

This Little Light of Mine

Matthew 5:13-16.

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. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that^[a] they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

There was once a mother who was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin, age five, and Ryan, age three. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a Jesus lesson. And said: “If Jesus were sitting here, he would say, ‘Let My brother have the first pancake. I can wait.’ Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, “Ryan, you be Jesus.” Sharing doesn’t always come easy, and we don’t always let the light of Jesus shine very bright. As hard as it can be to share something as insignificant as a pancake, to share our faith seems sometimes almost impossible. It’s easier and tempting just to say, “Let someone else be like Jesus.”

Yet, God has placed you and me strategically in the lives of certain people to witness to them and to make an eternal difference for them. God has designed us to share our faith and to let his light shine brightly. You and I have something to share that is needed by others.

How, then, can we be more motivated to share that light? How can we become more effective in sharing our faith and reflecting God’s love? How can our lives impact the life of someone else, for Christ?

First of all, people without God matter to God. We understand that without Christ people are lost. Jesus clearly tells us: “*No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6). This is a fundamental belief that we have to own and proclaim without apology. Apart from a living relationship with Jesus Christ, people cannot be made right with God and receive eternal life. That’s all the Bible gives us. It doesn’t answer the question for those who have never heard the message of the Gospel. Instead, God says, “I’ll take care of them and judge them justly, but this is what I will tell you: “*There is Salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved*’ (Acts 4:12).

In our time and culture Jesus has become almost irrelevant. Hundreds of millions of people believe they are going to heaven, even without Jesus. They believe God isn’t going to send anyone to hell.

The sad truth is that there are a lot of good people who are NOT going to be spending eternity with God in heaven, because, despite all their good intentions, the relationship they need with Jesus never happened, and so all the wrong in the lives was never dealt with, and it will separate them from God in eternity.

You and I know that we are NOT saved by what we do. No one else is either. A part of what will motivate us to action is our belief that people around us who don’t have Jesus are going to die and enter into a Christ-less eternity, forever separated from God and his love. This is a core teaching of the Bible

God’s heart is breaking for every person on this planet who does not have a relationship with him. You and I may not care about them (and there may be people we don’t even want to care about), but God does; they matter to him. In the same way that God gave himself to have you back, God gave himself in the Person of his Son Jesus to have them back as well. They matter to him.

Jesus said, “*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost*” (Luke 19:10). Jesus took the initiative “to seek”; Jesus paid the price “to save.” So, for us, reaching people is not optional; it’s central. God didn’t say, “There are people out there who need me, and, IG you get around to it someday or feel like it, GO for it.” He didn’t say that. He said, “*MAKE DISCIPLES!*” It’s not optional. It’s a matter of life and death. “I need you to go, go make disciples, go and share your relationship with My Son Jesus that is unique and true for you.” God wants to use the gifts and stories you have, because God has given you this commission! “You’re my plan A. You’re the one I’m counting on to reach the people in your life.”

Friends in Christ, the mission of the Church is not up for a vote. What Jesus has given us, as our primary assignment is HIS passion, and HIS heart. It’s not optional.

It’s not just about what we believe; it’s also, about what we’re willing to DO, and that leads us to the next major point.

The second thing that impacts our letting God’s light shine is the depth of our COMPASSION.

Exodus 3: "Then the Lord said, 'I have surely seen the affliction of My people. I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them...' " Being willing to share Christ with someone else is not just a matter of our beliefs, but what I am willing to DO! Do we care in our hearts about people who don't have Jesus Christ? Does it matter to us?

When he lived on this planet, "*Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages... proclaiming the Gospel of the kingdom... When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them because they were... like sheep without a shepherd*" (Matthew 9:35-36). I can only imagine what God feels in his heart when he looks down on our communities.

Fly over a large city and imagine what God feels in his heart as he looks down on the millions and millions of people who live there—people who don't have him in their lives. God's heart is breaking. He has compassion for them. He's angry at sin because it is destroying people and their lives, but he's not angry with his children who are lost without their Shepherd. God loves people, and he has compassion for them.

Sometimes we don't share because people don't WANT what we have, but whether or not people want it should not influence whether or not we share it. If we're hiding our faith under a bushel basket of fear, pride, or shame, they're never going to know whom to talk with to, or how to believe. Not **everybody** is going to want what you have to offer, but **somebody** does. That person is the reason to share it.

If we love people, we will share what we have in Christ. Love compels us to make the offer. Our love will overcome our fears. Our compassion can overcome our inhibitions.

The final thing that impacts letting God's light shine is the brightness of our reflections. The Bible says, "*Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven*" (Matthew 5:16). We should be asking ourselves the question, "How clearly and how brightly are we reflecting Christ in our lives." There are a lot of things that reduce our reflections—things such as willful disobedience to God's will, unconfessed sin in our lives, grudges and anger, grief, and guilt—they all diminish and tarnish our reflections. You and I were never meant to be God, but we were designed to be reflections of God, and what is happening in our lives, in our

hearts, in our minds, and in our actions affects our reflections.

Too often we spend our time trying to be the focus of the world's attention. We want to be what people look at, what people see. It's "Look at me!" instead of "Look at Christ!"

For you and me to BE reflections means that we have to be in relationship with God, and, when we are, then these words from Paul begin to come to life: "*For 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*" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Is there anything going on in your lives right now that is diminishing your reflection because it's coming between you and your relationship with God? Is there anything between you and the source of Light, Jesus Christ?

You and I are going to leave here today and busy ourselves with a lot of stuff, things that are important to us. We are going to be investing our time and energy in many things, and so we need to ask: "How much are we investing in others?"

How many of you could raise your hands and say that you know someone who is struggling with whether or not to believe in Christ or does not have a faith relationship with Jesus? How many of you know someone in that situation? Raise your hands. Almost all of you?

One of the most valuable things you could do is to strengthen your relationship with Christ which **SHOULD** strengthen your relationship with that person. Pray to God to give you hearts of compassion for them. It may be someone close to you, and that always involves a special challenge. Pray that God will give you a heart of compassion for what others need in their lives and that you will be a reflection that can help turn them toward him. There is nothing more valuable than investing in people to help them know Jesus Christ. It's an investment that lasts forever. When we reflect God's light to others, we live lives empowered by God's grace. Amen.

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October 16, 2016
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