

# Our Place at His Place

## Night Lights

August 30, 2020

*Welcome you to where we're learning what it means to let our light shine!*



**Are you reflecting what you're receiving?** On a grassy hillside above the Sea of Galilee, Jesus chooses and begins training His twelve young apprentices. At least eleven are teenagers; know how we know? Two years later, only *Peter* has to pay the temple tax required for men twenty and older. (Mt 17:24-27) And having said they're prophets and, as such, the salt of the earth, (Mt 5:12-13) Jesus then adds, what I read last Sunday, saying:



You **[amateur ambassadors]** are the light of the world. – Matthew 5:14a NIV



Not: should-be, could-be, or will-be; but, ready-or-not: *are*. As are *we*. As are *you* (if you're onboard). Which begs the question: **How bright is your light?** Let's face it, **nobody likes a dim wit ... ness**; dim witness. So, Jesus then says to His amateur ambassadors:



A city on a hill cannot be hidden. – Matthew 5:14b NIV



The most well-known visible city on a hillside was Jerusalem. This is a scale model. The actual, lived-in, ancient city, at night, would've looked similar to the modern Greek hillside city of Santorini.



A young woman was going out to participate in the protests (I've updated the joke); and her mom warns her to prepare to be harassed for her faith. Well, she goes, comes back, and says, "You were *so* wrong." Mom says, "No one bothered you?" She says, "*Bother* me? No one even found *out!*"



**No such thing as an undercover light.** That's Jesus' next point.

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. – Matthew 5:15 NIV

He's referring to their common clay oil lamps like this one. They're smaller than you'd think. And you don't put it under the bowl; but, on top of the bowl. When Paul says Christ, the light of God's glory, is a treasure we have in jars of clay, (2 Cor 4:6-7) these are the jars of clay that were used to house, carry, and bring light into darkness. We're told that God's the Potter and we're the clay. (Is 64:8) Well, now we know what He's *making!* But, what happens if a lamp is put under a bowl? It **suffocates**. And if *you* keep *your* light under wraps? Same thing. So then:

In the same way, let *your* light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven. – Matthew 5:16 NIV



So we must shine in ways that brings Dad praise! That “*let*” your light shine, is a warning: **you control the dimmer on your light**. But, what’s “*your light*”? *Him!* **We’re here to learn to mirror His brilliance in our darkness**. To receive is to reflect and reveal. And *not* in a way that makes people say, “**Stop shining your beam in my eye!**” We’re not to *blind* ‘em; but help ‘em to see. So, shine in ways that brings Dad praise *and* makes others say, “**Thank you for that little bit o’ light.**” Or, at the very least, **be intriguing**. Premiere lights make us curious to go check out what’s going on. At least be like one of those. When they team up, they add up fast.

Now, **projected brightness is measured in lumens**. Although the light of the glory of God revealed in Christ is off the charts: brighter than seven suns we’re told. (Rev 1:16; Is 30:26) But, *reflected* brightness, like movie screens, and *us*, **is measured in units of “gain”**. How appropriate is *that*?

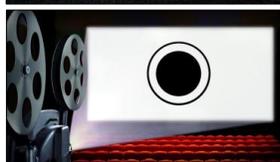
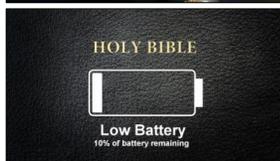
For to me, [says Paul] **to live** is Christ, [**In Him was life, and the life was the light of all mankind**] (Jn 1:4) and to *die* is *gain*. – Philippians 1:21 NKJ

But, maybe that “*die*” doesn’t mean what we think it means.

[Christ] bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having *died* to *sins*, might live for righteousness – 1 Peter 2:24 NKJ

How shall we who *died* to *sin* live any longer *in* it? – Romans 6:1-2 NKJ

Like us, a screen’s purpose is to reflect what it receives. **The brighter the better**. The more reflective the screen, the more lumens are seen. So, **how many lumens of grace are bouncing off you?** *That* depends on how much gain of which you gained from how much sin to which you died.



Holding onto sin is like a screen holding on to filth. **It greatly reduces it’s gain in every way**. And so, having *received* such a **brilliant, powerful, love**, and the command to call others to the light, **how are you doing, “screening” His calls?** “Hello? You desperately need to see a living example of the love of Jesus? Hold please. The next available ambassador *should* be with you momentarily ... *hopefully.*” **What’s consumin’ your lumens?** Fear? Neglect? Indifference? Anxiety? Ego? *Nope*. Those are symptoms. There’s always and only one *real* problem: not staying plugged in and keeping the charge! There’s no such thing as apathetic devotion or an undercover ambassador.

If we *claim* to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the *darkness*, we lie – 1 John 1:6 NIV

Because we all compensate for darkness in so many self-deceiving ways. For instance, What color is that black circle on that movie screen? Black? But, movie screens are white, and projectors don’t project *darkness* – just *light*. So, if you saw “Black Beauty” at a theater, that horse wasn’t darker than the screen.

This TV screen isn't like a movie screen; it projects rather than reflects. So, I'm showing you a picture of a movie screen *reflecting* this circle. The screen is white; so **why does that circle seem so dark? Contrast!** The surrounding light is intensified, magnified, let's say: glorified. **Without the light we can't see the absence of light.** And everything becomes one big gray area.

Same holds true for those around you. Want to shine in ways that bring Dad praise? Offer the contrast that only comes from the light of the life of the love of Christ reflected in full glory. **It isn't a switch you flip on and flip off; it's an authenticity emitted once we're committed.**

For you were once darkness, but now you *are* light in the Lord. *Live* as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and *find out* what pleases the Lord. [Hint: it's in the Word that's a lamp to our feet, and a light to our path [Ps 119:105]] ... for it is light that makes everything visible. – Ephesians 5:8-14 NIV

And, just as Jesus chose to come into *our* darkness, we must choose to come into *His* light.

Light *has* come into the world, [that's not the problem] but men loved darkness instead of light [that is] ... Everyone who does evil *hates* the light, and will not come into the light [even to just check it out] for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth *comes into* the light, so that it *may* be seen *plainly* – John 3:19-21 NIV

That's why authenticity, sincerity, and unashamed transparency is a must.

[You see] [Unbelievers] cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. – 2 Corinthians 4:4 NIV

And that's where us amateur ambassadors come in.

[God] has reconciled *us* to Himself [i.e. reestablished *our* relationship] through Jesus Christ, and has *given* us the *ministry* of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, *not* imputing their trespasses to them, and has *committed* to us the Word of reconciliation. [a.k.a. the B.I.B.L.E.] Now then, [ready-or-not] we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: [since they're not going to read it, for fear of exposure. So] we implore you [Down-Here'lings] on Christ's *behalf*, *be reconciled* to God. – 2 Corinthians 5:18-20 NKJ



Check out how *royally* screwed up I was, and look what He's doing! What's that? You're curious how I can have peace in my heart when all hell breaks loose? And have hope when all hope seems lost? Well, I have a secret. We may be stuck down *here* ...

But our *citizenship* is in *heaven*. - Philippians 3:20 NIV



If you're born in a US embassy on foreign soil, you're a citizen of the USA before you ever set foot in it. And if your dad is the Ambassador, so are you by extension. Because, everything you do or don't do reflects on him and your homeland. **We have a reputation to uphold: God's.** And, it's not *that* great.

Know the difference between reputation and character? **Character is what you are**, and **reputation is what others think you are**. God's character is perfect, *hallowed even*; but, His *reputation, mmm ... not so much*. Know why? He made us *His* Ambassadors! What was He thinking? But, with Jesus, reputation always takes a backseat to sincere compassion and kindness and gracious, sensitive, well-timed and well-seasoned conversation. Because, *that's* how *His* kingdom comes. **One heart at a time**.

So, how bright *is* your light? Remember: **before we can be the light, we got'a see the Light**. And guess where it's been hiding? In the only place only *unbelievers* won't look.

The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving *light* to the *eyes*. – Psalm 19:8 NIV

**[And that's why]** The *eye* is the *lamp* of the *body* ... if your eyes are *bad*, your whole body will be full of *darkness*. If then the light *within* you is darkness, how great is *that* darkness!  
**[You know the problem]** No one can serve *two* masters. – Matthew 6:22-24 NIV

My guilt has overwhelmed me ... the *light* has *gone* from my *eyes*. – Psalm 38:4, 10 NIV

**[So]** [I pray] that the *eyes* of your *heart* may be *enlightened* in order that you may know the *hope* to which he has called you, the riches of his *glorious* inheritance ... and his *incomparably* great *power* for us who *believe*. **[And read]** – Ephesians 1:18-19 NIV

You are my lamp, O Lord; the Lord turns *my* darkness into light. ... His way is perfect; the Word of the Lord **[which reflects His light to us]** is flawless. – 2 Samuel 22:29-31 NIV

Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. – Psalm 119:105 NIV

So we can be Ambassadors of light in an outpost of darkness. Not sentenced. **Posted! Appointed. Entrusted. Assigned.** We straddle two realms: **the dark temporal and the light eternal**. And, He has given us the honor of the *ministry* and the message of the truce of truth. **This world has a fatal heart condition**: it's filled with darkness. And they're done for unless they get a peace-maker implanted. So **we don't just pray for peace, we go make peace**; because we're *ambassadors!*



Ready or not. Like it or not. So, **what kind of authentic amateur ambassador are you?** You working with Him or against Him? **Giving people hope, or crushing it?** He came to set free those locked in the darkness with no hope they can see. And **He sends His lumens through us flawed humans**. Go figure. After He rose, His Spirit came as a flame, and rested on the heads of His little clay treasure jars. Think of the view from up top; all us junior jar heads shining the light of Dad's love. **Each Little night light taking a stand**; but, always in all ways that brings Dad praise in this dark world. Know why? So all those in the *enemy's* house can find their way home.

At the end of the day, **we all long to escape the darkness of sin**, from without *and* within.

So, why not you-be the lighthouse, in the dark house? I mean, an *amateur* could do it.