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*Let Your Light Shine*  
*Matthew 5:13-20*

Famous Pastor Archbishop William Temple once said, “the church is the only organization that exists for those who are *not its members*”.

Think about that. It’s a powerful statement.

I’m sure he would agree that we do in fact have an *obligation* to nurture our members, to educate our members, to grow our members, to love one another as members.....

Jesus himself said they will know we are Christians by our love.  
Love one another.

But we don’t just exist for one another here in the church.

We have a *mission* in the world as the body of Christ.

And it’s not to just let the light we’ve been given shine inside these walls.

I don’t know about you but *I don’t live here* in this building.....  
contrary to rumors you may have heard.....)

My ministry is out in Owasso, where people live, and work, and play, where they are receiving care, or healing, or finding help.

And you—*you don’t live here*.

When you leave Sunday morning, you go out into the world to socialize, to raise families and care for loved ones.

You go out to be a part of the community, to work, to volunteer, to enjoy life beyond these walls.

And the people in the pews beside you  
are just a few of the people you might meet  
when you leave on Sunday morning.

You’ll see many different *faces* throughout your week or month.

And what Jesus is saying to us today is---will you *share the light*, His light,  
Out there? Or will you be content to just *receive* it in here?

Will you share the love, and peace, and wisdom you receive in this church,  
With those you encounter outside this church?

In other words,  
Will you let *your light* shine?

He's not asking us to move mountains.  
He says that a small lamp can light an entire household  
as long as it's not hidden under a basket.

In the same way, your own *lifestyle*, the way you act and talk,  
The things you say and do on an everyday basis, the decisions you make,  
and the commitments you take seriously, these things---they can be like a  
light shining out there in the world,  
giving others the opportunity to know God, and praise God.

The word says we are to do *good works*,  
So that others will give glory to our Heavenly Father.  
This doesn't mean we have to be constant do-gooders.  
It just means we live with integrity, honesty, hard work, and commitment.  
And we take the time to attribute that to our Christian faith and values,  
Especially when we are asked.

It means that when God brings us through the *hard times*,  
We tell others how God saw us through.  
And when others are going through the hard times,  
We offer them our prayers, and our own stories of faith.

It does require *putting yourself out there*, just a bit  
For of course someone might brush you off once in a while,  
Or see your faith as not connected with your life.  
But I believe that even when that happens something is happening in them,  
telling them just the opposite is true.

It doesn't require door-knocking or street corner preaching.  
Rather letting your light shine can often best be done in the context of the  
*relationships* you already have in your life.  
Who do you know that doesn't have a *church* home?  
Who doesn't know God? That's someone who could use a glimmer of light.

Who do you know that's struggling with *hard times*?  
That's someone who could use a ray of hope.  
And because you know them, *you* are just the right person to provide it.

Some of the very best parts of the *news* these past two weeks have been the Good Samaritan stories, the rays of light shining in the midst of the blizzard—of people digging each other out, towing one another’s cars, delivering groceries to shut-ins, shoveling driveways and sidewalks, picking up prescriptions—all of this sometimes for complete strangers.

I experienced *my own Good Samaritan* events, I had two people help Eli shovel our driveway after the blizzard, and then several strangers helped dig me out when I got my van stuck in the snow on a neighborhood street.

We don’t exist to shine light in these walls,  
but to take our light out into the world.  
We go into the darkness of a broken world, to bring the light.  
We don’t just play it safe and stay in the church.  
After all, the light is not for us to hold onto—  
It’s meant to illumine the whole house, the whole world.  
There is no such thing as a secret Christian.

And Jesus knew what he was talking about when he said  
You ARE the light of the world....  
not you will be, or I hope you can be when you get your act together...  
He said “You ARE the light of the world”.  
We already have the skills we need to be light.  
This is our *mission*, and we can do it  
by being who we are, and giving all the credit to God.

*We ARE* the light of the world—  
Each one of us individually,  
and together as a church. We ARE the light of the world!  
We are light in our community, our offices, our schools, and our homes.

How can we keep our light shining as *First Pres Owasso*?  
It happens every time a child is tutored at Mills,  
As many of you serve Meals on Wheels,  
As Teresa brings needed supplies to Emergency Infant Services,  
As our offerings are received at the Presbytery of Livingstonia  
In Malawi Africa,

As backpacks for needy students are assembled in our sanctuary,  
As our youth paint walls or organize the pantry at OCR,  
As we all shop for angels at Christmas  
As we interview needy persons who come asking for assistance,  
As YOU join in any mission effort of this church.

You and I—we are *needed* to bring light  
Right into the darkness of our broken world.

No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a basket,  
No--it belongs on a stand to light the entire room, in fact,  
No Christian after receiving the light of Christ just hides in the church,  
No--they belong outside the church, lighting the entire world.

This is the Good News of the Gospel,  
And the people said, Amen.