

## DARKNESS TO LIGHT

“Hide It Under a Bushel??” Matthew 5:14-16

December 31, 2023

**INTRO.:** How many here know what 2024 will bring? Nobody here can predict the future. You and I do not know the future, but we know who holds the future. Amen! Are you and I willing to pray and seek God’s will for this next year? What goals does God have for His children in 2024? We are going to conclude our Advent series, **DARKNESS TO LIGHT**, with this question, **“Hide it under a bushel?”** Jesus begins His well-known Sermon on the Mount with a series of sayings referred to as *The Beatitudes*. He begins each statement with the words, *“Blessed are,”* and concludes each with a promise. Over the years pastors have spent months preaching through the Beatitudes, but this morning we want to look at what Jesus says immediately after the Beatitudes, as we look to answer the question, *“Hide it under a Bushel?”*. I believe this portion of Scripture provides us with guidance for what we should aim for in 2024. I would like us to read the Beatitudes and the section of Scripture we are looking at this morning for the Beatitudes truly lead into this next section.

**Matthew 5:1–16** Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying: “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. **7** Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. **8** Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. “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. “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Four things we want to look at this morning:

**YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** v. 14  
**SO**  
**DO NOT HIDE THE LIGHT** v. 15  
**DO LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE** v. 15b-16a  
**SO THAT**  
**THEY MAY PRAISE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN** v. 16b

**YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD** v. 14

Now I realize that this passage begins with the statement *“you are the salt of the earth,”* but for this morning we are going to concentrate on the statement, *“you are the light of the world,”* since that is our Advent theme. I will say that the two of these, salt and light go together.

Salt was an extremely valuable commodity during New Testament times. Romans held that, except for the sun, nothing was more valuable than salt. Roman soldiers were paid in salt, and it was from this practice that the expression *“not worth his salt originated.”*

Salt was used for many things and there are many applications, but I believe, as other commentators say, that the primary emphasis here is preservation. At the moment a person comes to faith in Christ the Holy Spirit takes up residence, and so the believer represents God’s presence on earth. (John MacArthur) So, the Lord works through the believer to be a preserving influence in our world, making a difference in the moral and spiritual climate in society.

This is all I will say about salt at this point, although I am sure it will come up in a future message. There are some very important things to consider as we look at the phrase, *“you are the light of the world.”*

In the statements *“you are the salt of the earth,”* and *“you are the light of the world,”* “you” is an emphatic pronoun. This is not a command; it is a statement of fact. Every true follower of Christ is the light of the world.

Last week we looked at Jesus’ declaration, *“I am the light of the world.”* This literally means, *“I, I am.”* Jesus is saying that He, and He alone is the light of the world. He is claiming deity. He said this statement just after the Feast of

Tabernacles, where they would have a nightly lamp-lighting ceremony to commemorate God's presence, direction, and protection when He provided the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire when they left the bondage of Egypt. Jesus is telling them that He is our light, that every believer can be assured of Jesus' presence, direction, and protection.

"*I am,*" is a present tense, which means that Jesus is continually being the light of the world.

Furthermore, in the account of Jesus healing the man blind from birth, Jesus is asked by the disciples, "Who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus' response:

**John 9:3-5** "Neither this man nor his parents sinned," said Jesus, "but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life. **4** As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. **5** While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

So, when Jesus ascended into heaven, who was left to be that light?

**Ephesians 5:8** For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.

"*live:*" means to walk, describes a way of life. It is also a present tense command. This tells us that every believer is to walk daily, continually as a reflection of Jesus Christ, the light of the world. When Jesus says to the disciples that they are the light of the world, He isn't saying that they are now god, but that they are His representatives while here on earth. Listen to the Apostle Paul's prayer in his letter to the church at Colosse.

**Colossians 1:9-14** For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. **10** And we pray this in order that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, **11** being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and joyfully **12** giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. **13** For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, **14** in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

The second thing we see in this statement, "*you are the light of the world,*" is that the word, "**you,**" is a plural pronoun, referring to every believer, and I believe that it refers to the whole body of Christ, the church. This body of believers is to be the *salt of the earth* and the *light of the world*. This is a group project, and it reminds us that we need one another. It's why we stress that not only does every believer need to be involved and serving in a local church that teaches and preaches the Word of God (we can't just say that our church is out in nature where we can avoid the hypocrites: yes, we can worship God there but it can't replace the gathered body of believers, the church), but also every believer needs to have a smaller group of believers with whom they meet with regularly to do life together: to encourage, to challenge, to pray with each other.

The third thing we see in this statement, "*you are the light of the world,*" is that it is in the present tense. As believers we never take a break from being this light. Jesus knew that we couldn't do this on our own because we are sinners by birth and sinners by nature, so He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell us the moment of our conversion. Right before He ascends into heaven this is what He tells the apostles, who were still thinking that Jesus would establish His kingdom on earth now.

**Acts 1:7-8** He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We are able to be the light of the world because we have the Holy Spirit residing within us and He makes us a reflection of the light of the world, the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't ever think you can do this on your own. There is no one here that is good enough, consistent enough, or powerful enough to be this light in a very dark world apart from the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and the body of Christ.

**ILLUS.:** This reminds me of the statement we here in this area of the state and further west, "We are...Penn State." They yell this at football games, you see it on their sports merchandise. I want us to walk out today reminded that we are...the light of the world. To be that we need the Holy Spirit, the Word of God, and one another.

**YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD  
SO**

## **DO NOT HIDE YOUR LIGHT**

**Matthew 5:14-15a** “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.”

“*A city on a hill:*” many of the cities were on hills which provided a source of protection. Often the buildings were made of white limestone, so when the sun shined on them, they could be easily seen. (D.A. Carson) At night the inhabitants would light their lamps, which would make the city easily visible. With all these lights it would make a glow around the whole city. So, whether in the day or at night you knew where this city was located. There was no way the city could be hidden.

“*neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl:*” It makes no sense to light a lamp and then hide the light. The word bowl is the word “*peck-measure* (1/4 of a bushel). It’s where we get the words of the song:

This little light of mine,  
I’m gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine,  
I’m gonna let it shine.  
This little light of mine,  
I’m gonna let it shine,  
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

Hide it under a bushel, No  
I’m gonna let it shine.  
Hide it under a bushel, No  
I’m gonna let it shine.  
Hide it under a bushel, No  
I’m gonna let it shine,  
let it shine, let it shine, let it shine

This light of salvation is not meant to be a secret, for a select few. This should be proclaimed from the rooftops.

**Luke 2:10–11** But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for **all** the people. **11** Today in the town of David a Savior has been born **to you**; he is Christ the Lord.

This was the angel’s announcement to a group of shepherds, not the most well thought of or respected professions of the day. Are you glad that this baby, the Messiah, came for you?!!

Every believer is the light of the world, but it is possible for the light to become dim or hidden in how we live, in what we say or don’t say. This light can become ineffective because of sin and disobedience to the Lord. If you and I do not spend time in the Word of God and prayer the light can become hidden.

## **YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

**SO**

**DO NOT HIDE YOUR LIGHT...**

## **DO LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE**

As is the case in so many times in Scripture, if we are told not to do something then we are told to do something instead. Contrary to what some think the Bible is not filled with just a list of don’ts.

**Matthew 5:14-16a** You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men

“*instead:*” there is a change of direction. You don’t light a lamp and put it under a bushel, instead...

“*put it on its stand:*” present tense. This is the normal practice of anyone who has a lamp. You put it where it can be seen.

“*gives light:*” present tense. This light continues to give light to everyone in the house. If you turn a light on in the room nobody can escape that light unless they leave the room. Does the world see the light of Jesus through us by our words and actions? You and I never get a break or go on vacation from being the light of the world.

“*shine:*” this is a command

**ILLUS:** When I was playing on an athletic team at the Bible college I attended my coaches would remind me that when I took the court or the field that I didn’t just represent myself, but I also represented the school and the Lord. When I was on the wrestling team, we had several matches against non-Bible college teams (doesn’t mean there weren’t Christians on the other team) and I wanted to do my best while on the mat and also be a testimony to whoever was my opponent. After the match we had an opportunity to talk with the person we wrestled against.

What type of light are you and I shining?

## **YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

**SO**

**DO NOT HIDE YOUR LIGHT**

**DO LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE**

**SO THAT**

### **THEY MAY PRAISE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN v. 16b**

As a believer my goal isn’t to get people to notice me!

**Matthew 5:14-16** “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

“*good deeds:*” The word “*good*” used here does not emphasize quality – though that is obviously important – as it does attractiveness, beautiful appearance. Letting our light shine before men allows them to see our good works, the beauty the Lord has worked in us. To see good works in us is to see Christ in us.” (John MacArthur)

Our good works aren’t so that others will notice us. The Pharisees were good at that, and Jesus gives a warning.

**Matthew 6:1** “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

My life, your life is meant to point people to Jesus. Our lives give support to our words. It isn’t just our actions or just our words, but it is both our actions and our words.

**Romans 10:17 (NASB)** So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.

Both these statements, “*you are the salt of the earth,*” and “*you are the light of the world,*” remind me that we are not to isolate ourselves from the world. We are to engage the world, sharing the gospel by using both our words and actions. As a light our life is to be visible in a world of darkness. We are not to retreat from our engagement with those who need Jesus.

In John 17 we have Jesus’ prayer and this is part of what He prays:

**John 17:15–19** My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. **16** They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. **17** Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. **18** As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. **19** For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.

“*praise:*” to make manifest or visible” When we **shine** our **light** before others by living righteously, we are making visible the character of the Father. (Stuart Weber)

It is interesting to note that this is the first time Matthew calls God, Father. He uses this designation for God 45 times in the gospel. This speaks of a personal relationship with God.

## **YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**

**SO**

**DO NOT HIDE YOUR LIGHT**

**DO LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE  
SO THAT  
THEY MAY PRAISE YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN**

**SO WHAT???**

I believe the video that we showed just before the message relates very well to this message. Are you and I willing to ask God what His will is for us in 2024?

Pray:

\*For opportunities to share Jesus

\*The ways God would want me to use in reaching out

\*For the ways God would direct me to serve my family, church, and neighborhood/community

**GOALS FOR 2024:**

\*Reading & studying God's Word (Bible reading plan)

\*Prayer (journal, time, plan)

\*Sharing the gospel (who, how, and when)