

Wesley United Methodist Church

October 15, 2017

“You Are the Light of the World...”

Matthew 5:13-16

Joe and Moe were carpenters. Joe was always finding ways to tease Moe, who was not too bright. One night, Joe shined his flashlight up to the 2nd story house and said, “Moe would you mind climbing up this light beam and get my hammer for me?” Moe said, “How dumb do you think I am?” “I’m sorry,” Joe replied. “You’d better be,” said Moe. “I know you too well...you’d let me get halfway up and then turn the light off.”

Matthew 5:16 “... Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”

Light was the first thing God created. Some of the first words recorded in the Bible are these: “And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light” (Gen.1:3). Scientists tell us that all matter and energy come from light and our life depends on it. People in Bible times knew far more about darkness than we. Light was a luxury. There were no street lamps. On a dark night if you were traveling, the world was a scary place. Roads were treacherous and criminals were performing their trade in the dark.

But darkness was not only a problem on the road. At the end of your journey, light was still a luxury. Palestinian homes were generally dark. They usually had one small window. They had no electricity, no light bulbs like we have. Their light consisted of a lamp which was a bowl filled with oil that had a wick. When they needed light, the lamp was placed on a lamp stand. The most difficult part of having this light in the house was lighting the lamp. Remember they didn’t have matches or lighters. As a result, no one wanted to let their light go out because it took much work to get the wick lit again. However, when people went out of the house it was dangerous to leave the light on. So, for safety reasons, when they left their homes the lamp would be taken from the lamp stand and placed under an earthen vessel where it could burn risk free. As soon as someone returned to the house, they would return the light to its stand so it could shine to its maximum. It was only natural that light became associated with religious faith. The Psalmist wrote, “The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27:1). In Isaiah we read about the coming of the one who would be the light of the world. “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned” (Isaiah 9:2). Later in John’s Gospel Jesus speaks to the people of his time and says, “I am the light of the world, he who follows me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life” (John 8:12)

The passage of scripture in Matthew helps us to open a wealth of reasons for walking in our passion to serve others. It doesn’t pose the question about whether we have something to offer. Nor does Matthew give us an option, as in a multiple-choice test. There are no scenarios from which we can choose what to do with what God has woven in our being. Instead, Matthew tells us that each one of us has a light to shine, not for our own glory, but for the glory of God.

Matthew also tells us that this light is public. It is part of our personal witness to the world. It is the message of every person who understands the ministry of Jesus Christ, and the example he left us by sharing the good news of the gospel. Sharing the light as a volunteer is an active, doing, moving ministry. It is love in action.

I was thinking, what a clever way to issue a command! Matthew doesn’t give us a way to question the “light” we have. Instead, he immediately tells us to do something. When Jesus called his disciples, he simply said, “Follow Me.” He is on the sideline cheering us on, urging us to go out into the world, serve the people of God and use everything within us to show others, so that when they see our noble and good deeds, they will give glory to God.

Just as Christ called his disciples, he called us, volunteers, to walk humbly in our passion to serve. We are asked, both lay and clergy, to let our lights shine in Christian service at home and around the world.

Countless people have given of themselves for centuries. Each week someone reaches out to a homeless person, visits the sick, makes phone calls to the sick and shut-ins, teaches Sunday School classes, feeds the poor, advocates for justice, makes coffee, greets visitors, ushers and greets on Sunday morning, runs the AV, helps with the monthly newsletter, cares for the church building, fills in at the office, serves as an officer at committees, volunteers at the Estate Sale, serves at Sunday refreshments, Collecting food and clothing for the less fortunate, and much more.

Today, we appreciate, honor and congratulate all the servants of faith who give day in and day out, sometimes without recognition. A simple childhood song says it all in one line, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.”

Our volunteers are shining their lights. We are reminded of the scripture in Matthew 25:40, “And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’” Let’s celebrate our volunteers today.

