

<sup>14</sup> *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;* <sup>15</sup> *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.* <sup>16</sup> *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.* (NASB)

Text: Matthew 5:14-16    A 2/4/18    Isaiah 49:1-6    Ephesians 5:1-16    Ps. 36    Resp. Ps.: 67  
Hymns: 3, 400, 767, 391

## YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

When I was a boy, my aunt, who was in her 30s, died of cancer. She was a sweet Christian lady with a firm trust in the Lord. Her love for the Lord and her trust in Him were a wonderful example to everyone who knew her.

Our text is part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Just before Jesus began to preach we're told, "*Seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them*" (vv. 1-2). Jesus was speaking to His disciples in the presence of the crowd. Jesus spoke so that the crowd could hear what was saying, but His words were addressed to His disciples as believers. Jesus told His disciples, "*You are the light of the world;*" from the original text, literally, "*You yourselves are the light of the world.*" As believers, they were the light of the world.

Many unbelievers think that they are the enlightened ones who follow objective truth, real science, and reality. They think that we Christians who believe in the God of the Bible, and believe that the Bible's history, geography, morality, and message of eternal salvation in Jesus Christ are all true are fools who believe in fairy tales. God says in the first chapter of Romans that all who reject and oppose Him "*[have become] futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts [are] darkened. Professing to be wise, they [have become] fools*" (see Ro. 1:18-22). Jesus assures us, "*You yourselves are the light of the world;*" the idea from the original being that we who believe in Jesus "*are*" now, and "*continue to be,*" "*the light of the world.*" All we who by the grace of God believe in Jesus and His Word in reality are the enlightened ones who bring light to the unbelievers, who are in darkness.

Jesus doesn't say, "*You are a light of the world,*" as if following Jesus is one way, but there are other ways – other religions and philosophies – that are equally as valid. Jesus says, "*You are the light of the world.*" Following Jesus Christ and leading others to follow Jesus is the only way. Jesus told Pontius Pilate, "*For this cause I was born, and for this cause I came into the world,*

*that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice*” (Jn. 18:37b).

Jesus says, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life”* (Jn. 8:12). Jesus gives us *“the light of life”*: eternal life. We were lost in the darkness of unbelief, sin, and eternal damnation. Jesus died for our sins on the cross and rose again. He worked faith in our hearts, rescuing us from our darkness and bringing us into His saving light.

Jesus is like the sun, the source of our light. We Christians are like the moon, reflecting Jesus’ light. As Jesus shines in us and within us we *“are the light of the world.”* We *“are the light of the world”* as we reflect Jesus’ love, forgiveness, kindness, and goodness in our attitudes and actions toward others. We *“are the light of the world”* as we tell others about Jesus and His Word. Peter says, *“You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, [God’s] own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”* (1 Pet. 2:9).

Jesus says, *“You yourselves are the light of the world.”* Jesus makes Himself known to the world through us Christians. What an awesome responsibility, and wonderful privilege! People see sin in us. But they also see Christ in us, and learn about Christ through us as we share the Gospel with them.

*“A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 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.”* A city built on a hill can’t be hidden, especially when it’s dark and the city’s lights are shining. When it’s dark we would never turn a light on and cover it up. We let it shine so we can see.

*“Let your light ... shine before men.”* As people can see a city on a hill, so there are people who know that we’re Christians. They see us. They’re observing us. Some just want to find fault with us. But there are others who don’t. We want what others see in us and hear from us to be an appealing reflection of our Savior.

We wouldn’t *“light a lamp and put it under a basket.”* However, there are times when we ‘hide’ Jesus’ light. We hide Jesus’ light in sinful attitudes and actions toward others that don’t reflect Jesus’ love. We ‘hide’ Jesus’ light when we do things we shouldn’t and don’t do what we should because we value the approval of others more than the approval of God. We ‘hide’ Jesus’ light when we fail to stand up for Jesus and His Word.

*“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.”* Some people say, “You Christians think you’re better than

everybody else.” We’re sinful just like everyone else. Some Christians have a bumper sticker on their cars that reads, “I’m not perfect, just forgiven.” Our purpose in life as Christ’s people isn’t to glorify ourselves and impress people with how good we are. As Christ’s people our purpose in life is to glorify Him and show the world how good He is.

Jesus tells us, *“Love one another; as I have loved you.... By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another”* (Jn. 13:34-35). God tells us in His Word, *“Walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love. ... And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us”* (Eph. 4:1-2, 32-5:2a). *“Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might”* (Eph. 6:10). *“Do not love the world or the things in the world”* (1 Jn. 2:15a). Paul tells us, *“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ... For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ”* (Philip. 3:17, 20).

In these ways you and I let Christ’s light shine into the world’s darkness *“in such a way”* that glorifies God and draws people to Him. The Bible says that *“God our Savior ... desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Tim. 2:3b-4). God wants everyone to learn about their salvation in Jesus, believe in Him, and be saved.

As my aunt was dying she kept placing her trust in the Lord, and He saw her through everything. She died knowing that Jesus was taking her to heaven. When she died, an unbelieving friend of hers who, throughout her battle with cancer, witnessed her faith, said, “I want what she had.” She wanted faith like my aunt’s faith. I pray that her friend does.

Christian friends, *“You yourselves are the light of the world. ... 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.”*  
Amen.