

# STRANGE Light

A sermon on Matthew

*The other day I was putting up some Christmas lights.*

*I started by getting the extension cord out and plugging it into the back of the house.  
I went back downstairs and got a second cord, because the first one wasn't long enough.  
Then, I went downstairs a third time to get a third cord, because the first two weren't long enough.*

*I got out the lights and began untangling...  
And untangling...  
And untangling...  
I thought: "Who put these away last year?"  
(Answer: Me.)*

*I finally got them straight, ran the lights across the front awning, when my wife stopped me. She said, "Could we not put those light there? And instead take those downstairs on our bookcase?"*

*I rewound the lights.  
Took them downstairs.  
Carefully lined the entire bookcase without knocking down the knickknacks on each shelf.*

*I inserted the plug into the outlet and...*

*They worked!  
And then.*

*They flickered.  
And then...*

*They didn't.*

*It was about that moment that I said to myself, "Is this worth it?"*

*Maybe you've been thinking the same thing.  
As you make cookies that could have used a bit more sugar.  
As you wrap presents that are uneven on the end.  
As you put up the do it yourself ornament that looks nothing like what you saw on Pinterest.*

*Perhaps you thought...*

*Is this worth it?  
Am I making a difference?*

*Especially this year.*

*I'm not churning out the vaccine.  
I'm not curing COVID.  
I'm not helping hundreds of people with their rent.*

*Can I make a difference this Christmas?*

Today, pay attention to Jesus. Because he thinks you can. But before we begin, a prayer: **O Lord, strengthen us by**

the truth. Your Word is the truth. Open our eyes to see what you want us to see; open our ears to hear what you want us to hear; and open our hearts to believe what you would have us believe. Amen.

## I. A STRANGE Statement

The words we are going to meditate on were spoken by Jesus himself. It's only three verses, but it's jam-packed with significance for you this Christmas. We're in Matthew 5 beginning at verse 14. Jesus said, "**You are the light of the world.**"

Jesus is talking to believers: the believers that were listening to him back then and believers who would read it in the future.

Like you.  
And me.

Jesus calls believers "light."  
This is a compliment.

People like light.  
People enjoy light.  
People need light.

Light helps to guide people.  
Light keeps you from being afraid in the dark.  
Light catches people's attention.  
Light warms people up.  
Light can be breathtaking.

Jesus calls believers light.  
But I want to draw your attention to the tiny, insignificant-looking word right before that.

**The.**

As in, believers are *the* light of the world.

Do you get the implications?

He didn't say that you are a light of the world.  
Or *one of many* lights of the world.  
Or even *part* of the light of the world.

He says, "You are *the* light of the world."

According to Jesus, there is no other light in this world than believers in Jesus.

That might seem strange to you.  
Because, could not a person of any faith type be a spiritual light for another?

Kinda like Christmas lights.

There are many varieties:

White lights.  
Multicolored lights.  
Ball lights.  
Blinking lights.

There must just be different kinds of *spiritual* lights too.

An unbeliever could be a light and bake cookies for their neighbor.

A person of the Jewish faith could be a light and buy a dreidel of chocolate for a family member.

A Buddhist could be a light and inspire you with a rousing rendition of Walking in a Winter Wonderland – all while being in a yoga pose.

People of all faiths or no faith can do nice things, right?

In fact, in preparation for this sermon, I read an internet article called, "[We asked a Satanist what he's doing for Christmas.](#)"

I was expecting to read about some kind of creepy ritual.

Instead:

"Well, we'll probably open our presents in the morning, then have Christmas lunch. My dad's not very well at the moment so maybe we'll go and see him in the afternoon if not on Boxing Day. After lunch we'll probably watch a few films and then go for a walk before tea – if it's really nice we'll go to the beach and have tea on the beach..."

Wow.

That sounds kinda nice.

How is then that Jesus would have the audacity to imply that believers in Jesus alone are the light of the world when even a Satanist can do a *nice* thing?

*Let us examine a very dark situation.*

*A woman has been caught in adultery.*

*She cheated on her husband.*

*She disappointed her children.*

*She frustrated her parents.*

*She made her dad cry.*

*Her friends have disowned her.*

*Her coworkers gossip about her.*

*If she would have lived at a time of the internet, there would have been a whole blog post written about how awful she is.*

*And the comment section is filled with horrific names all attributed to her.*

*Worst of all, she lives at a time when adultery can legally be punished by death.*

*So, the local religious leaders have gone to her house.*

*They confronted her with her sin.*

*They have taken her into the streets.*

*They are getting ready to throw stones at her until they kill her.*

*When...*

*Jesus approaches.*

*"What are you guys doing?"*

*"We're getting ready to punish her with death. She sinned. She committed adultery. The wages of sin is death so...You want in?"*

*Jesus looked at the rock the guy was handing to him.*

*He looked at the woman.*

*He looked back at the men.*

*“Sure. But why don’t we do this...The person who hasn’t done any sin; they get to throw the first stone.”*

*And...*

*It isn’t long before someone does throw a stone....  
...to the ground.*

*And all the other stones follow.*

*Until it’s only Jesus remaining.*

*He approaches the woman.*

*He asks her to get up.*

*He looks her in the eye and says, “I don’t condemn you.”*

That’s a story from Matthew 8:1-11. Read what Jesus says in the very next verse:

**Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (8:12)**

Have you ever thought what would have happened if some other religious leader approached the situation?

If it would have been a Rabbi, he might have said, “You are right to stone her, but you don’t have regulation size rocks. Here. Let me join you.”

If it would have been a Roman pagan, they might have said, “You don’t have to die, as long as you sacrifice your child to the gods.”

If it would have been a humanist, they might have said, “We’ve all got urges. Leave your family and move on. Make more mistakes. And enter into an even deeper depressive state.”

If it would have been Mormon, they might have said, “I’m not gonna kill you. In fact, here’s some iced tea. But know that you are forever outside of eternal paradise.”

If it would have been a Buddhist monk, they might have said, “These urges can be defeated, if your soul is strong enough. So...I don’t know what’s wrong with you.

If it would have been a “Christian” priest, they might have said, “You’re going to have to try really hard to make it up to God,” leaving her with a constant stress of trying to do enough her whole life.

Even if the person would have been some nice person who listened, took her out for lunch, and nodded as she told her story.

That’d be nice.

But it doesn’t effect eternal change.

But the person that met the woman wasn’t some nice guy.

It was Jesus.

He looked at her with God’s own eyes.

And said to her, “You are forgiven.”

**TRUTH:**

**Jesus is the Light.**

He shines through the darkness of gloom.

He penetrates the darkness of sin.

He illuminates the darkness of guilt.

He is God, who is light, speaking light to your soul.

And in case you did not think Jesus was serious, he also said, “Kill me and three days later, I’ll come back to life.”

They did kill him.  
And he did rise from the dead.

Jesus speaks the truth.  
He alone is God.  
He alone is the Light that shows us the reality of sin and the reality of our Savior.

No other being in history does.

And if you, dear believer, know that truth, then you, dear believer, are the light of the world.  
Because you know the Eternal Light...

Jesus.

**TRUTH:**  
**Jesus calls us the LIGHT because we have HIS Light.**

This is what makes believers different.  
It's not about who we are or what you do.

But the reason you are different is because of who Jesus is.

Jesus is the ONLY Savior.  
He is the ONLY one who will make an eternal difference this Christmas.

If you, dear friend, know that.  
Then, it is imperative of you to share it.

In fact...

That's the whole point.

## II. The Bright Solution

Jesus continued his illustration. He said this:

**A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither 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.**

There's simplicity in these illustrations.

If you set up one of those porcelain Christmas villages, putting out some matching Hallmark figurines like the tiny Christmas trees, the tiny baker's shop, the tiny school, the kid that fell off his sled, all matching parts to the town (except for the off-brand Skate Shop that Uncle Joe bought you...it's a different size), would you set up that brilliant village underneath your bed?

Nope.  
No one would see it.  
Except maybe the cat.

Or if you get a new lamp set up in your house because you're having trouble reading the fine handwriting of Aunt Sally's Christmas letter, once you have the lamp plugged in and the light bulb screwed in place, you don't cover it with a blanket.

That'd be silly.

Why buy the lamp in the first place?  
Why not just ask Aunt Sally to write more legibly?

Friends, God did the same thing.  
God has placed you into his light with a purpose.

He wants you to shine.

## 1) Shine

He wants you to tell your unbelieving friends about the hope you have this Christmas.  
He wants you to help your unchurched family understand what it means that “The Savior is born.”  
He wants you to tell your kids that Jesus loves them dearly and that’s why he was born in a manger.

He wants you to bring light to the darkness.

Jesus concludes:

**Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.  
(v.18)**

Because if you know that Jesus is the light.  
And you tell someone else that Jesus is the Light.  
God may just work through that message...

...to bring them into the light.

In fact, you might be more uniquely positioned to share Jesus with them.

### **Back to Christmas lights.**

You know how they come on a strand.  
What happens if you remove one of the lights?

Well...sometimes nothing.

But sometimes, when you remove one light, you are removing a light that is instrumental in relaying electricity to the other lights in the strand.  
Meaning that without that one light.  
There is no light.

Here’s what God is calling you to think about.

### **Who are you connected to?**

Who is next on the strand?  
Who do you know that by sharing the Light of Jesus God works to make them shine too?

Could be...

A coworker having a rough time.  
A girlfriend searching for comfort.  
A family member who is downright scared of COVID.

Be sure to shine in front of them.  
Because God put his light into you.

And...  
God might use you to shine Jesus’ light on them.

And...

God might work through you to bring them into the light.

And...

God might then work through them to bring his light to someone that you don't even know!

That's a big deal.

That's a huge deal.

That's an eternal deal.

And so, friends.

The answer is yes.

The kind works.

The small conversations.

That 1-minute social media post.

That...

Absolutely.

Matters.

Shine the light.

Amen.