

Let it Shine!

Matthew Ch 5 v 14-16

We all like to be paid a compliment, whether it is for something we have done or said or even how we look! In saying 'You **are** the light of the world', Jesus pays individual Christians the greatest compliment ever. In telling his followers to be lights in the world, Jesus is telling them, and us, to be like him (John Ch 9 v 5).

The Jews were familiar with this expression. Jerusalem was often referred to as 'a light to the Gentiles' and a famous Rabbi may be sometimes called 'the lamp of Israel'. The Jews were also very sure that this light was not self produced but that it reflected God's light. In the same way, the light in us is a reflection of Jesus' light. As the moon is a reflection of the sun, so we should be a reflection of Jesus, the light of **our** world.

Light is, first and foremost there to be seen. The lamp, used in Palestinian homes was kept alight day and night and only covered for safety when the house was left empty. Christianity is meant to be seen constantly, not just in church but in the whole community – in the work place, in the restaurant, on the golf course or when driving a car.

Light is there to guide. On a river estuary there may be a line of lights that mark out the channel where ships can safely sail as they head out to sea. Life is never a smooth passage but asking for God's presence in a situation helps to calm the roughest storm. **We** can sometimes be that physical presence amidst the turmoil. The coast line of the British Isles is dotted with lighthouses. These flashing lights act, not only as guides but as warnings. They warn against rocks, cliffs and other perils that can harm or hinder the safe steering of any seafaring vessel. In the same way Christians can often warn against dangers ahead. This is a difficult thing to do as any one who has tried to warn a young person or teenager of an impending harmful course of action will know! If our warnings are given, not in anger or in criticism or with a desire to hurt but are given in love, then they will hopefully be effective. The phrase 'you've got to be cruel to be kind' comes to mind!

In v 16 Jesus says 'Let your light shine' (our theme this year) so that people will see your good works. In Greek there are two words for good – **agathos** and **kalos**. **Agathos** simply means a thing of good quality but **kalos** means an attractive good thing. Our light should be attractive to those around. Further more our light should not draw attention to us, but to God. In Exodus we read that each time Moses spoke with God either on Mount Sinai or in the tabernacle his face began to shine with the glory of God. He did not know it, but the Israelites could see it so Moses covered his face with a veil so as not to frighten them. Through Jesus, we can reflect that glory with unveiled faces. That radiance can be seen in us through characteristics such as faith, humility, hope, peace, kindness and other 'gifts of the Spirit'. We should never think of what we have done but what God has enabled us to do.

For Discussion:

1. How can we as individuals and as a church guide and warn others in today's society?
2. Can you think of individuals in the past who have guided and may be warned you?
3. Benjamin Franklin once said "Lighthouses are more useful than churches."

Discuss!

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