

Fervent Witness

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[0 : 00] My name is Matthew Capone, and I'm the pastor here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church, and it's my joy to bring God's Word to you today. A special welcome if you are new or visiting with us.

We're glad that you're here, and we're glad that you're here not because we're trying to fill seats, but because we're following Jesus together as one community. And as we follow Jesus together, we become convinced there's no one so good.

They don't need God's grace, and no one so bad that they can't have it, which is why we come back week after week to hear what God has to say to us in His Word. We are in the middle of a break from the book of Judges to focus on our Grit and Grace Generosity Initiative.

Now, when you hear the phrase generosity initiative, of course, at some level, this is about money, but I have told you many times our church is not about money. It's about a mission. We just happen to need money to fuel that mission, and so what we are talking about really is not money.

It's about what God has for us as a church and where we want to go in being faithful to His commands, to His vision, or as we talked about last week, being faithful to the commander's intent.

[1 : 08] This is our last week, though, so we will go return next week to the book of Judges, and I know some of you have been waiting. We will be looking at Jael taking a tent peg to the head of Sisera.

So, the time is soon upon us. As our last Sunday, though, of the Grit and Grace Generosity Initiative, we are receiving commitment cards during our final hymn this morning.

If you need a commitment card, this is your time to raise a hand for Sam Ashmore to give you one. And Sam will run around and make sure everyone who has one has one. We are returning to the same passage we began with back at the end of September.

We are looking at Matthew chapter 5. When we looked at it before, we talked about the church as an embassy, as we talked about church being a city set upon a hill.

This is one of the richest passages in all of Scripture, and even having looked at it in September and looking at it today, we're still just kind of scratching the surface. So, we're going to zero in on a couple things this morning, and once again, I'm going to say something, but not everything.

[2 : 17] We're going to zero in on letting our light shine, and we'll focus on two things in particular. We're going to look, and these are our two points, by the way. We're going to look at verse 14, you are the light.

Verse 16, let your light shine. So, we're going to talk about two things. You are the light. Let your light shine. With that, I invite you to turn with me in God's Word.

You can turn in your Bible. You can turn on your phone. You can turn in your worship guide. No matter where you turn, remember that this is God's Word, and God tells us that His Word is more precious than gold, even the finest gold, and it is sweeter than honey, even honey that comes straight from the honeycomb.

And so, that's why we read now Matthew 5, starting at verse 14. You are the light of the world. A city set upon a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[3 : 25] I invite you to pray with me as we come to this portion of God's Word. Our Father in heaven, we do thank you for Jesus' words, that He is the light of the world.

And we thank you that you shine that light brightly through your Word. Lord, we ask that you would do that this morning, that you would help us to understand, Father, to believe, to obey.

Most of all, that you would show us Jesus Christ, that our love and affection for Him would be greater, that our reverence and awe for Him would increase, and that would result in us following Him and obeying Him.

We confess that we can't do these things on our own. We need your help. And so we ask for that help by your Spirit, that you would speak to us clearly in your Word. We thank you that we don't have to worry this morning about whether we've earned those things or deserved them.

We know that we haven't, and so we simply ask for them in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. There was a man named John Godfrey Sachs in the 19th century who is an American poet who is centered for his life mostly in New England, and he is famous, or at least his one poem in particular is famous because it tells the story of six different blind men exploring an elephant.

[4 : 54] These six blind men are trying to figure out, just by touching the elephant, what exactly is going on. So the first one touches the elephant's side and feels, you know, firm, and so he says, well, this elephant, it's kind of like a wall.

Now the second man grabs the tusk of the elephant. He said, you know, honestly, to me, I think this elephant is kind of like a spear actually, more spear than wall. The third one grabs the trunk of the elephant and says, no, actually the elephant is kind of like a snake, okay?

The fourth one grabs the knee, and he says this knee is so firm that this elephant must be maybe more like a tree. The fifth one grabs the ear and realizes how foolish everyone else has been because actually the elephant is like a fan, right?

And then the sixth one, though, has an even different insight, grabs the tail and says the elephant is, no, it's actually like a rope. And then Godfrey Sachs closes, applies his poem at the very end to people who are discussing theology and basically says these folks who are debating all these things, they don't really know what they're talking about.

They're missing the big picture. They see this small piece. They think it's the hole. No, it's actually this elephant. And so he uses it to throw religious people under the bus as we talk about our ideas of what God is and does.

[6 : 15] Some have even taken this idea and applied it to different religions and said, well, all these different religions, you know, they're different perspectives on the same thing. They're all actually similar, right?

They're pointing to one thing. Jesus here tells us the exact opposite. Verse 14, he says, you are the light.

And so we're going to talk about a couple things at the very beginning here. First, I want to focus on the word the and then on the word light. He says, you are the light. That's what he doesn't say.

He doesn't say you are a light. He doesn't say you are one way of many ways. No, this is exclusive. One problem with the story of the elephant that observers have pointed out is that to be able to tell that story, I must be so enlightened that I am the only one who can see.

So everyone else is blind, right? But I have this omniscience. I can see the whole picture. In other words, I'm criticizing everyone else because I must be on this higher level, this higher plane.

[7 : 25] I'm the only man who can see in a world of blind men. Another critique, though, comes from a pastor named Kevin DeYoung who wrote a book called Taking God as His Word, and he points out another issue.

He says, what if the elephant could talk? And the elephant actually described to these blind men what was happening, what was going on. If that was the case, the elephant would be able to say, no, I'm actually an elephant.

This is the reality of the world. This is how everything comes together. Of course, Kevin DeYoung there is saying, Jesus is like the elephant that talks.

It is not simply that there's all these blind people grasping around trying to figure out the nature of the world. No, God has actually spoken to us clearly in His Word, and He has outlined that He is the way and the only way.

It is a nice story, but it actually makes for bad philosophy. Why does Jesus say, you are the light?

[8 : 32] Why is Christianity the only way? There's a variety of reasons. One of them is that the elephant has spoken. God has told us in His Word.

In fact, it's insulting to religious people to say that all religions are the same. It fails to grapple with the differences and the disagreements.

Jesus tells us, John chapter 14, I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.

You are not a light. You are the light. I want to give you another reason, though, that we should think of Christianity as the light and not a light.

Of course, God has spoken to us. That ought to be enough. We can also come to this just by looking around and being honest about how the world works. If there are many different lights, if there are many different paths, then that must mean that the problem that humanity faces can be solved in a variety of ways, right?

[9 : 44] It also means that the problem that humanity faces must not be that great or that bad. And so maybe technology can solve it. Maybe greater advances can help us overcome these things.

Maybe if we just learn more. On page 7 of your worship guide, Pastor Timothy Keller points out this, that this idea of progress, that we can somehow solve the world's problems through all these different ways, has shown itself to be insufficient.

Technological knowledge, education, and social policy have not overcome disease, famine, war, poverty, racism, and depression. But history has shown us that increasing knowledge can be used in terrible ways to worsen our situation because the greatest barrier to progress is actually within us.

In other words, Christianity is the way because it is the only way that correctly diagnoses the problem and gives us a solution that is great and powerful enough.

The problem is not outside of us. Our problem is not that we need greater technology and knowledge. In fact, those things often undermine us. The problem is us.

[11 : 08] I've told you the story before about the English writer G.K. Chesterton who replied to a question that was printed in the newspaper. It said, Please write in and answer this prompt.

What is wrong with the world? Chesterton wrote perhaps the shortest response to the paper. He had a letter that said this, Dear Sir, regarding your article, What's wrong with the world?

I am. Yours truly, G.K. Chesterton. Why is Christianity the light and not a light?

It is the only diagnosis that gets to the heart of the problem. Why is Christianity the light and not a light? It is the only diagnosis that helps us understand the problem is not ultimately outside of us.

The problem is inside of us. The problem is not our knowledge and our technology. The problem is our heart. And the heart is not something technology or knowledge can change.

[12 : 11] And so it is not simply that it diagnoses the problem correctly. It is also that it provides the only solution great enough. What can change the human heart?

One power and one power only, God by His Spirit. God is the only one who can change the hearts and lives of men.

Remember we talked about that in Judges and we'll talk about it again. He is the only one who can change hearts of stone into hearts of flesh. Until and unless that happens, nothing else is powerful enough.

That's why Paul tells us, Ephesians chapter 1, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is the power that's at work in you.

Why is Christianity the light? It's the only answer with the power to change the heart.

[13 : 16] It's the only one that presents us with a solution of God coming down to us, not us climbing up to God. It's like I said when Judah was baptized this morning.

Romans chapter 5, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Judah played no role. All he did was receive. The only solution powerful enough to solve the human heart is one in which we play no role.

We simply receive. You are the light. Why? Because God has spoken to us.

The elephant actually tells us what reality is like. And because Christianity only does, only Christianity does justice to the problem of our world and to the solution.

He doesn't simply say that they are the light, though. He also says they are the light. This is the way in which truth comes to bear. This is the way that provides a path out that brings warmth in the cold.

[14 : 28] Jesus also tells us, not just that he's the way, but John 8, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

What does it mean to be the light? We talked about it last time in this passage. It means that we show what's true in a world filled with lies.

It means that we have true and reasonable hope in a world of cynicism and despair. It means that we can show forgiveness and reconciliation in a world that only knows how to cancel people. It means that God gives us the power to make what is broken and twisted whole and straight. It means rescue from slavery into freedom.

The light means modeling humility in a world that can't get along. It means reminding the world that the problems that we face are so great that we are not able to fix them.

[15 : 46] And it's because we know that God is our creator and our redeemer. John also tells us, John chapter three, verse 19, and this is the judgment.

The light has come into the world and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. Christian, the point is this.

we are not talking about a truth. We are talking about the truth. We are not talking about a way. We are talking about the way.

We are not talking about an answer. We are talking about the answer. We are not talking about a matter of preference.

We're talking about a matter of life and death. We are not discussing an opinion. We are discussing a fact and an announcement.

[16 : 52] Everything I've just said, though, about the light, really, is not about us. It's about Christianity. It's about God. And yet that's not actually what this passage says here.

He doesn't say Christianity is the light of the world. Verse 14, he says, you are the light. Of course, it's only when we are convinced that it is the light and that it is the light that we can do what we're commanded next.

Verse 14 and verse 16 go together in a logical progression. Verse 14 tells us, you are the light. So, therefore, verse 16, let your light shine.

Jesus is following basic logic here, which is that we go first from convictions and then to practice. It is our beliefs that we act upon. And so we have this then command from him in verse 16.

In the same way, let your light shine before others. What does it mean for us to let our light shine? Well, the rest of the verse clarifies for us what Jesus means by that.

[18 : 03] Verse 16 again, Being the light means being a small light that reflects and shows the greater light.

It says your good works, they're going to see those. What are they going to do? In other words, you're a mirror. You're a painting.

You're a picture. You're showing them what God looks like so that they can return to him. You're showing them how good God is so that they can give him glory.

Remember, we talked the end of September when we first looked at this verse about the church being the city set upon a hill. And we discussed the concept of the church as an embassy, this embassy that represents another country in a foreign land.

What do embassies have? Embassies have ambassadors. If the church is the embassy, if it's the outpost of God's kingdom, then its members are the ambassadors of that kingdom.

[19 : 18] They are the ones providing a taste of that place here and now. God's ambassadors represent him to the world. In context, this is Jesus giving his larger sermon called the Sermon on the Mount.

He has just finished discussing the Beatitudes. His famous list of what it is that Christians should look like and how it is that they experience blessing.

What then does it mean for our light to shine? It means for those things in verses 2 through 11 of Matthew chapter 5 to be true of us. Our light shines when we are mocked or marginalized for our faith and we're unfazed.

Because we have something greater that we hope in. Our light shines when we forgive others rather than canceling them or cutting them off.

Our light shines when we demonstrate our understanding of how we've been forgiven and we're able to extend that forgiveness to others. Our light shines when we share with others how God has changed us.

[20 : 43] When we tell them the story of what we used to be like and what we're like now. That God's been at work growing the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

That we have more love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. Our light shines when we do the opposite of this world.

Our world. I mentioned this before. A historian has noted that in the first century in Rome, Romans were generous with their bodies and stingy with their money.

Christians were the exact opposite. Christians were stingy with their bodies and generous with their money. When we are stingy with our bodies and generous with our money, we are letting our light shine.

We're letting our light shine when we gather together on Sunday morning and we are showing that there is something even greater and more glorious than being in the mountains.

[21 : 46] There is something even greater than leisure and recreation and trinkets. And we would say ultimately there is someone greater. Those are all ways in which we let our light shine.

We let our light shine when we rejoice in what's good and true. Even when or especially when those are the same things despised by the world.

In fact, you may have noticed on the front of your worship guide, page one, this quote from a man named John Piper discussing what the actual purpose of Christian missions is.

He says, Worship is the fuel and goal of missions. It's the goal of missions because in missions we simply aim to bring the nations into the white hot enjoyment of God's glory.

The goal of missions is the gladness of the peoples and the greatness of God. That sounds an awful lot like verse 16. Let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[22 : 58] Let them see your good works so that they might worship. And so that's what we're talking about when we say as a congregation we want to be a people of fervent witness.

We want to be a people whose light shines brightly. We want to be faithful as an embassy and an outpost here in Southwest Colorado Springs.

We don't simply want people to be able to see our physical steeple from a distance. We want them to be able to see the greatness and glory and goodness of God.

And we want them to see it in the ways that we live and work and play. So as we come to the end of our generosity initiative, this is our final piece of our vision.

That as this church grows and expands, we want the light to shine even brighter. We want this light, these lights here at Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church to shine even further.

[24 : 13] And so that's why we are in the midst of our Grit and Grace Generosity Initiative. God has brought us growth. We want to be faithful with the growth that he's given us.

God has planted us as a light. We want to be faithful with that light. We want to bring a second pastor to come help us learn and grow and move forward.

As I've talked with some of you, and I think I said this at our congregational meeting, we see kind of two buckets for the man that we're looking to bring. We see a bucket of discipleship and community here within Cheyenne Mountain Presbyterian Church.

And we see a bucket of outreach and evangelism. We want someone who's going to come and help us shine even brighter. We want someone who's going to come train and equip us and lead us as we aim to obey Jesus' command that we shine the light of the world.

And so that's why we've been inviting and challenging all of you over the past five weeks now to join us in that. Our goal is to raise \$800,000 so we can eliminate our building debt, which frees up almost \$8,000 a month on our mortgage payment.

[25 : 22] We want to take that, we want to take it away from our mortgage payment, and we want to redirect it towards fueling our mission even more. We want even more fuel for the mission that God has given us, the mission of being a thick community with robust discipleship, fervent witness, a place that's a gospel hub where people are brought in, equipped, and sent out.

And so I hope that you've been excited as we've talked about this the last several weeks, that you want to join us in the future that we believe God has for us as a church.

As I told you last week, we have 23 households that have already pledged towards this initiative. Two of those are not even directly connected to our church anymore. They are part of our alumni, as I affectionately call folks who have been with us and have moved on.

And together they pledged \$314,000, \$314,600. And we're inviting the rest of the families of this congregation to help us close that gap.

And so that's what we're going to do during our closing hymn. Our deacons are going to pass the offering bags again for you guys to hand in commitment cards, and we're praying that God would continue to be faithful to this congregation, that we would be able to move forward in mission

together.

[26 : 40] Now, what we've discussed this morning is really a discussion of little lights. Jesus says, you are the light of the world.

He's talking about the church. He's talking about Christians. Why is it that we are able to serve as lights? I told you earlier, the problem in the world is not outside of us, it's within us.

If the problem is within us, then we don't actually have light. And so how is it that we're supposed to shine bright? We shine bright as little lights because of the great light.

Jesus is able to say, you are the light of the world, because he says, I am the light of the world.

That's what Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones says.

He says, the Lord who said, you are the light of the world, also said, I am the light of the world.

These two statements must always be taken together, since the Christian is only the light of the world because of his relationship to him who is himself the light of the world.

[27 : 52] So not only have we received light, we have been made light. Christian, you shine and show only what you've been given.

We hold out small lights because of the great light of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, the one who is the way, the truth, and the life, the one who is the light of the world, the one and the only one who comes to redeem and to save.

And so we look to the great light to reflect our small light in the world, the lives that God has given us.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we praise you and we thank you that you sought out us. We didn't seek you. That you climbed down to us.

You don't make us climb up to you. We thank you for the good news of the gospel in Jesus Christ, that you do bring light into our darkness and hope into our despair. We ask that you would remind us of that truth this morning, that you would drive it beyond our minds and into our hearts, that it would lead us to honor and praise and love and worship you.

[29 : 07] And we ask these things in the mighty name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.