**Fifth Sunday after Epiphany – The Savior’s Sermon: “Let Your Light Shine”**

**Faith Lutheran Church, Radcliff, KY February 9, 2014**

**Based on Matthew 5:13-20 written by Vicar Ben Zuberbier**

**Let your light shine!**

1. **It’s always visible**
2. **It draws others in**

*13"You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men. 14"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15Neither 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. 16In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.* *17"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

If you’re unaware, our country is saying goodbye to something that has served it for over one hundred years. It’s been in every household. Actually in probably just about every room in each and every household. And each room usually contains multiple—two, four, ten or maybe even more than that. They’re found on the ceiling. They’re found mounted on walls. Sometimes on desks and end tables. They even go in certain types of decorative signs to add character to your living rooms or man caves. If you haven’t figured it out yet, I’m talking about incandescent light bulbs.

Effective on the 1st day of last month, companies by law are no longer allowed to manufacture them. Stores are still allowed to sell them, but only while supplies last. So if you think you’ll have a hard time saying goodbye, stock up now where you can find them.

The fact is, incandescent light bulbs typically only last about 1,000 hours before the filament breaks and they lose their shine. Their replacement—LEDs or those twisty fluorescent bulbs—will keep their glow for almost ten times as long as an incandescent. But even man’s best attempt to create a light bulb whose shine will always remain visible falls short. Every light bulb will inevitably burn out.

But this morning your Savior Jesus draws your attention to a light that never burns out. A light **that’s always visible** even when you try to dim its glow or cover the brightness of its shining. A light that catches the eye of just about everyone in this world at least once—and not just that! **It actually draws them in**. This morning Jesus even gives you some pretty simple instructions to follow on how to use it.

He says, **“Let your light shine!”**

**I. It’s always visible**

In fact, Jesus talked about this light in one of his sermons. This sermon in some ways was a little bit different than what you’re maybe used to. He didn’t deliver it from a pulpit. The people listening weren’t seated in pews or chairs. It wasn’t even in a church. It was on a mountainside by a large lake, the Sea of Galilee. Ready to preach, he sat down—as was the custom—and his disciples and some other followers gathered around him. He began to speak and a little ways into the sermon he got to his point about this light. He looked directly at them and said, **“You are the light of the world” (v 14a)**. “That’s right—*you*. Because you believe in me, you were called out of the darkness of unbelief. You received the light of faith. Because you follow me, the Light of the World, so also you are the light of the world. You’re a light that shines in the darkness of this violent and corrupted world. By faith in me ***‘You* are the light of the world.’**

And guess what? **You’re light’s always visible.** It’s kind of like this: **‘A city on a hill cannot be hidden’ (v 14b)**.” The disciples and the others listening probably pictured the city of Jerusalem. They had been there more than a few times to offer their annual sacrifices. And as they traveled to it, even from miles off they could spot it. It wasn’t hidden way down low in a valley somewhere or in the middle of a thick forest. Jerusalem stood on the top of a hill and could be seen from miles away.The city of Jerusalem is completely visible.

There’s a city in Brazil that lies on the coastline of the South Atlantic called Rio de Janeiro. It’s a large city that stretches throughout a series of hills. Most of the city is not located on a hill but there are certain parts that stretch over the smaller hills or are on built on the side of the larger ones. I imagine it would be pretty hard to miss from the deck of a cruise ship or the window seat of an airplane. From miles off this city is always visible. But what’s most astounding is what overlooks the city on the top of a peak. During the day, any one of its 2.8 million residents can look up to the top of this 2,300 ft. peak and see a statue of Jesus towering over 100 ft in the air. And it can even be seen anytime at night. At dusk, the lights surrounding its base turn on and illuminate this stone-carved statue of Jesus. Jesus, **the Light of the World, is always visible to anyone in this city**.

And it’s the same with you. **The light of your faith shining in this dark world is always visible.** You shine with the light of Jesus. And he gives you some pretty easy, straightforward, and obvious instructions for use of this light. He says, **“People [do not] 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” (v 15)**. He’s saying unless you attempt to cover this light up or dim it, **it’s always visible** and gives light to men. **So let you’re light shine.**

But how often don’t you and I try to conceal the light of our faith out of embarrassment? Or at least dim it a little bit so it’s less visible to others? Pastor Horn and I, for instance, are to be lights in this church and in this community. But we’d both probably have to admit, we haven’t always let our light shine at times when we’ve felt we’re off the clock. Like at Wal-Mart or a restaurant. Or maybe you are a Sunday School teacher here, but when someone asks you what you’re doing this weekend, you don’t even think to include, “I’m teaching a Sunday School class at my church.” Maybe you’re member on the Church Council but have chosen to leave that detail of your life out around your colleagues or a few of your friends. Or maybe you’ve been a member or regular attendee of this church but wouldn’t feel proud to tell others that you are. Maybe you didn’t even attempt to stand up for your faith when others were trying to put it down. You just let it happen. At times like this, you’re simply attempting to dim the visibility of your light that shines through faith in your Savior Jesus. Or you just choose to cover him up completely. Whether it’s dimming you’re light or covering it up, you’re spiting your Savior Jesus and the light that he’s given you.

But this light can never be covered. Death itself couldn’t even conceal it. After Jesus died on the cross, his body was gathered and placed in a tomb where a large stone covered the entrance. For the anxious hours that followed that night and the next day, it seemed like the Light of the World might be concealed forever. But early that morning, on Easter when darkness still was looming over the land of Israel, the stone which covered the tomb rolled over and rays of light burst from behind it. He had conquered the darkness of sin, death and the devil and stood in full light. Because Jesus, the Light of the World can never be concealed by darkness, and shines so intensely, even the covers we try to place over him are broken by that light. Because our faith in Jesus radiates light so vibrantly, it can never be dimmed. The light of our faith in our Savior Jesus is always brightly shining! **It’s always visible!**

**I. It draws others in**

Because this light is always visible shines so brightly, Jesus simply tells you, **“let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven” (v 16)**. He’s telling you, when you live your faith, it doesn’t go unnoticed. Oftentimes others might realize you’re a little different—but in a good way—and they get curious. Eventually someone might ask you about it and when you tell them who you are in Jesus and what he’s done for you**, you’re letting you’re light shine and drawing others in**

It’s only natural to say that light has a certain appeal **to be drawn in by**. If you’ve ever set up a bug zapper on your porch or deck, you’ll know what I’m talking about. Mosquitoes, flies, moths, and other insects go crazy for the shining blue glow of those tubes. They swarm around the lights. Or think about neon lights, for instance. When they first came out, I imagine the first restaurants in each town to put them up in the windows of their storefronts drew in more business than their rivaling establishments. Jesus is telling you, **you have a light that draws others in. So Let your light shine!**

It’s pretty obvious when you look at the growth in membership at this church **that the gospel light has been shining and drawing people in**. Since I’ve been here, in just six months the growth in membership can be tracked in double digits. A good number of you here today can even say you’re a member now because it all started with one of your friends who’s a member at this church. They invited you or said good things about it. Some of you are here because at one time, or maybe multiple, Pastor Horn, a student on an outreach team, or I knocked on your door. Some of you are here because you saw the gospel light shining at a funeral service you attended at this church. Some of you who are here received newsletters for a number of years from this church and **were drawn in.** All this is the result of the gospel light shining through the mission of this church, through the members here letting their light shine, through preaching and teaching shining with the radiance of the gospel. **When you let your light shine, and let the Light of the World shine, it draws others in.**

In all places—at the grocery store, in the office, in the halls at your school, in the field, at a restaurant, **let your light shine!** During the stress of exams and tests, in the middle of a long shift, during a bad day, on vacation, on a cruise ship, in the airport, at a resort, **let your light shine! Because, in Jesus, your light is always visible and it draws others in.** Amen.