**BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study**

**Sermon: “Light” (from the “We ARE” sermon series)**

**Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16 (Light of the World)**

**Key take-aways from the Scripture**

* In verses 14-16, we read: “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all 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.”
* In verse 15, we read that “No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house.” Some translations explain it as lighting a lamp and putting it “under a bowl.” The point here is that if you place a light under a bowl, or any type of container, it obscures the light and will ultimately extinguish the flame. We read last week in verse 13 that when salt loses its “saltiness” or essence, it is no longer good for anything. In a similar way, if light is hidden from view, it renders it good for nothing.
* We see in John 1:9 that Jesus is the “true light,” and in John 8:12 the “light of the world.” In verse 14 Jesus tells the apostles that they are the “light of the world.” Jesus often employed the use of a metaphor to help make a point in His teachings.
* Here, Jesus is using the metaphor of light to show the apostles (and the church) radiate light from Jesus. In this way, the light they radiate shines like a city that sits on top of a hill and thus cannot be hidden from view. Many cities in antiquity were built on top of hills, primarily for protection from the threat of invasion, and their lights could be seen for miles at night.
* There are several examples in the Old Testament (aka The Hebrew Bible) of God calling His people to be a light unto all nations. In Isaiah 42:6 we read, “…I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations.” Also, in Isaiah 49:6: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”

**Key take-aways from the Sermon**

* We have been looking scripturally at who God says that we are, regarding our stewardship and identity: (1) We are the *priesthood* of all believers; and (2) We are the salt of the earth that which preserves, flavors and heals. This week, we are focusing on the idea of our identity as *light*.
* Ancient Rabbis often referred to God as the light, meaning a source of wisdom, truth and salvation. They also referred to the Torah as light, and Israel as a nation as the light unto all nations (see Isaiah 49).
* In Matthew 4, the gospel writer interprets Isaiah 9:2 as pointing to, and being fulfilled, in Jesus. In John 8:12, Jesus refers to Himself as the *light* of the world. In today’s text, Jesus declares that those that follow Him are the light of the world. Because we are light, we cannot conceal it and hide it. The imperative to this is that we must let it shine! We are not called to conceal or privatize the light; it is something that must shine!
* We all have a “*shadowself*”…the part of us that we are afraid of but must be exposed to the light. Jesus loves sinners but struggles with those who think they are not sinners. It is part of who we are but not our primary identity.
* As Christians in the Wesleyan faith tradition, we do not believe that any person is hopelessly depraved. This is why we never give up on each other. We are all stained by our fallen nature, however, there is a divine spark within each one of us that mirrors the image of God and can be ignited by the Spirit of God.
* When a furnace pilot light goes out, it no longer is able to heat your home. In a similar way, the church can grow colder when the light goes out. When we stop worshipping God, or stop praying, serving or sharing, loving and giving… the light goes out.
* Our light in Christ is not self-generated…you have to be lit. Because we are light, it is our nature to shine. The witness has to shine in what we do and not just what we say.
* To let our light shine simply means that Jesus is visible in what we do and how we live our lives.
* We shine by doing what we can, with what we have, where we are!
* When you step up, the house warms up, the community lights up, people get fired up and God shows up! We let the light in and also let the let out. It’s who We ARE!

**Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion**

* What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
* In what ways can you be a “light” in this world and “…let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven”?
  + In other words, how can we be a positive influence in this world without drawing attention to ourselves but ensure all glory is given to God?
* What do you think Jesus means by “good works”? What are some examples of these?

**NOTES**