

But Where Are the Lamps?

Matthew 5:14-16

INTRODUCTION:

A. The story is told of a certain village in Europe several centuries ago, where a nobleman wondered what legacy he should leave to his townspeople. At last he decided to build a church building.

No one saw the complete plans for the church until it was finished. When the people gathered, they marveled at its beauty and completeness. Then someone asked, “But where are the lamps? How will it be lighted?”

The nobleman pointed to some brackets in the walls. Then he gave to each family a lamp that they were to bring with them each time they came to worship. “Each time you are here the area where you are seated will be lighted. Each time you are not here, that area will be dark. This is to remind you that whenever you fail to come to church, some part of God’s house will be dark.”

1. Is there not a sense in which that is true in this place today?
2. The building is here . . . the “brackets” are here . . . but where are the lamps?

B. The story I have just shared with you brings to mind three passages in God’s Word.

1. The first is a statement that Saul’s son, Jonathan, made to David in **1 Samuel 20:18** - “. . . Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty.”
2. A second passage comes from words spoken by our Lord in **Matthew 5:14-16** - “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

3. The third passage was penned by the apostle Paul and has to do with God’s building being made up of God’s people. **Ephesians 2:21-22** - “In whom [Christ] the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

C. The story of the nobleman has a double meaning.

1. The Christian light can certainly be seen when God’s people come to worship in a physical building in that all can help encourage others.
2. Furthermore, the Christian light can be seen on a daily basis as God’s people teach others through both word and deed.

3. You see . . . Christians are light!
- D. The three passages are pertinent in that each suggests a Biblical truth in the context of our study.
1. **1 Samuel 10:18** speaks of the empty seat and the absent occupant being missed.
 2. **Matthew 5:14-16** speaks of God's people being light and their presence being known.
 3. **Ephesians 2:21-22** speaks of God's people making up His spiritual building.
- E. One of the greatest blessings I have ever seen a congregation receive took place in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina.
1. From a 4 acre tract of property with a twenty-three year old building (a little over \$300,000) to a 4.07 acre tract of property with a state-of-the-art building (1.85 million dollars, not including the valuable land).
 - a. 16,400 sq. ft. under roof.
 - b. 15,102 sq. ft. heated and cooled.
 - c. An beautiful auditorium that seats 554 people.
 - d. A spacious paved parking area with spaces for 139 vehicles.
 - e. Marvelous amenities.
 - d. New paved road.
 - e. A new gazebo.
 - f. Numerous amenities.
 - g. A total of approximately 2.25 million dollars . . . all at no cost to the congregation!
 2. The building is well lit.
 - a. 85 lights in the auditorium.
 - b. Every light in the auditorium can be dimmed to a variety of levels.
 - c. 13 wall sconces that are major contributors to lighting the auditorium.
 3. Let us suppose for just a moment, that in the process of building the Myrtle Beach church building that the same principle was present as it was in the story I told about the European church.
 - a. Not state-of-the-art lighting but brackets . . . brackets for holding lamps.
 - b. Each member given a lamp.
 - c. How light . . . or dark . . . the auditorium would be at any given moment would depend on how many people were present and brought their lamps.
 - d. More people . . . more light.
 - e. Fewer people . . . less light.
 - f. I have heard people say, "It was so dark in the auditorium that I could not read the verses mentioned in the lesson."
 - g. Describe one such building. Stone . . . dark wood . . . not the best lighting.
 4. What if the same held true for the classrooms?

IS GOD NOT ASKING, “WHERE ARE THE LAMPS?”

A. **1 Samuel 20:18** - “Then Jonathan said to David, “Tomorrow is the New Moon; and you will be missed, because your seat will be empty.”

1. Background:

- a. Saul’s anger made it unsafe for David to be in his presence. David would soon have to flee.
- b. Jonathan was Saul’s son and David’s dear friend. In fact, Jonathan was helping David.
- c. Jonathan would miss David not being where he was accustomed to seeing him present.

2. When you seat is empty:

- a. Your light is not present.
- b. You have denied others the light from your lamp.
- c. There darkness present in your place because your light is not there to dispel it.
- d. The Lord needs you . . . your lamp . . . and your light. Also, your brethren do as well.

3. **Matthew 5:14-16** - “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

- a. These statements are made early in the Sermon on the Mount.
- b. Describe the villages on the hills in Israel at night.
- c. Jesus is teaching about the importance of light.
 1. Don’t hide your light from others.
 2. Don’t put light where it does not belong.
 3. Put light where it does belong . . . before others.
 4. Your light seen by others will provide light in their lives.
 5. Your good light seen by men will enable them to bring glory to God.
- d. Jesus is, in the moral world, what the sun is in the natural world.
- e. All Christians are lights of the world, because they, by their instructions and example, show what God requires, what is the condition of man, what is the way of duty, peace, and happiness the way that leads to heaven.
- f. Your light is needed when the church assembles for worship.

2. **Ephesians 2:21-22** - “In whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.”

- a. The word used here means "being together," as a carpenter does the framework of a building.
 1. The materials are accurately and carefully united by mortises and tendons so that the building shall be firm.
 2. Different materials may be used, and different kinds of timber may be employed, but one part shall be worked into another, so as to constitute a durable and beautiful edifice.
- b. So it is in the Lord's church.
 1. The different materials of the Jews and Gentiles; the people of various nations, though heretofore separated and discordant, become now united, and form an harmonious society.
 - a. They believe the same doctrines.
 - b. They worship the same God.
 - c. They practice the same holiness.
 - d. They look forward to the same heaven.
 2. Christ, as the solid and precious foundation.
 - a, You are built into that, or constitute a part of it.
 - b. You are not merely "added" to it, but you constitute a part of the building.
 3. That building . . . the church . . . is the dwelling-place, of God.
 4. Formerly he dwelt in the temple. Now he dwells in the church, and in the hearts of his people.

CONCLUSION:

A. In this study we have noted:

1. You are a light.
2. There is a place for your light.
3. When you are present, your light contributes to the brightness of the occasion.
4. When you are absent your light is withheld from the place of meeting.
5. There is a right and wrong use of your light . . . withholding it (hiding it) is the wrong use.
6. Letting your light shine so God can be glorified, is the right use of your light.

B. Is your light shining . . . is God being glorified when you keep your light at home? Jesus said in **Matthew 6:23** - ". . . If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"

C. In the vernacular of our opening story,

1. You have a bracket.
2. You have a light.
3. You have a seat (place).
4. Your presence adds light.
5. Your absence withholds light.
6. Withheld, or hidden light, does not glorify God.

- D. Is it not time for you to let your light shine for the glory of God?
- E. For some, is it not time to remove that which hides your light from others.
- F. The more present . . . the brighter the light.
 - 1. How bright is your life without the light of God?
 - 2. How bright is your life without the light of others?
 - 3. Light is to be shared that others might see.
- G. Isn't it time to remove the darkness from your life?
- H. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**