

# Light of the World

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Date: 02 February 2025

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right. Welcome to Sunday at First Baptist Henrietta. We like to see people get around here.

Like to lift up the name of the Lord in worship and thank God for that. Thank God for that last hymn. That was incredible. Sometimes it's good just to go back to the basics. Y'all know how many original verses there were to Amazing Grace? Anybody know? Twelve. That's right. Twelve.

Twelve verses. Have y'all ever sung them all here? I did that once when I was a minister of music at a church. The pastor who showed me all twelve verses, I wasn't even aware there were that many, and he said, would you lead all these on Sunday? And we did, and it was a lot of fun.

Um, so maybe, maybe at some point we'll do that here. We are finishing up our series on salt and light here, and this is taken directly from the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' most, I guess you could call it famous sermon, so to speak, that he preached during his 33 years here on earth, found in Matthew chapter 5. Just by way of review, um, a couple Sundays ago we talked about salt. Salt. We began with two Sundays talking about salt, and the first takeaway was, are we worth our salt? We looked at the inherent value that salt had back in ancient times. Still very valuable today, of course, and scientists have discovered literally over a thousand uses for salt, uh, in our culture and communities, but salt back then was absolutely, you couldn't live without it. It kept your meat fresh, et cetera. Roman soldiers were often paid in salt instead of money, and so we ask the question, are we worth our salt? If Jesus said, you are the salt of the earth, are we living as the salt of the earth, or has it been wasted on us in our time here on earth? Let that not be said of God's people.

And then a couple Sundays ago, we talked about the takeaway, uh, from the next Sunday on salt, which was, have we lost our flavor? Jesus said, if the salt has lost its flavor, how can it be good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet? And that is what the world does around us to everyone, is trample them under their feet. We see that, this heartless, cruel world around us.

[ 2 : 32 ] Jesus came to bring something different. He came to bring life. He came to bring hope. He came to bring grace, forgiveness, love. And now that he is back in heaven, he's left us, his church, his people, to be that life, that hope, that love, and to bring the truth of the salt. That is what brings the flavor that this world so desperately needs. So have we lost our flavor? Have we gotten away from the source of our flavor? And then last week, we talked about light. Jesus said, you are the light of the world.

You are like a city on a hill. And we learned a couple things about that. A city on a hill attracts attention. Whether we like it or not, as the people of God, we will attract attention. What are we doing with the attention that we attract? And then after that, we talked about, kind of harking back to Gideon, the story of Gideon, back in the Old Testament, and how God commanded his people to take their lights and their lamps and put them inside a jar, and then at the right moment, break the jars, and then the light would shine, blow the trumpets, and God won a mighty victory that day through his way of doing things.

Certainly not any military strategy that any of us would have come up with. And so the question was, does God want to break a jar in your life so the light can shine? We looked at Paul's writings, how he said, we are like a treasure hidden in a clay jar, an earthen vessel.

And God wants that treasure to shine through our bodies, our lives, so he can do something through us. See, folks, we're all basically about the same. We're all run-of-the-mill people. We all have problems.

We all have inconsistencies. We all have issues. And God has to have so much grace to work with a group people that looks like us. And he does this all around the world. He is using his people to shine his light into this dark, dark world. So what jar does God want to break in your life, in your life,

so his light can shine through? Maybe it's a jar you've been holding on to, and that was the question ultimately we came to was, how bright is our light? Are we hiding it under a bushel basket? Are we hiding it inside a jar? Or is God's light shining through us? Are the family members, the co-workers, the neighbors, the people in our lives impacted by the light of Jesus Christ shining through us? So let's go to Matthew chapter 5 now. If you're not already there, turn to Matthew chapter 5. If you're able to join me in standing, would you do that in honor of God's word? And let's read it together. Matthew chapter 5 and verse 13. You, Jesus says, are the salt of the earth. But if the salt should lose its taste, how can it be made salty? It's no longer good for anything but to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city situated on a hill cannot be hidden. No one puts a light, lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lamp stand, obviously. And it gives light for all who are 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 in heaven. Would you pray with me? God, I pray that you would give us wisdom and understanding from the reading of your word today, from the preaching of your word today. Let it be your words and not mine, [6:25] God. I sit and I prepare these sermons and sometimes I'm confident in what I have to say. And then other times it's like, man, God, you're going to have to take this one over. And I ask you to do that today, God. You leave us with something that you have for us. It's in Jesus' name we ask it. Amen. You may be seated. Thanks for standing. All right, we're going to do a little test of your Texan-ness, if that's all right. How many are native Texans here? You were born in this great state. How many of you are naturalized? You were born somewhere else, but you moved here.

Good. Welcome. Thank you. Holly, your hands should be up. What's that? Imported? Yeah, imported goods. There's like extra taxes you have to pay on imported goods. Yeah, let's not get into all that right now.

We don't need to. Listen, when I married my wife, I gave her a certificate that said you are now an honorary citizen of the great nation of Texas. It was great. Just by marriage, you know. So let me go ahead and give you your test real quick and then we'll move on. The stars at night are big and bright.

Good. All right. We're in good company here. So there they are. There's the bright night stars in the sky in Texas. It's great. We love it, right? I was standing out in my backyard looking up and you know, normally I was mostly raised in cities. Now I was born in Fort Worth, but spent my first year of life in Mejia, Texas. Anybody know where Mejia is? Anybody know how to spell it? M-E-X-I-A. There's your real Texans right there, man. If you know how to spell Mejia. And by the way, it's not just Mejia, it's Mejia. If you're from there, it's Mejia. Mejia. But then we quickly moved to Corsicana and Corsicana is a little bigger now. I still wouldn't call it a big city by any stretch, but back then it was a lot like Henrietta. So it was smaller, you know. But mostly I lived in cities and when you're living in cities, you can't see as many stars at night up in the sky. But last night I looked up and did anybody else see? It was a pretty clear night. The sky was full of stars out there. It was really, really neat to see. And I just sat out there with a dog for a minute and found what I thought was the Milky Way. I'm convinced it was. And that's the only galaxy or constellation.

Yeah, I'm not into astronomy at all. But that's the only one I know. So anyway, may I introduce a singular truth to you all that you probably didn't know until you showed up here at church this morning? Stars are made to shine. I see the shocked looks on your faces. Stars are made to shine. [9:20] Of course we all knew that. It's what they do, right? What's our star in our solar system? The sun, right? It's a big old star. Provides heat, provides light. We're grateful for it. God certainly set it up the right way. If you look at the solar system that we live in and then you realize how small it is in just the vast space that's out there. I mean, space is seemingly unlimited by any study that science has done. They have not yet found the limits or boundaries of space out there. Why? Because there's no limit and boundary to our God. So our God has created something that is so much bigger than us. He's put us in our galaxy. But there are so many other galaxies out there that likely humankind will never even have an opportunity to explore.

It's so much bigger than you and I. One time I got to go and see this IMAX presentation on space and the constellations and galaxies and and they talked about that and they zoomed out the camera to show just how small and seemingly insignificant our planet is in the vast created space. And it's easy in those moments to think, man, me as one little person on this planet that is our whole world, right? But really our whole world is so small and we're so dependent on our sun and we think it's the biggest, brightest thing anywhere, but really it's just a medium-sized star. There's

far bigger stars out there.

I want to show you what the book of Proverbs has to say. The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day. Read that again, would you? The way of the righteous is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.

Do you realize that God is comparing us and our lives, the way we walk, the way we live, earth. He's comparing it to what the sun does for our planet. He's saying you are the key.

You are the essence of what it takes to live this life how God intended us to live. Why? Because we are God's representatives on this earth. You know, the Bible actually uses another word. It says we are ambassadors for Christ. We are emissaries. We are his hands and feet. We are his face. We are his mouth. We are his ears to listen. We are God's representatives on this earth.

[12:48] So when we live our lives, it is meant to be like the first gleam of dawn, shining ever brighter until the full light of day. What's it talking about when it says the full light of day that's coming? We're shining ever more brightly until that day when the full light of day comes. What is that? What's it talking about? He's thinking. Yes, sir. It's when Jesus comes back.

That's when the full light of day will come. That's a prophecy of Jesus coming back. We can never shine as brightly as brightly as Jesus, but our commandment, our commission is to shine more brightly, reflecting people back to the sun, S-U-N, which in reality is the sun, S-O-N, of God, Jesus. Daniel chapter 12 is a, Daniel is a book full of prophecy that talks about the end times. You want to tie Daniel and Revelation together? They're intricately tied together in prophecy and fulfillment of prophecy, and it sheds a little more light in what we're talking about. Daniel 12 and verse 3 says, those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever. You want to know how to be a star for God? What do stars do? Stars were made too?

Shine. Y'all pick up fast, man. You're a smart bunch. Stars were made to shine. So if you want to be a star for God that shines as bright as the stars in the sky, the big sky at night deep in the heart of Texas, then you lead many to righteousness. Because if you lead many to righteousness, you'll shine like the stars forever. What's it talking about when it says those who lead many to righteousness? Anybody want to boil that down, summarize it? What's it talking about?

Sharing the gospel. That's it. Telling people about Jesus, about a way to find forgiveness and hope in Jesus Christ. That's how you turn people to righteousness. If you, the more people you lead to righteousness, the more brightly you shine in God's kingdom forever. Forever. Now you can shine here on earth for a temporary amount of time. You can shine brightly. You can get famous. You can get on TV. You can get a fat bank account. You can get all kinds of people who think you're important, but until you turn many to righteousness, your star does not shine brightly in God's kingdom.

That's what it means when it says those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky. What animal or bird do you think of when you think of wisdom and being wise? An owl. All of you read the same kids' books that I did. Yes, we think of a wise old owl, right? But listen, true wisdom, let's look at what the word of God has to say about true wisdom. Proverbs chapter 11 and verse 30. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life. We'll come back to that in just a second. Whoever captures souls is wise.

[16:26] What does it mean by that? Well, you got to tie these two things together. A tree of life. A tree that has the fruit of life. What's it talking about? It's talking about going and reproducing yourself as a follower of Jesus. Allowing God to work through you to share this life-changing message of the saving grace of Jesus. And then when somebody else hears that message because you allowed yourself to be the mouthpiece and allowed God to speak through you, then real change can start to happen. That person's life can be transformed. First of all, they can be brought from death to life.

They can be rescued from a destination of spending forever in hell and paying for their sins, which all of us deserve. But according to God's gospel message, none of us have to experience if we will turn to him and say, Jesus, I accept your payment on the cross for my sin. I believe that you rose from the dead and you are God. And if I place my faith in you, then I will be saved from that terrible punishment for my sin. So that can happen, which completely changes the course of that person's life.

And if enough of that happens, many are turned to righteousness, then you know what else can change? The culture can change. I've seen it happen. Revival can start to happen. God can change anything if many are turned to him. So that's that tree of life that all of a sudden, it's not just one little plant. It grows into a great tree that bears fruit with many, many, many turning to Jesus.

Not because you took on this great job, this great mission that you can't handle on your own. Trust me, I can't handle it on my own either. We can't save this whole world. We can't turn this whole world. We can barely get ourselves right, you know? Only with God's help. But together, as the church, we can't. God empowered us to. He equipped us to, to bear this tree of life. That is our fruit. That is the fruit of the righteousness. So how much fruit is on our tree? How much fruit is on your branch? How many have we turned to righteousness? Through prayer? Through fasting? Through falling down our knees before God and say, God, save my brother. God, save my spouse. God, save my grandson.

[19:14] save my aunt. Save my neighbor. Save my coworker. And then not just taking them to God, but taking God to them. Saying, I want you to know what happened to me. I care so deeply for you, for your soul, that I can't help but share what God has done for me, and I hope he can make the same kind of difference in your life. That's capturing a soul for Christ. And when we do it as a church, we can capture a city for Christ. We can capture a county for Christ. There is no limit to what God can do with somebody who won't tell him no. There's no limit to what God can do through somebody like you or me, who just says, I'm not going to tell God no. That's what wisdom is. When you capture souls for Jesus, you are wise.

And those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky because they're leading many to righteousness, and they'll shine like stars forever. So that's our question here. Does your tree have any fruit on it?

Does my tree have any fruit on it? I can tell you this answer. My tree has some fruit on it, but not nearly as much as it should. I've gone for months at a time. I hesitate to tell you this because I'm the pastor of this church and God's appointed me as the shepherd of this ministry, but I've gone for years sometimes without leading a single person to faith in Jesus Christ. I can't save them. I can't forgive their sins. If I died on a cross, it wouldn't mean anything except a tragic death. But when Jesus died on the cross, it made all the difference. When he rose from the dead, he showed he was God, and I can introduce them to him. I can't do the saving, but I can do the introducing. I can make an introduction, you know. Let me introduce you to someone who can really help you. You know, in churches, sometimes people come to you with needs. Sometimes they're emotional needs, and you say, man, I'm having enough emotional problems on my own. I can't really have the bandwidth to help you and yours, you know. But you know who does? God does. So oftentimes, I will make an introduction and tell them what he has to say. And sometimes then God takes over and transforms that situation. Sometimes people bring physical needs. Say, man, I need help with this. You say, man, you look at my bank account, you're going to see I don't really have the bandwidth to help you in this physical need that you have.

Church doesn't have the ability to fix all the poverty in our city, our town, or in Wichita Falls, or in our county, or in our region. We don't have the ability to fix every problem that exists in humanity. But we can make an introduction to the one who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the one who hung the stars in the sky, the one who has unlimited resources, and oftentimes he will step in and do things that are so much better than anything that we could have conjured up to do, any solution that we could have come up with. I've gotten to go on so many trips to do mission work in other countries. My wife and I actually served as career missionaries for a time down in Central America and Panama, and we got to see very poor areas and places over in India and Thailand and Russia and just third world areas where they can only dream of having the basic, what we would call necessities of life here in middle-class America.

And you wish you could just fix all their problems. You wish you could just get them a cell phone or give them a thousand dollars and that would just go so far, but you realize that's not really gonna fix anything. It's gonna run out.

[23:24] None of us can do everything that needs to be done to fix all the problems that sin has caused in this world. But you know who knows the solution to the problems that sin causes is Jesus Christ.

He is the solution. So when we got to introduce Jesus to those people in third world countries in different parts of the world, you know what was real interesting? On future trips when you go back,

all of a sudden they've got wells built in their town. All of a sudden everyone looks a little different. All of a sudden they're even dressing a little more nicely and that's kind of a weird road to go off on. Like what does a Christian dress like? I don't know. But you know, probably different depending on where you are in the world. But you know, you just see oftentimes the overall quality of life start to improve because God stepped into the picture and he can do so much more than the best humanitarian efforts can. Now oftentimes he'll use people that share the gospel to then go meet physical needs and we should. We're commanded to do that in scripture. But we've got to start at the beginning. We've got to start with the number one problem that those people have and it's not what they're lacking physically, it's what they're lacking inside. They're lacking a savior. They're lacking a father, a good, good father. So does your tree have any fruit on it? Or have you mostly been living concerned with yourself? That's where most of us live day to day. I'm not exempt from that.

Most days we are more concerned with ourselves than we are anybody else. Let's look at Philippians chapter 2. When God does a work in us, Philippians chapter 2, Paul wrote this, he shows the fruit of it. He shows the results of it. When we are saved, the Holy Spirit of God moves in. He takes up residence and he wants to take over. And to the amount that we allow him to take over, then we show the results of our salvation. And so Paul commands us to work hard to show the results of your salvation. What does that look like? Obeying God with deep reverence and fear. Because God is working in you. And he's working in me. And he's giving us the desire and the power to do what pleases him. Why? Because we don't come naturally with that desire. We come naturally from the factory standard equipped with the desire and the power to please ourselves. And that never lasts long, does it? We please ourselves one day and we're displeased the next. Maybe we should call it by the hour because it can change that quickly or even faster. We are so wishy-washy. Sometimes we think we know what we want and we get it and we find out it wasn't as good as we thought it would be. We don't know really how to please ourselves, much less anybody else. And so God wants to replace that sin nature that we came standard issue with, with now a new nature. We are a new creation. And so we can show the results of our salvation by letting God work in us to give us that new desire to please him and the power to please him. So he spells that out. Do everything without complaining and arguing. Talked about this a little bit last Sunday. That's hard to do, isn't it?

We're natural complainers. We love to complain. We love to argue. But we do this without complaining and arguing. We let God work through us without fighting him on it so that we don't open ourselves up for criticism. So that no one can criticize us for how we've gotten in the way of God working.

If we just let God work through us perfectly, then everything would be just as it should be. Now God knows that we're never going to let him work through us perfectly because we're not perfect.

[ 27 : 37 ] But the more we live clean and innocent lives as children of God, then we shine like bright lights in this world like bright stars in the Texas sky in a world full of crooked and perverse people.

Now we can get on board with that part, can't we? We talked about it last time. Would you describe this world around us as crooked and perverse? You're either crooked or perverse, especially if you're in politics, right? Sometimes both, unfortunately. And I thank God there are some good men and women trying to represent well our nation. But it's no accident that politicians have earned a reputation as being either crooked or perverse. We have an opportunity to shine differently, to shine brightly if we do everything without complaining and arguing, if we allow God to work through us and answer that desire to do what pleases Him. Then nobody can criticize us. They may not like it. They may not like the truth. They may not like the fact that Jesus says, I'm the only way to heaven. Any other religion that points you towards something else is wrong. That's intolerant in today's world, isn't it? But it's the truth. So we must hold fast to that. But we do it with the same love that Jesus showed toward us, full of grace and truth. Not just the hard truth, smacking people in the face with it, but doing it with grace. That's how Jesus approached us. That's how we must approach others. And that's how we shine as bright lights in this world. 2 Corinthians chapter 4. 2 Corinthians chapter 4 and verse 5.

You see, we don't go around preaching ourselves. If you ever show up to a church that's just preached, the pastor's preaching himself, walk out of that church. We preach Jesus Christ. We preach that He is Lord. We preach ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. I have a debt to you. My debt to you is the one that God gave to me. He said, you have the responsibility to preach the

truth to this flock of my sheep. We're all His sheep. He is all of our shepherd. And then He has appointed under shepherds to be His representatives in churches all around this world. And He's given us a holy responsibility to preach the truth. And guess what? We all share that to a certain extent. You are the shepherd of the people in your circle. You're the shepherd of the people in your life. You are the representative of Jesus to those people. You can shine brightly. So Paul says, don't make it about you. It's about

Jesus. And then in verse 6, because God who said, let there be light in the darkness. Remember back in creation, He said, let there be light. And there was light. Yeah. That same God who can create light from nothing because He is the light has made this light shine in our hearts so that you and I could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus. That Jesus hanging on the cross.

[ 31 : 20 ] That Jesus healing people. That Jesus showing kindness when the world around Him was showing hatred to Him. That is the face of the glory of God. You want to know what God looks like?

It's Jesus. Read about Him. Read what He did. Read what He said. The face of Jesus Christ reveals the glory of God. This is why we glorify God. This is why He's worth all the praise. This is why we sing the songs. Because we see who He really is in the person of Jesus. He's given us this realization.

He's given us this understanding. He's given us this light to shine like lighthouses in this dark world. And we now have this light shining in our hearts. But have we hidden it in a jar?

Have we hidden it in a basket? God wants you to shine your light so brightly. That's what He made you to do. That's what He's left you here to do. God's stars shine brightly. And you know the other side of that?

God's stars shine forever. Forever. This is the last thought I'll leave you with here today. I want to go back to Daniel chapter 3. Daniel chapter 12, I'm sorry. Daniel chapter 12 and verse 3. We read it just a moment ago. Those who are wise will shine as bright as the sky. And those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars. What's that last word? Forever. How long? How long, church?

[ 33 : 06 ] How long will God's stars shine? Forever. Guess what? Those are the only kinds of stars that will shine forever. The only kind. Running out of time and I want to share a couple things with you but sometimes you got to make hard decisions. And that's okay.

Anybody know who this fella is? Anybody know who this fella is? A shining star? Not so much. Anybody know what this is? That's a car. I'm glad you figured that out. Yes, it's an old automobile. It's one of the first ones ever made. Anybody know what this is? Yes. It was one of the first semi-trucks ever made.

Conceivably the first. But I'm not for sure. How would you like to get stuck behind that going down 287? Anybody know what this is?

[ 34 : 31 ] It was a race that happened between two cars. Do you know who's in one of them? Ooh. Look at you, Cadran.

Yes, it was Henry Ford. Do you know who won that race? Henry Ford. Do you know who the other guy was? This was the only race that Henry Ford ever raced in.

He raced his Model T against... I don't remember what the name of the other car was. That's kind of the point. It was a Winton.

Yes, you know that huge auto manufacturer Winton out there. Anybody got a Winton on their property somewhere? In the barn? Just preserved and glistening.

Listen. Alexander Winton created the first semi-truck. His Winton Roadster right here was the most popular car of his era.

[ 35 : 44 ] And this was Alexander Winton. But none of y'all knew that. Not a soul in this room knew who that was. Even though he was the most famous person in the early era of automobiles before Henry Ford came along.

But you know what happened? He lost this race to Henry Ford. And his fame was quickly gone. He ended up selling his company.

They merged with, I believe, General Motors. I'll have to double check that again. And it was over. But he was one of the most famous men in America for a time. How many of y'all follow high school football?

Who won the state championship five years ago? Ours. Duncanville.

How about ten years ago? Henry Ford. That was good. Look. I don't even know.

[ 36 : 55 ] Maybe I should have prepared that ahead of time. But truth is, these things move on quickly. Could you name any players from a recent state championship team?

Could you name who won the Super Bowl ten years ago? Could you name who the most valuable player was? Could you name who lost the presidential election in 1980 whatever?

Maybe some of you could. But listen. The point is, our 15 minutes of fame on this earth goes by so fast.

You're a flash in the pan and then you're gone. You can work your whole life and succeed in whatever you're doing. And reach the top of the mountain until the next guy comes along and beats you in a race.

And then your fame is gone. And then no one will remember you. And there's people out there that think Henry Ford invented the automobile. And he didn't.

[ 38 : 03 ] He invented the, or popularized the assembly line. Yeah, that made it so easy to mass produce. I did lose in a race to Caleb Wilson.

You're right. I did. I did. See, my fame is not over because you still remember that. So that's good. But listen, y'all.

If you want to shine forever, lead many to righteousness. Because this world will come and go. And the stars of this world will have their moment and then that moment will be gone.

Sometimes the stars turn into villains. But if you want to shine forever, invest in God's kingdom. Let him shine through you.

We said this a few weeks ago. John Stott, great theologian, one of my favorite authors out there, said we should not ask what's wrong with the world.

[ 39 : 06 ] That diagnosis has already been given. It's called sin. That's what's wrong with the world. Instead, we should ask, what has happened to the salt and light?

What's happened to my salt and my light? Has my salt lost its flavor? Have I hidden my light? Am I shining brightly like the stars in the Texas sky at night for Jesus?

What difference am I making for God's kingdom? What difference are you making for God's kingdom? Would you bow your heads with me? God, I pray right now that we would make a difference.

That we would make an impact. That every man, woman, and child would leave this building today and go home.

And at some point, you would bring that question back. What impact am I making? How brightly do I shine? Or have I allowed my star to dim?

[ 40 : 15 ] Do the people around me know that I'm a follower of Jesus? Do the people around me know that I love them? And why I love them?

Because Jesus first loved me. Do I treat the people around me like Jesus would? But most importantly, God, do I share the truth with them?

Do I share the gospel message with them? Do I get the truth with them? Do I get the truth with them? Do I get the truth with them? That Jesus died for them? That he loves them even though they're sinners, just like we all are. That he rose from the dead for them so he could live to be salvation for them.

how much fruit is on our trees, God. Impact us. Convict me. Let it start with me.

Let it start with this church. And let it spread like wildfire throughout our town, throughout our county. Let us capture our area for Christ.

[ 41 : 24 ] We'll give you the glory for it. In Jesus' name we pray.