

Sermon on Mount (15)  
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Sermon Text: Matthew 5:16 NKJV

<sup>16</sup> “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Having considered vv14-15 this morning, we come this afternoon to v16—now if you recall I suggest this morning that this verse serves as a practical application of the previous verses—in other words, having made a simple declaration in v14a, a twofold illustration in vv14b and 15, our Savior provides a practical exhortation in v16—to put this a bit more theological—having stated the indicative our Savior now states an imperative—the indicative is found in v14 and describes what we are—“you are the light of the world”—the imperative is found in v16 and describes what we are to do—“let your light so shine...”—these two necessarily go together and in this order—we are to be in practice what we are in position...

Thus before we come to our text [v16] I want to suggest a few applications based upon the indicative of v14 [you are the light of the world] and the imperative of v16 [let your light shine]—[1] we can only do what we have been made—it is important to notice the order our Savior puts these—before telling us to be light He first tells us we are light—in other words—before we can shine as light we have to be made light—shining as lights does not make us lights—we shine as lights because we are light—the only people who possess the ability to shine are lights—let me put it this way—the only ones who can obey v16 are those who’ve experienced v14—the Lord never expects us to make bricks without providing the straw—He only commands us to do what we have been made...

But [2] we’ve been made something for the purpose of doing something—why have we been made the light of the world—but for the purpose of letting our lights shine—my friends—we are not made light merely for our own benefit—but for the express purpose of shining this light upon others—let me put it this way—the indicatives of Scripture are always followed by imperatives or commands—because you the light of the world let your light shine in the world...

1Pet.2:9—“you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light...”—why were we make His own special people—that we can simply sit back and rejoice in our many privileges—no—“that we might proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness...”—why have we been made the light of the world (v14)—that we might let our lights shine in the world (v16)...

## I. A Practical Exhortation—v16

### A. How are we to let our lights shine?

1. Here we find that our Savior is not content with declaring—“you are the light of the world”—but continues by exhorting them to let their light shine...
2. Because you are the only light this world will ever know—“let you light so shine before men, that they may see your good works...”
3. Just as a city on a hill cannot be hidden, and a lamp gives light to all who are in the house—we are to let our light shine so as to be seen of men...
4. To be more specific—[1] we are to let our lights shine personally—this is where we must begin—our Savior’s exhortation includes every single one of us...
5. There always seems to be this unconscious thought—that exhortations like this are relevant for a certain kind of Christian...
6. But our Savior having used the plural pronoun in v14—you collectively are the light of the world, now descends to a singular pronoun in v16—“let your light shine...”

7. Yes the church is collectively the light of the world—yes there is a communal dimension to our shining in the world...
8. As we come together on the Lord's Day we collectively shine as lights—we unite together as coals to build a great fire...
9. But we are all expected to leave here on Sunday nights and take our lights into the world beginning on Monday mornings...
10. It's relatively easy to let our lights shine on the Lord's Day when we have gathered collectively—and in fact this is one we brighten our lights...
11. But we have to leave from here and go forth into the darkness—when we get to heaven their will be no darkness and we will their shine in the light together...
12. But here this is not the case—we gather together in order to be strengthened and encouraged to be the light of the world—not of the church...
13. Notice [2] we are to let our lights shine purposefully—by this I mean we must act in an unashamedly Christian manner...
14. All that we do and say is to be in Jesus name—it is to be done as Christians for the glory and honor of Jesus Christ...
15. For example—people we come in contact with should know we are distinctly Christian—all that we do and say flows out of this...
16. Here of course I am not suggesting that we act in such a manner as to purposefully draw undo attention to ourselves...
17. I am not advocating that we act in such a way so as to grandstand before men—to act for the purpose of our own praise...
18. John Broadus—“He does not say ‘may glorify you,’ for the good works of God's children are all due to him, and hence the beholders ought not to praise them, but to glorify their Father...”
19. Matt.6:3—“but when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly. And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward...”
20. Here our Savior expressly forbids us to perform our charitable and religious deeds—“to be seen of men”—that is for the sole purpose of being seen...
21. Gill—“The proper motive to influence us is not simply that we may be seen, but it should be that our heavenly Father may be glorified. The Pharisees acted to be seen of men, true Christians act to glorify God, and care little what people may think of them, except as by their conduct others may be brought to honor God...”
22. Notice [3] we are to let our lights shine pervasively—by this I mean our lights must shine all the time and in every place...
23. Being lights that shine is not merely a part of our existence but is the purpose for our existence—our lights are never to cease...
24. They are to shine all the time and in every place—wherever we go we are lights—whatever we say we are lights...
25. J.C. Ryle—“A candle is not lighted in order to be hidden and concealed, but to be set on a candlestick and used. Religious light is not given to a man for himself alone, but for the benefit of others. We are to try to spread and diffuse our knowledge. We are to display to others the precious treasure that we have found, and persuade them to seek it for themselves. We are to tell them of the good news that we have heard, and endeavor to encourage them to believe it and value it themselves...”

Obs.1—Christians are to ensure that their lights burn bright

1. This I trust is an obvious observation—when our Savior exhorts us—“let your light so shine before men...”—He's implying the need to brighten our lights...
2. Lk.12:35—“let your waist be girded and your lamps burning...”—here what is implied in our text is expressly stated...

3. We are to keep our lamps burning—we are to take all necessary steps to insure our lights are burning brightly...
4. Thus here I want to address the question—how are we to ensure that our lights shine personally, purposeful, and pervasively...
5. Notice [1] we must fill our lamps daily with oil—as I mentioned this morning the lamps of our Savior’s day were filled with oil...
6. Thus there was the constant need to ensure the lamp never ran out of oil—if it did the lamp would begin to burn low and soon go out...
7. Thus the apostle exhorted the Ephesians—“be filled with the Spirit...”—that is—be constantly filled with oil...
8. Oh my brethren, if we are to keep our lights burning bright, we are in desperate need to the ongoing filling of the Holy Spirit of God...
9. But what do I mean by this filling—or perhaps I can ask it this way—how are we to be ongoingly filled by the Spirit...
10. Well foremostly I can answer this question by one word—prayer—we must ask God for fresh supplies of grace worked within us by the Spirit...
11. Lk.11:13—“how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him...”—that is give Him in an ongoing way...
12. My friends—we have no oil within ourselves—it is the work of the Spirit to replenish our lamps with fresh supplies of oil...
13. Oh my dear friends—how often do we go without for lack of asking—how often our lights burn dim for lack of seeking fresh supplies of grace...
14. Notice [2] we must walk in the light of the word—the Scriptures are often described by the imagery of light...
15. For example, Ps.119:130—“the entrance of your words gives light...” Prov.6:23—“the commandment *is* a lamp, and the law a light...”
16. The Scriptures communicate light—thus the more entrance we give them into our hearts the more light we will have...
17. Let me ask you a question—how often do we fill our hearts with the light of God’s precious truth—“the entrance of your words give light...”
18. Notice [3] we must stay close to the source of light—the closer the moon stays to the sun, the more light it reflects...
19. 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...”

B. Why are we to let our lights shine?

1. There are two closely related reasons why we must let our lights shine—[1] that the world might see our good works, and [2] glorify our father in heaven...
2. These are related as cause and effect—it is because they see our good works that they glorify our Father in heaven...
3. Notice [1] that they may see our good works—by “good works” is meant—deeds performed out of a good heart and for a good end...
4. In other words—deeds performed by a regenerate heart, are in keeping with the law of God, and done for the glory of God...
5. Its important here to interpret “good works” in the broadest possible way—works that relate directly to God and to man...
6. We are to let our light shine before men—that they might see our good works—works that have reference to God and to man...
7. Thus good works would include—devotion and adoration of God, love toward the saints, benevolence towards the needy, and patience in affliction...
8. Notice [2] that they may glorify our father in heaven—it must be pointed out that the same ones who observe our good works are the same ones glorifying the Father...

9. In other words—our Savior is here referring to the world—to those who are in darkness upon whom our lights shine...
10. To glorify God is here put for a heartfelt acknowledgement of the existence and nature of God as the source of our good deeds...
11. Thus it necessarily implies conversion—in other words—our light is used by God as a means of bringing them out of darkness...
12. Lenski—“The works wrought by the Word shine with a heavenly brightness in this dark world of sinful works; and this light will draw many to Christ, so that they too, believe and thus give praise and glory to God, the Father, who sent Christ, and on their part join us in the same radiant works...”
13. 1Pet.2:11-12—“beloved, I beg *you* as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, 12 having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by *your* good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation...”
14. Let me examine this passage by two words—[a] observing—“your good works which they observe” and [b] glorifying—“glorify God in the day of visitation...”
15. Notice [a] observing—“that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe...”
16. The word translated “observe” literally means to—“to consider or observe”—it refers to a prolonged and intensified scrutiny...
17. Notice [b] glorifying, v12—“glorify God in the day of visitation...”—the end goal of such observance is the glorification of God—“in the day of visitation...”
18. This phrase refers to the personal and powerful visitation of God to the soul—when God visits the soul so as to save it...