

Wheelersburg Baptist Church
Sunday Morning Message – December 20, 2015
Let Your Light Shine
Matthew 5:13-16

READ Matthew 5:13-16

¹³ *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.*

¹⁴ *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ 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.*

INTRODUCTION

This is an intriguing section of the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon is Jesus’ teaching to His disciples concerning kingdom living. He begins this sermon by teaching the characteristics of true disciples, called the beatitudes. Those who are truly blessed and inherit the kingdom are poor in spirit, mourning over that poverty, humble and meek, hungry and thirsty for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers and persecuted. The world has never been a friend to the true disciple. Then Jesus gives these two short parables that teach his disciples the effect His disciples will have the world. Using the analogy of salt and light, He teaches all of His disciples, including us, about our purpose in this world.

- I. The Purpose of Our Salvation – to preserve, season, and let our light shine for the glory of God.
- II. The Temptation: to hide our light because of the fear of man
- III. The Command: Let our light shine by overcoming fear through love
- IV. The Application

I have four points this morning. First, we are going to look closely at the purpose of our salvation. Secondly, we are going to examine the temptation to miss that purpose by giving way to the fear of man and hiding our light. Third, we will look at the command to overcome that fear and let our light shine by overcoming that fear through love. Lastly I will share a few practical applications on how to let your light shine.

I. THE PURPOSE OF OUR SALVATION

First, let’s consider the purpose of our salvation. Jesus uses two analogies, salt and light. This passage is about God’s purpose for His children. Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth” What is the purpose of salt? Salt is used to preserve and season. This world is decaying and decomposing because of the law of sin and death. It is corrupt, lost and tasteless. As God’s

people, we can bring preservation, freshness and good flavor to what would otherwise be rotting, decaying, and tasteless. This is our calling and purpose in this life; to have a preserving and seasoning influence on those in our sphere of influence. We are a primary way that God expresses His grace and mercy to this world.

We need to realize that God has saved us for reasons much greater than just meeting our own personal needs. Why does God save rebel sinners and make them His children? What is the purpose for my salvation? It ultimately is to bring Him glory. Ephesians 2:8-9 states that we have been “saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift, not from works, so that no one can boast. And then Paul states the purpose for God giving us this free gift in verse 10 – For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them.

God is saving a people for Himself and has prepared good works for them to do that will result in the praise of His glorious grace. As people are touched by these good works, many will respond in worship and give praise to God. God’s purpose is for us to be a preservative in our daily relationships and activities, and also wants us to bring zest, tastiness, and great joy to people’s lives. Meat without preservative rots. Food without seasoning is bland. People left to themselves will rot and decay and become hopeless. God saves us, and through the power of His Spirit calls and enables us to give this joy, life, love that He has given us to others. We become the conduit of God’s grace and kindness to the people in our sphere of influence. This is why He saved us -to be that influence. In the same way that presence of salt preserves and seasons, our presence brings God’s nature and influence into other people’s lives.

The apostle Paul states it this way in Titus 2:11-14

For the grace of God has appeared with salvation for all people, instructing us to deny godlessness and worldly lusts and to live in a sensible, righteous, and godly way in the present age, while we wait for the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to cleanse for Himself a people for His own possession, eager to do good works.

Eager to do good works. Good works can’t save us. Jesus’ work alone is sufficient and complete to save us. In fact, the Bible teaches us that our good works apart from God are considered as nasty, filthy rags. There is nothing we can do that will increase our worthiness before God. However, if we have received this free gift of salvation based on Jesus death and resurrection, we have been filled with His Spirit and now have the capacity, calling, obligation, and privilege of doing works in this world that will cause other people to glorify and worship the God that saved us. We are His children. He owns us. We are also his bondservants, and His work for us is to bring love and joy and blessing and mercy and grace and forgiveness, and gentleness and goodness that we have freely received to others. We are even to bless and love our enemies. Often the sovereign Lord uses our works to preserve people from the effects of sin and decay and call them to repentance and faith in Christ. They then become members of His family and are recreated to be true worshipers of this amazing and awesome God. This is His ultimate purpose...to have a people that will worship and glorify Him forever.

I exhort and encourage you to watch and pray and discover the good works that God has for you to perform. Who can you love? Where can you influence the outcome by displaying mercy and unconditional love? What kind words can you say? Who might you offer to pray with? What words of encouragement might you offer that will season a flavorless drab situation? He has specific works like this prepared for us to do.

Then Jesus says that we are not only salt, we are the light of the world. This current world is in darkness and under the dominion of the prince of darkness. Unsaved people hide and cover their lives in shame and guilt. They fill their lives with the vain pursuit of money, fame, fortune, and fleshly pleasure. They are fearful, skeptical, resentful, self-centered, and often rebelling against the One who gave them life. Sin isolates and causes deep loneliness as well. To these people in darkness, blind to the truth and real life, we are called to be a light. We are called to dispel that darkness that surrounds them. We are called to do good works that express the love and mercy of God, often to people who want nothing to do with Him and His glory.

We are called to love in the midst of hate. We are called to forgive in the midst of mistreatment. We are called to be kind in the midst of harshness. We are called to speak the truth in love in the midst of lies and slander. We are to encourage people who slander us. We are called to care for people who only care about themselves and may never appreciate and acknowledge what we do for them.

Listen to Paul in the letter to the Philippians:

Philippians 2:14-16

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.

We are to shine as lights as we cease our complaining and grumbling. Beloved, we are to be without blame, innocent, and without blemish among crooked and twisted people. Realize that as we respond like Christ, we shine a light that exposes evil. Our lives will cause a conviction of sin. Patient, kind and loving among impatient, harsh people. This takes the grace of God. This is a supernatural empowered life. This is a dependent, humble life. We really are just mirrors that reflect the true light who is Christ.

II Corinthians 4:5-7

⁵For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

II. THE TEMPTATION – TO HIDE OUR LIGHT BECAUSE OF FEAR

So I hope you are beginning to get excited and that this message is increasing your desire to influence those around you. I hope that you want to shine the light of Jesus so people can see your good works and glorify the Father. Perhaps you are thinking of some people that you would like to begin to engage, and serve, and love, and offer some kind words and

encouragement. Here's what often happens when I want to step out and take some risk by loving other people. I sometimes become afraid of how they might respond and back off.

In this sermon by Jesus, He warns us that this is inappropriate for His disciples. In fact, He says that if we cease being a preservation and seasoning to this world, we have become useless. He goes on to say that it makes no sense to place a bushel basket over a light. A lamp is meant to be displayed and be seen and bring light to all in the house. It is only useful when it is shining bright and placed in a prominent place.

This reluctance is called people pleasing. Biblically it's called the fear of man, and it's a trap and a snare that will hinder you from fulfilling your divine purpose

Proverbs 29:25

Fear of man proves to be a snare, but whoever trusts the Lord is kept safe

For sure, we must be aware that not everyone will commend us for our kindness, forgiveness, unconditional love, and expressions of mercy. When we begin to display loving and kind behavior, it shines a light on selfishness, self-righteousness and judging. It exposes prejudiced and hateful people. Consider the response of the religious leaders to Jesus. Because of His kindness and love for sinners, the religious self-righteous people of the day were threatened and infuriated. An unregenerate person is offended by unconditional love and forgiveness given to those who don't deserve it. They often see it as weakness. Also, those who want to live in immorality will not appreciate a person who lives a holy life. Such examples of integrity and righteous living expose the darkness. Just to state it clearly, many people will not be pleased when you choose to follow Christ and live a holy life. And when that happens, it is tempting to back down and go along with the crowd. Paul warns us against succumbing to this pressure:

Ephesians 5:7-17

⁷Therefore do not become partners with them; ⁸for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." ¹⁵Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, ¹⁶making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. ¹⁷Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

Our calling is to love people, to serve people, to be kind, to be patient, to be understanding, to be quick to listen and slow to speak. It is also to give a reason for our lives when asked. We must also to be clear and not ashamed of our faith and commitment to Christ.

So if you relate to the challenge, you probably want to know the antidote for the fear of man. How do we practically overcome the temptation to be people pleasers, and not take a stand for Christ? How can we be fearless in our practice and resolve to openly love even our enemies, and

actively do good to all men? What is it that will help us overcome our fear and shame and boldly share the love of Christ with others? Well, here is the antidote to fear:

I John 4:16-19

16 And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him. 17 In this way, love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. 18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 19 We love because he first loved us.

The cure is the most powerful force in the world. It is the mature and perfect love of God. Fear is rooted in embarrassment and shame. Sin caused Adam and Eve to hide and cover themselves. I don't want others to really know and see me. I don't want to be vulnerable. Fear wants others to like me, and cannot handle the thought of rejection and public disgrace and humiliation. Fear always focuses on self. On the contrary, love always focuses on what is best for others, regardless of what happens to self. As we mature in our comprehension and experience in the love of God, we come to deeply know that because God is for us, and because He sent His Son to die for us, and because we know that He is all powerful, and that He is able and willing and committed to keeping us from all harm. As I mature in the love of God, I understand that any suffering that He allows in my life is for my ultimate good and His ultimate glory. This perfect love from God frees me to take risk and be bold in my love for others. As I grow in the love of God, it matters not if others reject me. Because I know and experience the full and complete acceptance of my God and Savior, I have no concern about what others think about me. My passion and focus is the glory of my Savior through His love expressed through me to them. My desire is to always please and obey Him. I need not defend myself, for I know He is the righteous judge and will provide my defense. I need only love others. Peter said it this way:

1 Peter 3:14

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. "Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened."

As Paul faced his impending death, He knew that he had to pass the baton. In his letter to his junior associate Timothy, he addressed this challenge of timidity and fear of man.

II Timothy 1:6-8

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. ⁷ For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. ⁸ So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God,

III. THE COMMAND: Let Your Light Shine

Brothers and sisters, if we want to see God receive the glory due His name from those we are with, we must take this commandment to heart and obey it. Jesus wants us to let our lights shine brightly and fully among the people we are with day-to-day. He has designed specific good works of kindness, love, encouragement, and even times admonishment and truthful speaking to those we are with. We need not fear. We only need to love. Perfect love casts out fear. God

has not given us a spirit of fear, but He has given us His supernatural power, and He has loved us completely and unconditionally, and we also have the fruit of self-control that enable us to rule over our feelings in inadequacy and fears of failure. This is not the time to be timid and afraid. This is the time for us to rise up and be bold in our love for God and others. We need not be ashamed of Christ and the gospel, for the good news of Christ has the power to set men free from sin and take them to heaven. And here is the promise that is inherent in the command to let our light shine; People will see our good works and glorify our heavenly Father. If we truly have a passion for the glory of God, we will take off the bushel basket, and let our light shine on others through loving them, speaking the truth with them, listening to them, being with them, serving them, and praying with and for them.

This is our privilege. This is our purpose. This is our calling as His people.

I Peter 2:9-12

⁹ *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.* ¹⁰ *Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.* ¹¹ *Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul.* ¹² *Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.*

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Here are some practical ways to put this message into practice.

1. Consider who is in your sphere of influence. It is typically related to the roles that you have in life. A first step in how to let your light shine is to make a list of those you are with day-to-day, and begin to pray for them regularly.
2. If you are married, this begins with your spouse. You have multitudes of practical ways to put this into practice. Your light shines when you love your spouse unconditionally, regardless of how they treat you. This takes an abundance of God's grace. Your light shines primarily in what you do, and at times in what you won't do. It will always be a balance of grace and truth. It takes great humility and dependence on the Lord to know not only what to do at times, but also know how to do it. For husbands, it will be expressed in the way they love their wives; patience, kindness, not being rude, not seeking your own way, practical service in the home, not being a controlling person, but a servant leader. It is in studying and knowing your wife and caring for her in light of that knowledge. For wives it will be in the way you respect, follow, and obey your husband. It will be in how you without fear, submit to him as unto the Lord. It will also be in how you express your first love and allegiance to Jesus as well.
3. If you are a parent, it will be in the way that you nurture, love, and discipline your children. With younger children, it will be in deep involvement, sacrifice, and hard work in investing time in their care and rearing. With older and adult children, it will be in

listening to them, understanding them, supporting them, and offering your wisdom in the context of someone who loves and cares for them unconditionally and deeply. It will be as you are straightforward and direct at times, but always in a gracious and kind spirit and demeanor. It will be in the way that you pray and commit their souls into the care of God to take care of them and affirming that He is ultimately is the One that they will give account to. It is being available, always understanding and long-suffering at times.

4. If you employed, it will be in the way that you are diligent and committed to being a great employee. It will be in the gratitude you express, and being content and thankful for your job and your wages. It will be in the way that refuse to participate in whining, complaining, gossiping, and other non-edifying activity. It will be in the way you communicate with others in respect and kindness, yet always honest and open. It will be the gracious spirit that you express when others overstep their authority and place, violate your space, and are not loyal to your trust. It is in your perseverance and long-suffering and willingness to forgive 7 x 70. It is in the soft answer that return to people who are at times harsh and unreasonable. This is letting your light shine. When you are honored and commended, it is humbly and graciously directing the praise and credit to the Lord.
5. As an extended family member, we ought always be known as the one in the family who is happy, content, reasonable, easy to get along with, kind, loving, gentle, helpful, faithful, dependable, available, honest, real, humble, forgiving, and willing to give.

It is in the context of relationships with other people that we have opportunity to let our light shine – fearlessly, shamelessly, humbly, and with great joy and contentment. It is being aware and present with every single person we meet. As we look at this purpose and commandment, and the great opportunity before us, it will drive us to our knees to ask God for He alone can give, and will abundantly supply – His help and grace. Let's pray right now for that provision.