

## *Becoming Jesus' Lighthouses*

Matthew 5:11-16

February 18, 2024

Please open your Bibles again today to Matt 5. When I was serving as a state FFA Officer 40 couple years ago, I was driving to a home in Caroline County to spend the night. I was on a back road I'd never been on before and it was well before the days of Waze or GPS. As I drove along in my little Fiesta, suddenly there was a flash under my dash and then my headlights went black. On a road I'd never been on before. With no streetlights. I turned on my flashers to keep from getting hit and they provided enough illumination to creep along until, praise God, another car came up behind me and provided enough light for me to drive the next mile or so to the house. I installed a new fuse the next day and it worked fine ever after. But it's hard to drive or to live without light.

Jesus knew how important light was and had a few things to say about it. If you are able, please stand as we read about them from Matt 5:11-16 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Say light. What a fantastic gift is light! We use it every single day of our lives! As the sun comes up each morning, it dispels the darkness of the night and floods our valley with lots of fresh bright light. Thankfully God not only gave us the light of the sun, moon and stars, but He also gave us means whereby we can have light when none of those are enough. Today we rely on electricity from a line or a battery to light up our lives and how we yell and holler when the power goes out. As the sun sets, our car lights, streetlights, and porchlights come on. We turn on the lights in our kitchens, living rooms and bedrooms so that we can continue to see what we're doing, where we're going, and what's around us. Imagine a world with no light. Sadly, that's what someone endures who is totally blind. Have you ever tried to sneak around the house in the dark and banged into something? Many more accidents happen in the dark than in the light. Many more crimes are committed in the dark. Jesus knew how important light is.

In the same passage that we looked at last week, during the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus told His followers to be the salt of the earth, He also tells us to be the light of the world. (banner) What did He mean by that? The disciples knew that the Messiah would be the light of the world. Way back in Isaiah 9:2, the same chapter that names

Jesus the Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, etc says, “the people walking in darkness have seen a great light.” He’s talking about the future Messiah and in John 9:5, Jesus clearly says, “While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” I John 1:5 tells us that in Him there is no darkness at all. But Jesus knew He wasn’t going to be in the world much longer. And so He commissioned His followers to shine His light in his absence. He passed His torch to His disciples and it has now come down to us if we are His disciples. We have His light to share, if we’re in Jesus, but we must shine it. How can we do that?

Once again, Jesus’ statement comes right after the Beatitudes. So as you and I live out those Beatitudes and demonstrate meekness, humility, purity, mercy, peace, etc we will be shining the light the world so desperately needs. Proverbs 13:9 says, “The light of the righteous shines brightly.” Jesus was talking about dispelling the darkness of evil with the light of righteousness, right living. With God’s good news of love. We shine Jesus’ light by doing His good deeds. By caring for the sick, homeless, and poor, both here and around the world. By loving our own children and grandchildren and those who have no one to love them. By standing up for truth and justice and against hatred, anti-Semitism, and racism. We have a very dark world that needs His light. How many lumens are you shining at? And what would it take to turn up your brightness?

The ocean floor along the Outer Banks is known as the graveyard of the Atlantic. On it lay an estimated 5,000 ships that ran into rocks and other hazards that sunk them. And with them, their cargoes and their crews. Thousands of lives lost at the bottom of the sea because they couldn’t see the rocks. Because the area was so dangerous, lighthouses were built along the coast and still stand attracting tourists and motivating all sorts of selfies. From Corolla to Ocracoke, 5 lighthouses shine out across the darkest nights warning sailors of the hazards. Although most ships are now guided electronically, the lighthouses remind us of the desperate need for light and what happens when there is none!

Friends, we live in the graveyard of the Shenandoah Valley! All around us our friends, family and coworkers are running aground on sin. Pornography and promiscuity, greed and love for money, bitterness and unforgiveness, false gods of popularity, drugs, and etc. And their lives are sinking fast. So many are dying without Jesus! We have the light! We must shine Jesus! Share Him and His good news of forgiveness and new life! His joy and love. America is dark and getting darker! The whole nation needs us to be lighthouses! Turn up your lumens!

We must shine Jesus’ light! That they may see our good works and glorify us. Whoops. Not us. Glorify God! That is our goal! That’s the whole reason we shine Jesus’ light! Not to bring attention to ourselves and what we’ve done, but to Jesus who lives through us. Do your deeds glorify you? Or God? Do they shine light for others? Although lighthouses are painted very beautifully, they weren’t built to look

pretty. They were built to shine. I may be the handsomest man ever, but that's not my purpose. My purpose and yours is to shine Jesus' light. The brighter the light, the less of the lighthouse you see. He must become greater, I must become less! Too often we get distracted and forget our purpose, as individuals and as even as a church. Our purpose is not to feel good or look pretty or just to have fun, it is to save souls by shining Jesus' light and to glorify God!

Thankfully, we have now lighthouses all up and down the east coast and 18,600 of them all around the world. And so should we be. Just like salt needs to be scattered throughout our world and our culture, we need Christians to shine Jesus' light wherever we may be. Wherever you are. Is your home brighter because you're in it? Your workplace? Your school? Your community? Brighten the corner where you are.

Imagine taking the light from a lighthouse and putting it at the base of the building inside its walls. That would be stupid. It would contradict the whole purpose of a lighthouse. That's what Jesus said. Don't put your light under a bushel. Don't bury it. Do we go to church on Sunday and put Jesus on top and then go to work or school on Monday and stuff Him down inside? That's not a lighthouse. Sometimes we may be ashamed of Jesus depending on the crowd we're with. That's when we need to shine the brightest! The darker the night, the more need for light! Don't cover your light with a bushel basket! Jesus said if anyone is ashamed of me and my word in this adulterous and sinful generation of him also will the Son of Man be ashamed when He comes in the glory of the Father with the holy angels. Don't be that guy! Shine His light! Someone needs it! Even if you don't think so. If you know Jesus, you have the light that can keep people from wrecking their lives and their eternities. People say, "Religion is personal, between me and God. We don't want to offend anyone." While our faith is very personal, it should never be private! Jesus commanded us to shine His light!

I know some don't want it. Jesus said men love darkness rather than light because their deeds are evil. Job 24:13 says, "There are those who rebel against the light." Roaches run from the light. But moths are attracted to it! You know some roaches and I do too. Shine anyway! They rebelled against Jesus! They tried to snuff Him out. They could not! He's like one of those birthday candles you can't blow out! Sometimes you will be hated or even persecuted for shining your light. Shine anyway! Someone needs it and you need to glorify God with your good deeds even if no one ever appreciates your light. Only in heaven will we know how many lives we guided to safety. Lighthouses never know how many ships they help each night, they just shine. Some will ignore the light, some will even run from it. Our job is to shine anyway!

Jesus said a city on a hill cannot be hidden. Front Royal is not even on a hill, but I can still see its glow at night over the mountain. A city is a collection of many lights and

reminds us of the church, a collection of Jesus' lights. We can shine more brightly together and we can't be hidden nor should we be! Our candlelighting service at Christmas reminds us of the power of each candle when they are all added together. Imagine the church in America shining with over 200 million Christians! At our Church Board retreat last summer, I gave each participant a flashlight to remind us of our theme this year, the Great Commission. Let us combine our Jesus-lights to be that city on a hill, that lighthouse on a stand that guides others into the harbor of safety and salvation with Jesus Christ. A French scientist named Augustin-Jean Fresnel built the first Fresnel lens that amplified and magnified light and enabled lighthouses to shine further and brighter than ever before. Because it was so effective the Fresnel lens became known as the invention that saved a million ships.

Is that not our calling? To save a million souls? To tell everyone about Jesus? As individual Christians, as a church and as a CBC denomination, we should constantly be evaluating our light and designing ways for it to shine brighter and farther. Churches should plan to strategically infiltrate and light up our communities and our world. That's what sending and supporting missionaries is all about. Reaching unreached people groups. Including that family next door. Jesus said, "Put your light on a stand." The taller the stand, the further it shines. That's why lighthouses are tall! We must lift Jesus up! If He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Himself. If He is not lifted up there will be lots of shipwrecked lives! How can we best lift Him up together and be that city on a hill? Here are 2400 people lined up, not to enter US, but the kingdom of God! To get baptized in Thailand! Since 2017, over 64,000 souls have been saved there and over 4000 churches have been planted. The goal is to establish one in all 84,646 villages! Because someone prayed and someone planned! Along the southern border, Franklin Graham will be starting a crusade Feb 24. What can we do?

Before we close to day, I want us to notice who Jesus was speaking to that day up on the mountain. He wasn't talking to philosophers or priests, or to highly educated professors. He was talking to regular people. Fishermen, bookkeepers, shepherds, farmers, homemakers. How did they light up their world? By connecting to the power source. All light comes from some source. Either by burning wood, or oil, or electricity, or something. In Jesus' day, lamps used olive oil for fuel. Throughout the New Testament, olive oil is a symbol for God's Holy Spirit and those regular disciples became lighthouse beacons by allowing the Holy Spirit to fill them. He enabled them to love and make peace. He enabled them to share Jesus with others. He made them walking talking lighthouses which is what we are called to be. They started in Jerusalem and ended up going all over the world. They passed Jesus' light onto others until it finally came to you and me 2000 years later. With the same brightness and intensity that it had then. What will we do with it?

We cannot shine on our own. We need the Holy Spirit within us! We need His power. You don't need to be super bright mentally, just allow the Holy Spirit to make

you bright spiritually. We know that no light bulb can burn without electricity! It's got to be connected! Plugged in! And so do we! Jesus said apart from me, you can do nothing! You can't shine one candlepower! It's like a cord not plugged in. Keep your connection tight that you might burn bright! We can't live the Beatitudes on our own anyway. We can't be just or good nor do any truly good deeds on our own. Only by and with and through the Holy Spirit empowering us! Mother Teresa once said, "to keep a lamp burning, you have to keep putting oil in it." Give me oil in my lamp, keep me burning...

The brightest lighthouse today is in France. It has 500 million candle power or 6.3 billion lumens and can be seen up to 37 miles away! Oh to be a lighthouse like that for Jesus! Ask Him to make you one. To make you a walking talking lighthouse shining brightly for Him! Are you full of Jesus' spiritual light? If not, come to Him today and connect to the source. And if you are connected, ask Him to turn up your luminosity to light your world.