



360 DISCUSSION 10.30.16

LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD | MATT 5:14-16



The Christian life is really fun when it becomes infectious. It usually starts somewhere deep inside when you become dissatisfied with where you are and begin to rekindle old flames. You fall in love with Christ again. You fall in love with grace again. You recover your sense of wonder. Your outlook on life takes a surprising turn.

You navigate through chaos with grace. You are more at peace with yourself, and unbothered by the noise all around you. You even notice a hint of profound joy.

Your husband or wife will notice. Your kids will be absolutely baffled. Your roommate will notice. The guy occupying the cubicle next to you will notice. You are not caught up in the panic that has everyone else gasping for air. There is a sense of thoughtfulness and genuine concern for those around you. You even slow down long enough to listen to people's responses when you ask, "How are you doing?" You are struck with an odd sense of empathy for the girl behind the counter at the convenience store, in place of the impatience you used to feel when she wasn't moving the line fast enough to accommodate your acute sense of panic.

Jesus is referring to the infectious nature of the Christian life when he challenges us, "You are the light of the world."

He takes one of the most powerful images in Scripture and uses it to describe what the Christian life could be. Should be.

THE IMAGE OF LIGHT IN SCRIPTURE

Light is used in some powerful ways in Scripture. As you read through the following passages, take note of how they use the image of light, and how they expand your understanding of what it means to be light in a dark world.

GENESIS 1:3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:6 God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.

PSALM 27:1;4 The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

⁴One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

ISAIAH 9:1-2 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the nations, by the Way of the Sea, beyond the Jordan— The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.

JOHN 1:9-12 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹²Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God...

YOU AND ME AS LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD (Matthew 5:14-16)

It is not surprising that God could be described as light in a dark world. It is not surprising that Jesus could be described as light in a dark world. It is surprising that Jesus would refer to you and me as "THE LIGHT of the world."

Read Matthew 5:14-16 and discuss what it means for us to be the light of the world.

MATTHEW 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

1. If Jesus is the true light (see John 1:9 above) that was coming into the world, in what sense are we the light of the world?
2. Why do you think Jesus highlights good deeds rather than bold proclamation of the gospel?
3. What kind of good deeds do you think Jesus is talking about?
4. What happens when we proclaim the gospel but fail to have good deeds?
5. What happens when we have good deeds but fail to proclaim the gospel?
6. What happens when we reflect the character of Christ, but fail to share the gospel?
7. What are some of the ways we do what Jesus says nobody does? We light a lamp and put it under a bowl?

A GOOD PLACE TO START (Matthew 5:3-10)

We are at our best as light in a dark world when we reflect the heart and character of Christ. Christ's character is beautifully portrayed in the opening lines of the Sermon on the Mount, that we've come to know as the Beatitudes.

MATTHEW 5:3-10 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

1. How are these qualities seen in Christ?
2. Why are these qualities foundational to being light in a dark world?
3. When we are confronted with a list like this we are faced with a choice between "trying harder" and "drawing nearer." Why will "trying harder" ultimately lead to frustration and failure? What does "drawing nearer" involve?