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“Domine, volumus Jesum videre,” John 12:21.

“Credo, Domine; adjuva incredulitatem meam,” Mark 9:24.

MATTHEW 5

... ¹⁴You are the light of the world. A city located on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket. No, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶In the same way let your light shine in people’s presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven...



Who do you think you are? In the first ages of the Christian era one of the most effective mission strategies was the holy life of the Christians. At the love and virtue of the first Christians, the heathens were astonished; and through it many were convinced that this apparently new religion must truly be from God, because it made men so good, loving, and humble. To all Christians in all ages that should be true.

Who does Jesus think you are? Jesus thinks you are the light of the world. I am talking to the church, and so I am talking to believers in Jesus. I tell you: Before people see and trust that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, they will see you. Before they taste and see that the Lord is good, they will have a taste in their mouth and a viewpoint of whoever brings that Light.

Christians just aren’t like the world. They shine as lights. The most effective testimony, the strongest recommendation that Christians can give to Christianity is to live humbly, honest, loving, and kind, like Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus Thinks You Are Different

The apostles were called the light of the world because they were sent to bring the light of life to a world lost in sin, sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death. So preachers are still supposed to be the light of the world, causing the the light to shine on those in darkness. Yet these words have to do with all Christians. To the Philipians Paul writes that they are to shine as lights in the world, and then our text says, *“Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works.”*

First a Christian must have light before letting his light shine. Therefore these words aren't addressed to those who have no faith, the unbelieving who are without the light. If you are still in darkness, your first care must be to seek the light. What is this light?

Light is not science, technology, and learning of the world. Many people are educated, and the world literacy rate must be off the charts. But people can be educated and yet be without this light. Their souls are wrapped in thick darkness and without hope in the world. There are uneducated people, unable to read and write, who rejoice in this light as the star of their hope.

In John 8:12 Jesus says, "*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*" Jesus Christ Himself and He alone is the One true Light. To have light, light for eternal life, you must seek it in Jesus Christ. You must embrace Him as your Savior, your Righteousness, and the atonement for your sins. If you see in Jesus Christ the wisdom of God and the Way to the Father, then you have the Light in you.

Are you in darkness? Do you know where your soul would land if you should die today? Have you discovered that your righteousness does not surpass the best of the best? Have you realized you break the least of God's commandments? Seek this Light. Come forth out of darkness. If you sleep, awake, and arise from the dead, because Christ will give you light. He will not leave you in darkness. He will enlighten your eyes to see in Him the help of your soul.

Now those who have the Light are commanded, "*Let your light shine before men.*" A Christian cannot be a Christian in secret without ever showing it or letting anyone know it. It would be a delusion to think you can be a private Christian for yourself and don't need to join a church or make a public confession of faith. In the days of Jesus' ministry on earth, many of the chief rulers believe in Him. They believed this Jesus of Nazareth to be the promised Messiah. But because of the Pharisees, they didn't confess Him. They didn't want to be put out of the synagogue! Yet that's exactly how they demonstrated they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God. If you believe in Jesus Christ, confess Him, and don't let the fear of friends and neighbors prevent you.

A confession with the mouth, however, is part of the story. Here the Lord is speaking of a confession in works; for He adds, "*That they may see your good*

works.” (Of course, the Lord does not mean we should try to do good works in order to be seen. It’s not that we do good works to publicize our goodness. Yet we shouldn’t hide our good works as though we were ashamed of them.) The fruits of the Spirit are to be seen in us, but we are to bear them in such a way that the honor will be given to the Lord, not unto us.

The very simple meaning of our text is ... that those who have the light should walk as children of light. Resist the works of darkness. Follow what is good. Walk away from the sinful nature. Step with the Spirit and show that the light of Jesus Christ is in you. Follow the pattern of Jesus Christ, do good day by day, as you have opportunity, in public and in secret, when people see you or do not see you. If you will walk that way, you won’t need to make a lot of noise with it. They’ll know what you are doing. People will soon see Jesus in you.

The Lord urges us to shoulder up to the task. Let’s earnestly take it to heart how necessary of a thing it is for us Christians to let our light shine in good works. This urging is needed with the very best of us, because the sinful nature in the Christian is always lazy about what’s good, always disinclined to everything pleasing to God.

This text offers three strong arguments for being diligent about good works:

1st Put into practice what is good. Study God’s Word for what is right and do it.

- *“Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things,”* Philippians 4:8.
- *“The servant who knows the Master’s will and doesn’t do it is beaten with many blows,”* Luke 12:47.

Just like that the Scriptures cut off from the kingdom of God not only those who do evil works, but those who will not walk in good works. Hear the command of the Lord your God; and **do good**. It’s the command of Him who gave you body and soul, the command of Him who purchased you with His own blood. He is the Lord, you are His people. Acknowledge Him as Lord. Do His bidding. Obey His command. Walk in good works.

2nd You are a child of Light. It is in the nature of a light that it will shine. A light that doesn’t shine isn’t actually light. Do you have the light of Christ? Then let its rays show in your behavior and life. Ephesians 5:8,10, *“You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ... proving what is right in the Lord.”* We are made Christians without our good works, for it is God alone

who creates people new in Christ Jesus. But we were made Christians that we immediately agree with God's will, cooperate with the Holy Spirit, and walk in good works.

Paul says emphatically that your light was "*prepared in advance for you to do*"; it was foreordained. It was determined in the eternal purpose of God. His children walk in good works. Don't say in your heart that it is okay to do wrong. That's a trap of the devil! For God has ordained His children to walk in good works.

Remember also that the brighter the light, the brighter it will shine. When the shining diminishes and ceases, the light is out. If you're determined to walk in good works, see to it that you figure out how to do so more and more. If you have obstacles to your good works, fight through it like a battle! Sort it out like a puzzle! Drown the sinful nature! Learn God's mercy so that the rays of your light increase.

3rd The main point of our good works: We Christians are to walk in them in order to commend the gospel to those around us. We should so walk that seeing our works, people of the world would have to conclude that Jesus Christ is no mere name, no mere theory, but that there is a divine power in that name to lift sinners out of the filth of vice, to exalt us above sordid worldliness and to prompt and to draw souls into that which is good and noble.

Paul writes to the Philippians, "*That you may become blameless and pure, children of God, without fault, in a warped and crooked generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,*" Philippians 2:15. Christians just aren't like the world. They are to shine as lights in the world, commending their faith by their works. Let's never forget to tell why we do what is right, but let us also never forget that our actions can speak louder than our words. Let's have a reputation so that people in the world would say, "That person is a member of Bethlehem, so you can depend on it that (s)he will do what is honest and right and good."

"I'm not up to that task," you may say. Truly, it doesn't fit us sinners. But it fits the One who called us and enlightened us. He is faithful to forgive, to make you salt, and to lighten your heart and hands. Amen.

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in Him, so that you may overflow with hope, through the power of the Holy Spirit. Amen.