



Matthew 5:14–16

14 “You are the light of the world. A town built 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 others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Reflection

I'm going to lead into this passage with a verse we're already familiar with, Matthew 4:16 which is quoting Isaiah 9:

16 the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.”

In Jesus the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death, a great light has dawned. Jesus confirms this in John 8 when he says ‘I am the light of the world.’ But perhaps in our passage today Jesus is thinking that he’s soon going to be taken out of the world and that’s why

he tells his disciples and us that 'you are the light of the world.'

Working with Jesus' metaphor a little, it might be helpful to think of things in the following terms. When Jesus came into the world he was a bit like the sun, who dawned and then shone brightly overhead, but then night came he was gone, with the promise of coming again soon in the morning. Now when the sun goes down the moon comes out. The moon is a bit like the church. The moon shines too, but it only shines because it reflects the sun's light. The church is like the moon, reflecting the sun's light until the sun returns.

And that's where Jesus starts in our passage today isn't it? He starts with the

church, with all the members of the kingdom of God, with all Christians together. 'You are the light of the world, a town or city on a hill.' Together, unmistakably, and strikingly Christians project light and hope into the dark world around us. We reflect Jesus into a world living under the shadow of death, to people all around us who are living in darkness, and through us they see his great light. That's the imagery of Jesus' words in this passage – so now three questions. What is this light? How does it shine? And why does it shine? What? How? And Why?

Well firstly, what? What is light? Now at the risk of stating the obvious 'light helps people to see.' Christians are the light of the world in that we enable people to see. We enable them to see clearly for the first

time. Through the good news of the gospel people blind to their own sin, people groping around in the darkness of Satan, sin and death, can now see. Through the light that we shine they see Jesus, and this enables them to leave a life lived under the shadow of certain death, to enter his glorious light, and enjoy his promise of eternal life, changing forever both their present reality and their future.

So if light helps people to see Jesus, to see clearly for the first time, then how does our light shine? Secondly, how? Our passages has two images and then the answer. The first image is that of a city on a hill. Not an individual hiding in a cave, but the Christian church, unified, prominent, and boldly positioned for the whole world to see as a beacon for Jesus. That's who

we are as Christians in the world, that's how our light is to go out. But the next image is much more intimate, did you notice it? In verse 15, we're a lamp in a household. We're to be lights for Jesus as part of God's glorious churching beaming out together to the world but also individually in our homes, to our families and extended families in the way we live and speak and love them. Two images and then an answer. How? Well the images teach us 1) prominently as the church in our culture, and 2) intimately and personally as a witness to your family, but specifically how? Verse 16 has the answer:

‘let your light shine before others,
that they may see your good deeds.’

How does our light shine? How can we

shine brighter for Jesus? How can our world and our families be flooded with his light? Through our good deeds. This means through sharing the gospel (which is the greatest of good deeds), but also through living the gospel out in our world just as we've seen in the beatitudes and in the image of Christians being the salt of the earth.

What? How? And now why? Why shine the light of the gospel of Jesus Christ into our dark and dying world through our words and our deeds? The very end of verse 16 gives us the answer. So that people may glorify our Father in heaven. We do it for his glory. We do it so that he might be praised, not that we might be praised but that he might be praised. We do good deeds so that people might see our precious Fa-

ther for who he is and that he might be glorified by them through us. We do good deeds so that people might come to faith through them, and glorify our heavenly Father right alongside us.

It's such a wonderful image isn't? Light flooding our culture and light flooding our homes and people everywhere coming to faith in our Lord and praising him with one voice. The darkness retreating, fear of death melting away, and the joy and certainty of eternal life revolutionising the way communities of people, both big and small, live in the today. This is the coming of the kingdom of God of which you are a part.

Think

How will it change the way you live today? Are you an active part of that city on the hill? Are you shining brightly as a part of your church? Are you working with your brothers and sisters in Christ to collectively be a light, to be an attractive alternative to our city? And what about your family? Have you covered the lamp that God has placed in your household? Is work leaving time for your children? Do you get home in time to read to them stories about Jesus and pray with them before they go to bed? Is Sunday church time for your family, a time that's blocked out in your diary never to be replaced – for the good of your family? Do you love your wife as Christ loves his church, do you lay your life down for her daily? Or is the lamp that God has placed

in your household covered over? Please think about these things this morning as you start out into your day.

Pray

Then pray to our heavenly Father. Did you know in today's passage it's the first time that Matthew refers to God as our Father? How unspeakable it is that we can call God, who dwells in unapproachable light, our Father! How unspeakable it is that Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords is our brother – the privilege, the love shown to us at being adopted into their family! Pray about that. Then pray that we might shine for them, shine to their glory, and shine among the people of this earth like stars in the dark night sky as Paul says so beautifully in Philippians 2.

See you again tomorrow.