

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 12 February 2023
Services: *Across the diocese*
Series: SEEK SHINE GO
Title: Let your light shine before others
Passages: Matthew 5:14-16

Outline:

1. Are we?
2. Hiding vs
3. Shining
4. The outcome

- Let me ask you – is your faith **personal** and **private**?
- Many times, people have said this to me – *I think faith is a very private thing.*
- but I need to point out the words from Jesus **himself** from our passage this morning “*Let your light shine before others*”
- If we understand what Jesus is saying here, there is **no way** faith can be a **private thing** and in this the 2nd of our series to kind of launch us into the year... I want to challenge us this morning about just this.
//
- But I’ve jumped straight in and we need some background, so here’s where we are heading...
 1. Are we? (The light of the world?)
 2. Hiding vs
 3. Shining
 4. The outcome

- So

1. ARE WE?

- Have a look with me at v14...: the context is the sermon on the mount – Jesus is teaching his **disciples...** those who are committed to **following** him and **learning from him** and **growing** more **like** him and he says – **YOU ARE the light of the world.** //
- You will know that throughout the Bible, the theme of **light** and **darkness** has a **moral aspect**.
- That is – walk in the **light** – and you are walking in all that is **right** and **good**.
- Walk in the **dark** – and you are walking in **evil** and **rebellion**.
- The reality is, that we live in a **dark world**.
- **Dark** because it is a **world** which has turned its **back** on **God**.
- Either **rebellious** against God **openly**.
- Or **ignoring** God **passively**.
- and Jesus describes his disciples – both **then** and **now** – as **light** shining into this **dark world**.
- Note that this is a **DEscription**, not a **PREscription**
- That is, Jesus is not **pleading** with his disciples or **instructing** his disciples to **please try hard to be the light of the world... /**

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- Rather – he’s stating fact – you **ARE** the light the world. //
- Now you’ll recall that the nation of Israel had this role...
- That is, all the nations of the world were to be attracted to Israel – they were to see in the nation of Israel and by the way Israel **related to** and **served God**, the sheer **brilliance** of being in relationship with God... and by this means... salvation was to come **to the ends of the earth....! //**
- Now Israel never lived up to that ideal... they failed to be the **distinctive brilliant** people of God...
- So the prophet Isaiah promises in ch 9, that
The people walking in darkness **WILL SEE** a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness
a light **WILL dawn...** remember the words – as he looks forward down the centuries?
For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders etc.
- So Jesus **dramatically** enters the **scene** and is announced in John’s gospel as the light of the world... *In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.... The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world...* John 1:4 and 9 ////
- But now here in **Matthew 5**, Jesus says announces that his **disciples** are **also** the **light of the world...** //
- So this commission which **began** with Israel... **then** was **ultimately taken** on by **Jesus Christ...** is now **ours.... //**
- **Robert Lewis Stevenson**, best known for his adventure story **Treasure Island**, was in **poor health** during much of his childhood and youth. One night his nurse found him with his nose pressed against the frosty pane of his bedroom window. "Child, come away from there. You'll catch your death of cold," she fussed.
- But young Robert wouldn't **budge**. He sat, **mesmerised**, as he watched an old **lamplighter** slowly working his way through the black night, lighting each street lamp along his route. Pointing, Robert exclaimed, "See; look there; there's a man poking holes in the darkness."
- "Poking holes in the darkness." What a **marvellous** picture of our task as the light of the world! It is our job to poke **holes** in the **spiritual darkness** of our **sin-filled world.** /
- Notice again - he doesn't **tell** us to **be** the light of the world – he tells us we **are** the light of the world
- This is not telling us what to **do** – it is telling us what we **are!** ///
- It’s not a **request**
- It’s not a **choice**
- It’s not even a **command //**
- It’s **who we are**
- It’s our **DNA**
- It’s our **role** in the **world... //**
- We **ARE** the light of the world...
- The choice is whether to **hide** it or not – whether to **HIDE** it or to **let it SHINE...** ///
- So let’s look secondly at

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2. HIDING

- Have a look with me again at the end of v14 and v15: *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.*
- If we think about the nature of light for a second...
- If a light **doesn't** shine... you can be certain it's because there is a **blackout**, or the **globe** has **gone** or the **circuit** has **broken** or the **battery** has **run out** or the **oil** is **finished**, or the **wick** has **burnt out** or the **wax burnt up** – it's **NOT** because the **darkness** has become **so** dark that the light won't **work.... Right?? //**
- If the light does **not shine**, it is not because of the **darkness!** //
- **Darkness** cannot put out **light.** /
- No if **light** is not **shining**, it's because someone is **actually** and **actively** working to **hide** it. //
- If a **Christian** is **hiding** their **light**... they are actually working **against** their nature...
- They are working at **smothering** something that is meant to **shine**...
- It may mean they are **awkward** or **embarrassed** to even reveal they love the Lord Jesus....
- Or lack **confidence** in defending their faith in any way...
- It would mean that no one in their life even knows they're Christian.... they never **mention** it, **speak** of it, **live it out** or **share** it in any way... //
- Our lamp is **not** shining "before others" if we keep ourselves **isolated** and **hidden** and **away** from the **world.**
- As someone said, "There can be no such thing as **secret discipleship**, for either the **secrecy** destroys the **discipleship**, or the **discipleship** destroys the **secrecy.**" ///
- **Secret Christians**, are hiding the light – they are going against their **role**, against God's **purposes** – in the end – against their **very nature.**
- And it's absurd as a city on a hill trying to **hide** its **light** or someone lighting a **lamp** and then putting it under a **bowl.** //
- Jesus is saying – you **ARE** the light in this **world's darkness... don't hide that light.**
- Don't **hide** it, **minimize** it... don't be **ashamed**, **embarrassed**, **awkward**...
- Don't pretend you're **not** a Christian...
- don't **misrepresent** yourself – don't **misrepresent** Jesus....
- Don't try to be something you're **not** – rather be **exactly** and **comfortably** – even **proudly** – what you **are!**
- What's the flip side then?

3. SHINING?

- v16 makes it clear: *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your **good deeds** and praise your Father in heaven."*
- We let our light shine... by our **good deeds**... It means acts of **kindness/goodness.**

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- In the context of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), it must specifically refer to things like being **meek** (5:5), **showing mercy** (5:7), making for **peace** (5:9), **valuing marriage** (5:27-32), telling the **truth** (5:37) turning the **other cheek** (5:39), **loving enemies** (5:44), giving to the **needy** (6:2) and **refusing** to judge **others** (7:1).
-these are the '**good deeds**' which will bring people to **praise** our **Father in heaven**.
- But I also want you to notice that this is a **collective** description...
- The statement "**yous** (plural) are the light (singular)" makes clear that Jesus is describing Christians **collectively** not **individually**.
- As good deeds are done by **Christians** as a **community**, light shines and others are drawn into the worship of God. //
- Jesus' first disciples took this call seriously... They devoted themselves to quite heroic acts of godliness. They **loved** their **enemies**, **prayed** for their **persecutors** and **cared** for the **poor** wherever they found them.
- In the New Testament period itself we know that a **large daily food roster** was set up by the Jerusalem church for the destitute among them—no fewer than seven Christian leaders were assigned to the management of the programme (Acts 6:1-7).
- The apostle Paul, perhaps the greatest missionary/evangelist ever, was himself utterly devoted to these kinds of good deeds. In response to a famine which ravaged Palestine between AD 46-48 Paul conducted his own decade-long international aid programme earmarked for poverty-stricken Palestinians. Wherever he went, he asked his Gentile churches to contribute whatever they could to the poor in Jerusalem.
- But Christian 'good deeds' continued long after the New Testament era. We know, for instance, that by AD250 the Christian community in Rome was supporting **1500 destitute people** every day. All around the Mediterranean, churches were setting up **food programmes, hospitals and orphanages**. These were available to **believers** and **unbelievers** alike.
- And the result of all this? Well, within two and half centuries Christians had gone from being a small band of several hundred Palestinian Jews to the **greatest social force in world history!**
- ...in fact, the influence of Christian good works was so great that the fourth century Emperor Julian (AD 331-362) became fearful that Christianity might take over the world forever by the stealth of good works!
- So - finally

4. THE OUTCOME?

- v16 again: "*let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven*" (Matt 5:16).
- Jesus taught that '**good deeds**' could **powerfully** contribute to the **conversion of the world** – that's what he's referring to in saying 'praise your Father in heaven!'
- ... if people see your good deeds and end up praising your Father in heaven – that must mean – that they've come to **acknowledge** our Father in heaven.... It doesn't just mean they think we're **nice people!! //**
- When we ask as a church: How can we better care for the **sick**? How can we meet the **needs** of the **poor**? What **more** can we do for the **elderly**? How can we **foster peace**? and so on, we are not only

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asking questions of **obedience**; we are also asking questions of **MISSION**. We are searching for **fresh ways to BE**, and to **CONVEY**, the light of God's **glory** in an **unbelieving world**. ///

- Kathy was just six years old when her mother became ill with cervical cancer. The family was quite poor, and surgical techniques for this form of cancer were in their infancy in the 1970s. The only operation available was somewhat experimental and therefore expensive. As much as she wanted to live to see her four children grow up, Kathy's mum realised her options were limited.
- A knock on the door changed everything. Kathy's family had never been involved with a church and yet somehow the local Baptist congregation had learned of their situation and wanted to help. A representative from the church turned up one day with an extraordinary offer. "If you would allow us," said the stranger at the door, "we as a church would love to pay for the operation."
- The operation was a success; Kathy's mum recovered well and got to see all her children grow up. Although the family started to attend the church for a while—Kathy's mum even became a Sunday School helper—as the years rolled one by one, they began to drift from church.
- And then, some years ago, one of Kathy's own children started asking questions about Christianity and church. With such beautiful memories of Christian community, Kathy did not hesitate to find a congregation in her area and start attending with her family. Suddenly, her dormant faith was reignited. The Jesus of her memory is today the Lord of her life.
- When Kathy now tells her story of faith, she leaves you in no doubt as to what (under God) was the crucial factor in her journey to full faith: the kindness of that Baptist church was "100% responsible for my faith," she says. **"How that congregation treated my family convinced me there was a God and that he loves me."**
- Yes, the **good deeds of God's people** shone **brightly** and caused her to **praise her Father in heaven!** //
- Friends – **we are the light of the world...**
- **We** are to poke holes in the darkness where ever we go... Our life as **individuals** – and our life as a **community** of God's people – is all about doing **good to others** and letting that light **shine**.
- **Together**, we are to work out how to do **more** and **more good deeds** across central and western NSW - not so **we** look good, not to earn **merit** with God, **not** to fill our **seats**.... But so people will see **our good deeds** and **praise our Father in Heaven**.
- **MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN CHRIST - WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!! //**
- *Let your light shine before others that they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in Heaven.*

Next week: Go – Matt 28:16-20 – GO and make disciples.