

**Sunday, August 16, 2009**

**Matthew 5.13-16  
Letting Your Light Shine  
SWCOB 8.16.09**

Years ago during an evening at a Billy Graham Crusade,  
A businessman went forward,  
And received Jesus Christ as Savior.

The following Sunday he went to church  
For the first time,  
And recognized a fellow businessman.

After the service he went and spoke to the man.

He said,  
“I was at the Billy Graham Crusade,  
And I went forward and received Christ.”

The other man said,  
“Yes, I heard and I’m delighted.”

Then the man who had just received Christ,  
Asked his business associate,

“How long have we known one another?  
And how long have we done business with each other?”

“I expect it’s been twenty years,” said the other.

“And all this time you have known Christ as Savior?”

“Yes, I have,” he said.

“I don’t remember you ever speaking to me about Christ,  
During those years,” the businessman said.

“You mean you never had enough concern,  
Over my spiritual welfare to ever mention Jesus?”  
Is the Christian faith our best kept secret?

Have you ever shared the joy of Christ with anyone?  
Or is faith a “private matter?”

We love to gossip,  
Have we ever gossiped for Christ?

Does your faith impact others?

Does it come up in conversation at work or school?

How do you respond to the disparity between,  
How you try to live your life  
And how others live their lives around you?

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In ways, many of us are “rabbit hole” Christians.

In the morning we pop our heads,  
Out of our safe Christian homes,  
Hold our breath throughout work,

Scurry home to our families,  
And thank God,  
We didn't have to witness to our faith.

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The rabbit hole Christian,  
And the businessman had one thing in common.

They both compartmentalized their faith.

That is, they divide into separate compartments,  
The differing aspects of their lives.

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Actually compartmentalization,  
Is the exact opposite of integrity.

For integrity means wholeness or completeness.  
The root of integrity is integrate.

To integrate is to gather together,  
Those differing components.

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And so the ultimate question today is:  
Do we live lives of Christian integrity?  
Or do we compartmentalize our Christian faith?

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There are three ways that church relates to the world.

The first way is to withdraw from the world,  
To live separate from the world.

The Amish, Old Order Mennonite,  
And the early Brethren lived lives like this.

They lived in closed communities,  
And did not associate with the “other” people.

They practiced a strict moral lifestyle among themselves,  
And did not seek to influence,  
The non-Christians around them.

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The second way that church relates to the world,  
Is to live by the same values as the society around them.

In this way, one cannot distinguish between a Christian,  
And a non-Christian.

They practice a lifestyle that falls within the acceptable norms  
Of morality within society.

If the society finds something morally acceptable,  
These Christians do, too.

The society, not faith, dictates what is right from wrong.

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The third way the church relates to the world,  
Is to seek to influence the world.

This was what Jesus talked about in our text today.

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Jesus uses two metaphors to show how,  
His disciples should be influential.

Jesus told his disciples they are the salt of the earth.

We can't do without salt!

Particularly this time of year!

Salt brings out the flavor of corn on the cob.

But we don't salt corn because we want to taste salt

We don't put salt on corn on the cob and say,  
"Boy, that was good salt!"

We put salt on corn on the cob and say,  
"Boy, that was good corn on the cob!"

So too, like salt,  
Our Christian influences should not point to us.

Our Christian saltiness should point to Christ,  
The Great Flavor Enhancer.

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The second metaphor Jesus uses is light.

“You are the light of the world.”

People don't light a lamp,  
And then put it under a bowl.

They put it on a stand,  
And it gives light to everyone in the house.

We don't turn on a light to see the light-bulb,  
We turn a light on to see the book we're reading,  
The features on a face,  
A path for our feet to trod.

**In the same way,** Jesus said,

**Let your light shine before others,  
That they may see your good works,  
And praise your Father in heaven.**

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I heard someone once say,  
    There are people around us everyday  
        Who have never opened a Bible.

Yet they are reading us.  
    Do they see God in our lives?

Do they say that you are salt of the earth?

Do your actions or words remind them of Jesus?

Do we let our light shine,  
So they know that what we do,  
Is not about us,  
But about Jesus?

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The Christian theologian, John Stott,  
Had recently come back from India,  
Where he had heard of a little Hindu girl,  
    Who had been brought up in a strict Hindu family.

She had experienced being among Christians.

Somebody asked her one day what she thought a Christian was.

She thought for a moment and replied,  
“Well, as far as I can see,  
A Christian is somebody who is different,  
From everybody else.”

How I wish that this was true in America.

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Brothers and sisters,

We do not want a church to move with the world!

We want a church that will move the world!

We cannot have the influences of the world transform us!

We must have the influences of the church transform the world!

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We cannot assume

That our church building is the “light of the world.”

We must not assume that people will be attracted to us,  
Like bugs to a light on a dark night.

We must not live by the theology,  
Found in your own Iowa movie, Field of Dreams,  
“If you build it, they will come!”

It is not the church building,  
That is the light of the world.

The light of the world,  
Is the way our Christian faith,  
Is expressed in our daily living.

If we are to live lives of integrity,  
We need to integrate our faith and practice,  
Into all the compartments of our lives.  
We are called by Jesus to live our lives differently,  
Than the way others live their lives.

Jesus said I am the way!

We are called by Jesus to influence society,  
By being salt of the earth.  
To flavor, enhance, and enrich lives,  
By the way in which we live our own.

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There was a man who was stuck in traffic.

He heard the person behind him honking his horn.

The guy wouldn't quick honking.

So the man sticks his hand out the window,

And with his hand gives him a rude gesture.

This guy has forgotten two things:

He has forgotten his behavior as a Christian  
And he has forgotten that his wife,  
Recently put a bumper sticker on his car that reads,  
“Honk if you love Jesus!”

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John Stott describes today’s society,  
As dishonest, corrupt, immoral,  
Violent, pornographic,

With a total diminishing of respect for human life and dignity.

Whose fault is this?

Stott say, “Let me put it this way.”

“If the house is dark at night,  
There is no sense blaming the house.

That what happens when the sun goes down.  
The question should be,

‘Where’s the light?’

If society becomes corrupt,  
There is no sense blaming society.

That’s what happens when fallen human society,  
Is left to itself,  
And human evil is left unchecked and unrestrained.

The question is:

‘Where is the church?’”

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I was talking to the pastor at Central Christian church.

He told me that when he first came to Waterloo,  
He asked a police officer if he could ride with him,  
During his shift.

He said he couldn’t believe what kind of verbal abuse,  
The police officer received,  
As he drove from neighborhood to neighborhood.

He also noticed just how many children,

Stayed out on the streets way on into the night.

And he asked himself  
Where are the parents?

And we ask,  
Where is the church?

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Which model of church are we?

Are we like the old Brethren,  
Living separate from the world,  
Trying to stay pure and unblemished,  
From a sick society?

Are we the church model,  
Which is not distinguishable from the rest of society?

What society calls acceptable,  
We call it that to.

Or are we the third model,  
The one that Jesus teaches us to be?

Are we the salt of the earth,  
Or the light of the world?

Are we out there everyday,  
Slogging it out for Christ?

Does our church influence the society around us?  
Or does the society around us influence the church?

It is your call!

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Do you know that 2% of a population,  
Can influence the rest of the population?

Robert Bellah, a psychologist,  
Is quoted in Psychology Today as saying,

“We should not underestimate the significance,  
Of the small group of people,  
Who have a new vision of a just and gentle world.

The quality of a culture may be changed,  
When 2% of its people have a new vision.”

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Jesus calls us to be the salt of the earth.

How will our faith impact those around us?

How can South Waterloo influence,  
The communities of Orange and Waterloo?

Can we uphold the moral teachings of Jesus,  
And be quiet as we sit by and watch the world,  
Slowly disintegrate?

Can we be the light of the world,  
And watch as marriages and families break up,

As the communities around us fall apart,  
As immorality and unethical behavior,  
Permeates our society and culture,

Can we simply allow evil to influence culture,  
From the poor to the very rich,

From the low in stature to the very high,  
From the bankers to the politicians?

Can we be true disciples of Christ,  
And not have a desire,  
To share the life-promising faith we have?  
To cry out there is a better way!?

Can we respond to the urgent pleas of Jesus,  
To influence the society around us,

By warming the seats of our pews,  
And do nothing in response,  
To the desperate needs that face our world?

The answer is no.

Our salt has lost its saltiness,  
Our lamp is hidden under a bowl.

Brothers and sisters, let your light shine!

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“This little light of mine,  
I’m going to let it shine . . .”