

For two reasons, I have decided to forgo our study in John's gospel and preach instead upon the theme, The Church: Christ's Light in the World—[1] because I am preaching both this morning and evening, I thought I would preach the same text this morning and evening, and [2] I have been asked to preach upon this theme this fall (and although I will need more than two sermons for that), I thought it may be helpful to get a start on those sermons...

The text before us answers an often asked question—Why does God save His people only to leave them in this world—Why doesn't He bring them immediately to heaven—well, our Savior tells us—He leaves us in this world to serve as SALT and LIGHT, v13—"You are the salt of the earth" v14—"You are the light of the world..."

It is utterly impossible to envision a world without Christians in it—if you think this world is dark now, take away the church and it will become ALL and ONLY darkness—He's left us in this world that our light may shine...

- I. A Simple Declaration—v14a
- II. A Twofold Illustration—vv14b-15
- III. A Practical Conclusion—v16 (considered this evening)

I. A Simple Declaration—v14a

1. Most of you are aware, Matthew 5-7 constitutes our Savior's first public discourse—the Sermon on the Mount..."
2. He begins with a description of His people—poor in spirit, mournful, meek, hungry and thirsty, merciful, pure, peacemakers, and persecuted...
3. He then provides a twofold description of the church as a whole—they are salt of the earth (v13), and light of the world (vv14-16)...
4. The imagery of salt is largely negative (it preserves), whereas the imagery of light is positive (it illuminates)...
5. William Hendriksen—"In the main salt has a negative function and acts secretly. Light, on the other hand, has a positive function and shines openly and publically..."
6. Thus, at this point I want to answer the question—What does our Savior mean when He calls His people LIGHT...
7. Or perhaps I can phrase the question like this—What is now true of Christians, that makes them light and no longer darkness...
8. Well, as many of you know—Scripture uses the imagery of light to communicate two related truths—spiritual understanding and moral purity...
9. [1] Spiritual understanding—by nature our hears are darkened and without understanding—this changes by grace...
10. Ps.82:5—"They do not know, nor do they understand; they walk about in darkness"—that is, spiritual ignorance...
11. Lk.1:76-79—"And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; for you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins...v79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death..."
12. The goal or purpose of John's ministry was—"To give knowledge of salvation...To give light to those who sit in darkness..."
13. These are the same thing—to have light is to have knowledge—knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins...
14. [2] Moral purity—Scripture also uses light to describe purity, 1Jn.1:5—"God is light and in Him is no darkness at all..."
15. That is—God is perfectly and inherently pure—there's not even the shadow of moral darkness or impurity in Him...

16. Prov.2:13—"From those who leave the paths of uprightness to walk in the ways of darkness"—darkness is the opposite of uprightness...
17. To walk in the "ways of darkness" is walk in unrighteousness—it to leave the paths of uprightness and decency...
18. Eph.5:8-11—"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light...And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness..."
19. [a] Where this light is found—"You were once darkness, but now you are light IN THE LORD"—in Christ...
20. [b] How this light is seen—"Walk as children of light"—that is—"in all goodness, righteousness, and truth..."
21. Thus—the imagery of light communicates two ideas—spiritual understanding and moral purity—holiness and truth...

II. A Twofold Illustration—vv14b-15

1. Our Savior uses two related illustrations to make His point—a city on a hill (v14b), and a lamp within a house (v15)...
2. [1] A city on a hill, v14b—"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden"—this describes the church as a corporate people...
3. This imagery describes the church's visibility and accessibility—a city can be seen by many from a great distance...
4. D.A. Carson—"Often built of white milestone, ancient towns gleaned in the sun and could not easily be hidden..."
5. The Scripture often likens the people of God to a city, elevated on a high mountain, visible to the entire world...
6. Ps.48:1-3—"A Psalm of the sons of Korah. Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in His holy mountain. Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is in her palaces; He is known as her refuge..."
7. [a] Beautiful in elevation—literally—"Beautiful in height"—it looks beautiful as it's elevated on a mountain...
8. The church is "elevated" in that she's "a city set on a hill"—she is to be visible throughout the entire world...
9. [b] The joy of the whole earth—this means—it's God's intention to use it to spread true joy through the whole earth...
10. The church is to serve as a beacon of light—constantly sending forth a ray of light throughout the entire ocean...
11. Oh brethren, think of this world as a vast and dangerous ocean—and there's only one lighthouse with light...
12. What an amazing title for the church of Christ—"the joy of the whole earth"—light brings with it TRUE joy...
13. I mentioned earlier that light, in Scripture, means spiritual understanding and moral purity—but it also means TRUE and LASTING joy...
14. [2] A lamp in a house, v15—"nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house..."
15. This describes the people of God as individuals—the church corporately and as individuals are light in this world...
16. The purpose of a lamp is to provide light to the house—thus to light and then hide it under a basket is pointless...
17. By "lamp" is meant a portable lantern and by "lampstand" is likely meant a rock sticking out of the wall for the lamp to rest on...
18. Such lamps were filled with oil and had a wick pushed down its spout, and thus—"it gives light to all in the house..."
19. Matt.25:7—"Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out..."

20. Thus—essential to the lighting of lamps, is not only trimming the wick, but also filling and replenishing the oil...
21. The point being—lamps are lit for the purpose of giving light to the house—not to be hidden beneath a basket...
22. Now—this is a very important point that I intend to return to this evening—Christians are to intentionally spread light...
23. This is one fundamental reason they exist—why does God save us only to leave us in this world—to be lights...
24. CHS—"We are to remove the darkness of ignorance, sin, and sorrow. Christ has lighted us that we may enlighten the world. It is not ours to lie in concealment as to our religion. God intends his grace to be as conspicuous (obvious) as a city built on the mountain's brow. To attempt to conceal His Spirit is as foolish as to put a lamp under a bushel; the lamp should be seen by all that are in the house, and so should the Christian's graces..."

III. Observations

A. Christians are BOLD lights

1. By "bold" I mean—light is a daring, courageous, and even intrusive thing—it pierces and penetrates darkness...
2. Christians are BOLD lights—lights that penetrate, engages, and overpowers the darkness that surrounds them...
3. thus our Savior says—"A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden"—it will stick out—it will NOT be denied...
4. [1] Light exposes—that is, it exposes sin and error—wherever light goes, the darkness is uncovered and exposed...
5. Eph.5:11-13—"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light..."
6. [a] What we are to do, v11—"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them..."
7. [b] How we are to do it, v13—"But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light..."
8. The darkness is exposed by the light—this is HOW darkness is exposed—it's exposed by us living as lights...
9. When Christians walk in the light, it exposes the darkness around them, it makes a clear and undeniable contrast...
10. Now brethren, I am sure you've experienced this—we don't even need to open our mouths to bring conviction...
11. [2] Light reveals—at as necessary exposing the darkness is, it's only half of the work, the truth needs revealed...
12. Christians must do more than merely expose the darkness, but we must point people to Christ as the solution...
13. And my dear friends, the only way we can accomplish this is by opening our mouths and telling them the truth...
14. Phil.2:14-16—"Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain..."
15. [a] Christians shine forth by their works, v15—"that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world..."
16. [b] Christians shine forth by their words, v16—"holding fast (forth) the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain..."

17. The Greek word rendered "holding fast" can either mean—"to hold fast" or "to hold forth"—both are possible...
18. Christ must "hold fast" to the word of God, if they are to shine like lights in the midst of a dark and evil world...
19. But I suggest Paul likely means "to hold forth" as it fits best with the imagery of v15, and shining as lights...
20. This is HOW Christians shine as lights in the world, they—"hold forth the word of life"—the word of light...
21. This is the ONLY way the darkness can be savingly expelled—this is the ONLY way light can be effectually established...

B. Christians are BROAD lights

1. V14—"You are the light of the world"—that is, the church is to take the light to the four corners of this world...
2. The church is the light of the world, not merely the nation of Israel—she is to shine her light upon the whole world...
3. It's almost impossible to understand how radical these words were—the church was limited to a small group of Jews...
4. Isa.60:1-3—"Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people; but the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you. The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising..."
5. [a] Light will dawn, v1—"Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you..."
6. This refers to the coming of the Messiah, His incarnation, public ministry, and the initial formation of the church...
7. [b] Darkness will spread, v2—"For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people..."
8. This refers to the pervasive nature of man's native depravity as would be found in the 1st century and esp over the Gentile nations...
9. [c] Gentiles and kings come, v3—"The Gentiles shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising..."
10. Scripture sometimes speaks of the church going into the world, and at other times, the world coming to the church...
11. These two go together—the church goes into the world as light, God then draws His elect people to the truth...

C. Christians are BORROWED lights

1. By this I mean—the light within us, isn't native to us, but is derived from Christ—only Christ is the TRUE light...
2. Now—before I move further into this final point—I want to point out a very amazing word in v14—"YOU are the light..."
3. Our Savior says, His disciples, and by inference, the church, true Christians, are—"the light of the world..."
4. Now—I want you to think for a few minutes about this—WE are the light of the world—poor and needy Christians...
5. Furthermore—WE are the ONLY light of the world—there are NOT many lights—there are NOT many truths...
6. Thus—the question becomes—How is it, that poor needy people like the disciples, like you and me, are the light...
7. Well—I trust it's obvious, we are lights only because of our union with Christ, who is THE Light of the world...

8. Christ is natively inherently light—we are light only because of our union with Him—our light is derived from Him...
9. For example—this is similar to the moon—it has no light native to itself, it only reflects the light of the sun...
10. So too—Christians are like the moon, in that we reflect the light of Christ, which is in us by His Holy Spirit...
11. Isa.49:6—"Indeed He says, It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth (Acts 13:46-47)..."
12. Jn.8:12—"I AM the light of the world. He who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life..."
13. [a] Christ Himself is the Light of the world—He is eternally and essentially Light, 1Jn.1:4—"God is light..."
14. [b] To follow Christ is to have the light of life—to follow Him is to be in union with Him—to reflect His light...
15. Christians are the light of the world, because they reflect the radiant glory and truth natively true of Christ...
16. They have "the light of life"—that is, it's light that brings with it life—they are to carry that light to the world...
17. Thus we learn, that as the light of the world, we are to imitate Christ in our actions and tell of Him in our words...
18. We are to reflect the light—we are to reflect Christ, who is THE light—and we do this by staying close to Him...
19. Now, I want to come back to that this evening, but let say in closing—the light of salvation is found in Christ...