

Text: Matthew 5:14-16

Theme: I'm Gonna Let It Shine

February 5, 2017

As kids, one of the first songs most of us learned in Sunday School after “Jesus Loves Me” was “This Little Gospel Light of Mine.” We were so proud when we could sing all the words and do all the actions at the same time. For most of us, a few years have passed since those days, yet the need to let our light shine hasn’t changed. In our Gospel, Jesus, the Light of the World, reminds us that we are to reflect His Light. As we do so today, we focus on our theme: I’m Gonna Let It Shine.

I. The Light of the World has called us to let our light shine on His behalf. A. As is evident from our text, we sometimes are reluctant to let our light shine. 1. We are reluctant because we’re concerned about what other people will think. How many things do we do or not do because we’re concerned about what someone else might think or say? Because we’re almost encapsulated by a world that insists that we only do what the majority thinks is right, it’s tough to act the way we know we should act when it appears everyone around us is just waiting to criticize our every move. Within a world where the opinions of others matter, we struggle to stand our ground.

2. We are reluctant because we fail to realize the power of our light. “Nobody cares; nobody is noticing. It doesn’t matter what I do” - it’s easy to think one person doesn’t matter, that the actions or words of a single person have little or no effect on those around us. Yet that notion takes us back to our theme for the year, “The Power of One.” Surrounded by hundreds of other people, there’s still power in one act of love, one spoken word. We may not see it; people may never run up to us and thank us for what we did or said, but, in our hearts, it matters. You make a difference; I make a difference. Although that’s true, we’re still reluctant to let our light shine.

3. Our reluctance leaves us thinking that letting our light shine is someone else’s job. Our text makes it rather clear, “Let your light shine.” It doesn’t say, “Tell someone else to let their light shine,” or “Delegate that task to someone more qualified.” Yet, too often, we think we are unqualified. Therefore, someone else should do it and we will stick to doing what falls within our comfort zone. Yet, when we follow that notion, other people lose. Someone else can do your job and my job better than we can do them, but that doesn’t mean God wants someone else. He called you; He called me. He called us to let our light shine. Comfortable or not, it is our calling.

B. Although we struggle, how do we let our light shine more effectively? 1. We let our light shine by walking in the light. To reflect the Light of the World, we walk in that Light. But notice the action word in that statement. God doesn’t call us to sit, stand, or lean on the wall. He calls us to walk which clearly implies motion, that we are making things happen, that we believe in ourselves and what God wants to do through us. Walking in the Light is all about activity, about using our abilities, our energies to get the message out. Your walking will be different from the person next to you, but as we make it our goal to walk in His Light, He will bless each of our efforts.

2. We let our light shine by realizing the value of our light. There is a legend of a village in Southern Europe with a church called “The House of Many Lamps.” When

it was built in the sixteenth century, the architect provided for no light except a receptacle at every seat for the placing of a lamp. Each Sunday night, as the people gathered, they would bring their lanterns and slip them into the bracket at their seat. When someone stayed away, his place would be dark; and if very many stayed away, the darkness became greater for the whole. It was the regular presence of each person that lit up the church. Our light matters and we need to let our light shine.

3. We let our light shine by teaching the next generation. Later in our Gospel, Jesus says, "Whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Your light will only light up this world for a hundred years give or take and then there will be darkness. But when we help the next generation realize the significance of the Light of the World and of being His reflection, our light lives on through the next generation. Our precious children need to know of the light. They need to see our light shining. They need to learn from our examples. And as they learn, we know that our little Gospel light will live on through the next generation.

4. We let our light shine by realizing that someone is always watching. Suppose you were sitting in a conference room surrounded by 250 people and the lights suddenly went out. If you pulled a penlight flashlight from your pocket and turned it on, how many people would notice? Everywhere you go, everything you say, every act you perform, someone is watching, watching to see whether you believe your light makes a difference and whether you care enough to shine when the world around is filled with darkness. You may not realize it, but there are many people watching and what they see in you will determine whether they join the light or stay in the dark.

C. As we let our light shine, what becomes our ultimate goal? 1. Our goal is to influence others. A man once dreamed that he was in hell. When asked to give an account of what he had seen, he said, "Yes, there were flames and unimaginable suffering, but there was something far worse than that: I was compelled to face the influence I had had on others. My worst pain was to see what effect my life had had upon others." We are in this place for such a time as this to influence lives, to move hearts from darkness to light, to help those in the light to remain in that light. Your influence matters. Therefore, we make it our goal to create a lasting influence.

2. Our goal is to give God the glory. Truth be told, we like glory; we like praise. We like it when someone gives us the credit. Yet, although the world of professional football may have its downfalls, the great players who acknowledge Christ, who give God the glory in the midst of their moments of greatest glory, serve as an example. The reason we live is to give God glory. Self-glory may make us feel good, but the facts say, "Give God the glory. Give Him the praise because in every situation, it's always Him and not you or me." By giving Him the glory, He will bless us and the light we provide to the world around us.

3. This little Gospel light of mine - We still know the words, and now, after we've outgrown Sunday School, it's still proper and fitting for us to say and then to act on those simple words, "I'm gonna let it shine." Amen.