

A Journey with Christ the Messiah You Are the Light of the World

Matt. 5:14-16

INTRODUCTION:

This morning we are continuing a series that I have entitled *A Journey with Christ the Messiah*. In the last several weeks we have embarked on a journey through both the Old and the New Testaments with the purpose of discovering Christ the Messiah that is written there. We have looked at Old Testament prophecies and saw Jesus fulfilling all of the Messianic prophecies concerning Him. We have looked at His birth, His miracles, and His seven "I AM" proclamations. We have examined His death, burial, and resurrection from the dead and the significance of those events.

Of late we have been looking at Jesus' teachings through the parables that He taught during His ministry and trying to apply them to our lives. Our parable this morning was taught by Jesus to His disciples during His sermon on the mount. Jesus told His disciples that they were the light of the world.

All Stand and Read Scripture

Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB)

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

As we prepare to continue this journey, let's bow in a word of prayer.

Prayer

Let's continue the journey!

This morning I would like to share with you a story that was being circulated on the internet back in 2009. By pure coincidence the author's name was Wayne. It is entitled **"The Old Phone"**.

ILLUSTRATION:

When I was quite young, my father had one of the first telephones in our neighborhood. I remember the polished, old case fastened to the wall. The shiny receiver hung on the side of the box. I was too little to reach the phone, but used to listen with fascination when my mother talked to it.

Then I discovered that somewhere inside that wonderful device lived an amazing person. Her name was "Information Please" and there was nothing she did not know.

"Information Please" could supply anyone's phone number and the correct time.

My personal experience with the genie-in-a-bottle came one day while my mother was visiting a neighbor. Amusing myself at the tool bench in the basement, I whacked my finger with a hammer, the pain was terrible, but there seemed no point in crying because there was no one home to give sympathy to me.

I walked around the house sucking my throbbing finger, finally arriving at the stairway. The telephone! Quickly, I ran for the footstool in the parlor and dragged it to the landing. Climbing up, I unhooked the receiver and held it to my ear. "Information, please" I said into the mouthpiece just above my head.

A click or two and a small clear voice spoke into my ear. "Information."

"I hurt my finger..." I wailed into the phone, the tears came readily enough now that I had an audience.

"Isn't your mother home?" came the question.

"Nobody's home but me," I blubbered.

"Are you bleeding?" the voice asked.

"No," I replied. "I hit my finger with the hammer and it hurts."

"Can you open the icebox?" she asked.

I said I could.

"Then chip off a little bit of ice and hold it to your finger." said the voice.

After that, I called "Information Please" for everything. I asked her for help with my geography, and she told me where Philadelphia was. She helped me with my math. She told me, that my pet chipmunk, that I had caught in the park just the day before, would eat fruit and nuts.

Then, there was the time Peaty, our pet canary, died. I called, "Information Please" and told her the sad story. She listened, and then said things grown-ups say to soothe a child. But I was not consoled. I asked her, "Why is it that birds should sing so beautifully and bring joy to all families, only to end up as a heap of feathers on the bottom of a cage?"

She must have sensed my deep concern, for she said quietly, "Wayne, always remember that there are other worlds to sing in." Somehow I felt better.

Another day I was on the telephone, "Information Please."

"Information", said in the now familiar voice.

"How do I spell fix?" I asked.

All this took place in a small town in the Pacific Northwest. When I was nine years old, we moved across the country to Boston. I missed my friend very much. "Information Please" belonged in that old wooden box, back home and I somehow never thought of trying the shiny new phone that sat on the table in the hall. As I grew into my teens, the memories of those childhood conversations never really left me.

Often, in moments of doubt and perplexity I would recall the serene sense of security I had then. I appreciated now how patient, understanding, and kind she was to have spent her time on a little boy.

A few years later, on my way west to college, my plane put down in Seattle. I had about a half-hour or so between planes. I spent 15 minutes or so on the phone with my sister, who lived there now. Then without thinking what I was doing, I dialed my hometown Operator and said, "Information Please". Miraculously, I heard the small, clear voice I knew so well. "Information".

I hadn't planned this, but I heard myself saying, "Could you please tell me how to spell fix?"

There was a long pause. Then came the soft spoken answer, "I guess your finger must have healed by now."

I laughed, "So it's really you," I said. "I wonder if you have any idea how much you meant to me during that time?"

"I wonder," she said, "if you know how much your call meant to me. I never had any children and I used to look forward to your calls."

I told her how often I had thought of her over the years and I asked if I could call her again when I came back to visit my sister.

"Please do", she said. "Just ask for Sally".

This puts tears in your eyes doesn't it? You never know when an act of kindness you do for someone will have a lasting effect upon them. God uses situations that may seem small and insignificant to us to work some of His greatest miracles. When we imitate Christ's love and share it with others we are being a light to a world filled with darkness.

In our scripture reading this morning Jesus reminded us that we are to be a light to the world.

Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

This morning I would like to share what Jesus taught about light and darkness and how we can be a light to the world.

BODY:

I. WHAT IS LIGHT AND DARKNESS?

If you recall, just a few weeks ago, we looked at one of Christ's "I AM" statements where He declared "I am the Light of the World."

One of the first questions that might come to mind would be "If Christ is the Light of the World why would He teach that WE are the Light of the World?"

First let's look at what the scriptures written by men through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit tells us about light and darkness.

In the scriptures, light refers to goodness and darkness refers to evil.

Paul explained light and darkness in his letter to the Romans.

Romans 5:12,18-21 (NASB)

¹² Therefore, just as through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned—

¹⁸ So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. ¹⁹ For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous.

When God first created the world it was perfect. There was no sin. Man was righteous. But when sin entered the world through Adam darkness fell upon man. Darkness was the result of sin. The darkness represented the fact that we were no longer righteous. That we had fallen away from God and died spiritually.

Mankind had fallen away from God because of the sin of Adam. But God loved man and desired that they could be made righteous again and be reconciled back to him.

John 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

God loved us so much that He was willing to allow Christ to come to earth and die on the cross as a perfect sacrifice for us. Christ became a light to the world. A light by which we could understand that we were sinners separated from God. A light through which we could learn how to have our sins forgiven. A light through which we could understand how to have our spiritual lives restored and be able to face God in the Final Judgment and be found blameless before Him. A light that encourages us that we can live with our Creator for eternity because of the free gift of Christ.

II. WHAT DOES LIGHT DO?

A second question then might be if I am to be a light to the World, What exactly does light do?

ILLUSTRATION:

Several years ago, a preacher from out-of-state accepted a call to a church in Houston, Texas. Some weeks after he arrived, he had an occasion to ride the bus from his home to the downtown area. When he sat down, he discovered that the driver had accidentally given him a quarter too much change. As he considered what to do, he thought to

himself, "You'd better give the quarter back. It would be wrong to keep it." Then he thought, "Oh, forget it, it's only a quarter. Who would worry about this little amount? Anyway, the bus company gets too much fare; they will never miss it. Accept it as a gift from God and keep it quiet."

When his stop came, he paused momentarily at the door, and then he handed the quarter to the driver and said, "Here, you gave me too much change ..."

The driver, with a smile, replied, "Aren't you the new preacher in town?"

"Yes" he replied. "Well, I have been thinking a lot lately about going somewhere to worship. I just wanted to see what you would do if I gave you too much change. I'll see you at church on Sunday."

Our lives are the only Bible some people will ever read. This is a really scary example of how much people watch us as Christians, and will put us to the test! Be on guard and always remember you carry the name of Christ on your shoulders when you call yourself "Christian".

The Bus Driver saw Jesus in this preacher. And this is what others need to see in us, **preachers or not**, the Love of Jesus! People are always watching, testing, and examining us. Do they see Jesus in us?

Just as Christ is the Light, we are to **reflect** Christ's light to the world around us. The **moon** does not generate light but reflects the light from the **SUN** to serve as light to the darkness, so too are we to reflect the light of God's **SON** to the world around us.

Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount that you are the light of the world. The more that we mirror His image, the brighter that light is. Not that we produce it on our own, but that we reflect Him. This gives glory to God. When we become more like Him, through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit within us, we reflect more and more of His light!

This begs the question, How, exactly, do we walk in the light?

III. HOW DO WE WALK IN THE LIGHT?

When Jesus made the claim that He is the Light of the World, He also made a challenge. Jesus said it would not do us any good that I am the light of the world if you do not do something.

Let's look once again at Christ's I AM statement that He is the Light of the World.

John 8:12 (NASB)

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Jesus says, if you want to get out of darkness and walk in the light then you will have to **follow me**. Do you know what it means to "FOLLOW" Christ?

John 3:21 (NASB)

21 But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God."

The scriptures reveal that to be a "follower" of Christ you MUST be someone "**who practices the truth**".

If we practice the truth in our lives we "do unto others as we would have them do unto us". We will do good deeds for other people. Just as "Information" inside that old wooden phone did for Wayne.

What are good deeds? **Good deeds are things motivated by love, carried out in the power of the Holy Spirit, and performed for the glory of God.** In other words, good deeds are works produced in us and through us by Jesus Christ. As I yield to Jesus and He lives His life through me, I prove to the world that my faith is real.

James 2:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ But someone may *well* say, "You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

Just "having the faith" that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God in and of itself is not enough.

James tells us...

James 2:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ You believe that God is one. You do well; the demons also believe, and shudder. ²⁰ But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?

If we are a "follower" of Christ, then we believe in Him, we love Him above everything else, and we **follow** His teachings.

Matthew 16:24 (NASB)

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me."

If we are to know light, we must follow Christ. The way we learn how to follow Christ is by reading His Word (the Bible).

Psalms 119:105 (NASB)

¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

What a powerful light the scriptures reveal to us!

Those who read God's Word and follow Jesus Christ know exactly what to expect in the future. We understand the purpose for our lives. We have assurance of our salvation and we are not afraid of death. When a Christian dies, that person experiences the joy of escaping from this world of sin and spiritual darkness and starting a new life of pure righteousness with God for eternity!

CONCLUSION:

I hope that God places within our hearts a burden for our world. People are walking in darkness. They are stumbling around. They are throwing all of their energy in all the wrong places.

We have the light.

Remember the illustration I started with about Wayne and the Old Phone? He had learned that his old friend that lived in the phone was a lady named Sally. He had asked if he could call her again the next time he was in town. Wayne continues...

ILLUSTRATION:

Three months later I was back in Seattle. A different voice answered "Information." I asked for Sally.

"Are you a friend?" she said.

"Yes, a very old friend," I answered.

"I'm sorry to have to tell you this," she said. "Sally had been working part-time the last few years because she was sick. She died five weeks ago."

Before I could hang up she said, "Wait a minute, did you say your name was Wayne?"

"Yes." I answered.

"Well, Sally left a message for you. She wrote it down in case you called. Let me read it to you." The note said, "Tell him there are other worlds to sing in. He'll know what I mean."

I thanked her and hung up. I knew what Sally meant.

Sally had the light! She knew that this time on earth was temporary and better things were on the other side of this life. Never underestimate the impression you may make on others.

Do people see Christ's love in you?

Whose life have you touched today?

God is so good! Let His light reflect from you!

If you do not know Christ as your Lord and Savior and you are in spiritual darkness, I invite you to come forward this morning and place your faith in Christ and be immersed in the waters of baptism and begin walking in the light and have an assurance of salvation.

He is Lord!