquer it.
Whatever it may be - let him destroy it. Don't hide your lamp under a bushel.
If the salt has lost its saltiness - what good is it. Jesus said men never hide
their lights. For if you put light under a bushel - it will get little air and
will soon burn out.

Light is something that you are. You can never hide the light.

A traveler on a dark stormy night visited a light house. While standing
there looking on the keeper boasted about the brilliance and the beauty of the
light. And told about how few lights had been built as this particular one.
And the traveler said, that may be so, but he said what if one of these burners
go off during the night. What, say the keeper - go out sir. Oh, he said, look
at the dark stormy sea. You cannot see them but there are ships passing and
re-passing to every point of the compass. And with the light to go out from my
lighthouse - lack of attention - this light in six months from now - news would
arrive from every part of the coast as such ships and crews were lost through
my neglect. No, he said, God forbid such a thing should ever occur. I feel
every night as I look at my burner - as though all the eyes of all the sailors
of the world were looking at my lights and watching me.

If such great care to avoid concern about the care of that natural light -

to light the sailors on their course - what a far great tragedy for us to put a bushel over our lights.

The main object is holy living and this is to glorify your father which is in Heaven.

V. 16 - How is the light to shine. It is to be about the Father's business. Your light is to shine. Whatever ye shall eat, whatsoever things you drink, whatsoever things you do - do all to the glory of God. I Cor. 10:31. God will supply all oil for your lamp. God will certainly need this ready light.

The story of the ten virgins we remember that oil was absolutely essential. Without it it was impossible to get a light.

We are the light of the world. And it will be impossible for men in darkness to get this light. If we do not keep the lamp shining.

Did you ever pause to think how it is on our streets at night - if there were to be no street lights. Then think about how it is in this world without any light. It means to give expression and recognition that God is your Saviour - your Redeemer. And this is what your light is for - to glorify God. You can't afford to hide this light. Because it is supposed to shine - Jesus said look across there and see those cities on the hillside. You just can't hide them.

By your good works you can do this. Matt. 5:16. A minister told of a group of Christians making a report of the business meeting, concerning some work that they had been doing. And at the close of each report, the statement was made - (this work is done for Jesus' sake.)

That is a real thrill as we consider working for Christ just to glorify the

We know that we cannot live without light. It is essential for growth and progress.

Now we are ~~not talking about~~ good works, words, or good intentions - these things can never substitute for good works. A young minister was to be ordained - stating at one point that he was nearly an infidel in his life. There was one argument in favor of Christianity. I could never refuse the insistent conduct of my own father.

A Buddhist was given a New Testament. As he read it, he said, this is the truth of God. The Buddhist then said, truly this book is of God. It tells me things that fit me and gives me the message that I need.

The priest replied, there is nothing to it and I can prove it. Go to America where more people have this book than any other nations, and consider the way the people live, you will see they profess to believe it and yet don't live according to it. There is much truth in the reply of that Buddhist. Our works often put out the light. But some people say my life is my own - and I will live it as I please.

In the (second place) you can get the light out by being loyal to your Christian convictions. This is another way to let your light shine. A man spending some time with a friend said, if I stay any longer - I shall become a Christian in spite of myself.

I remember reading about a young man who went up to a lumber camp. And he worked during the summer. The men were rough and when he returned back home he talked about his experiences. They asked him, what did they say when they found out you were a Christian. He said, they never found it out.

Third, by sharing your faith. I think this is another way in which you can let your light shine. A splendid way - share the light with someone else. This is one of the Christian principles. It was a great trust and a great obligation.

Helen Keller once asked Philip Brooks - tell me what you know of God. We cannot keep silent. Birds are bound to sing. Tides never cease their flow. The sun does not hide its light.

The first Christian missionary to Sweden told those people that he had been sent from God.

They said, show us a miracle. We will believe you. He said, I will show you the greatest of all miracles - a holy life. And he did. He demonstrated - thus sharing the grace of God and letting his light shine.

Do you want your life to count for God.

Getting the light on is the last problem. Let God push the switch and turn the light of salvation on in your life. Let us remember the first thing to be done with a lamp is to light it.

The second thing is to set it where it can be seen.

Third, the third thing the lamp must be fed with oil or it will not keep a light.

Fourth the lamp must be trimmed if it is to give a good light.

One of the martyrs of England when he died said - by God's grace we will
light a candle that shall be seen around the world. What a statement as he
died at the stake.

Let the world see what you are. No one can misunderstand salt and no one
can misunderstand light.

When I think of Lottie Moon giving her life in China. And then after 40
years she had served these people and trusted in God, then for lack of funds -
there was a hard struggle because of famine. She became ill and on her way
back she died on board ship.

Later when they opened her trunk to see if there was anything special in
it - it had nothing in it to amount to anything. Worn out clothes and very few
of them. She had left all she had in China. A host of friends and many Chinese
brothers and sisters in Christ. (She had been light unto those people.)

Some yrs. ago. Some Bystanders mocked a
Chinese Communist about to be executed -
just before the fatal shot rang out he
cried: "yes but I'm dying for a cause,
What are you living for?"

Act like a light - shine.

Houses Palestine Very Dark - open one window 18"
little lamp - gray heat of oil - floating wick - stand -

No such thing Secret Discipline!
Do you wonder about your purpose in life?