**“Shine Light”**

Isaiah 58:3-9a

1 Corinthians 2:1-12

Matthew 5:13-20

 Epiphany 5

[Jesus said]: “**You** **are** the light of the world. Let **your** **light** **shine before others**, so that they may **see** your good works and **give glory to your Father who is in heaven**.”

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

**Bridge**

A **disorder** (“Social Anxiety Disorder”) is where people fear public attention drawn to them. Probably our Happy Birthday singing (bringing people forward to **all stare at them while we sing**) might cause anxieties that I shouldn’t put people under … but you’re all taking it so well. I consider **myself** fighting such anxiety. In my **natural state**, I know that **I’m** a more-quiet talker, dress to blend in, uncomfortable in party settings, not good at small-talk, and prefer (often) being alone than with **many** others … often alone over being with **any** others. If that surprises you then know that I’m **purposefully fighting the problem (but know the problem)**. The roles I’ve been put in (or put myself in) have, certainly, helped **do battle with the condition**, as I have forced myself into some “up-front” roles since I was a kid (choirs or singing or some leadership and sports activities that have forced me out of a shell), but I know the feeling (natural for me) to want to hide under a “basket” and not be seen. Putting myself (in any way) on a “stand” to (of all things) “give light to all around me” sounds about as not me-ish as any demand from Jesus could sound to me. I’m literally **pained** here (down to the deepest parts of my core senses) with this His first demand of me. In other words, it would take some serious **convincing from Jesus** to get me to be really OK with putting myself on a lampstand in the middle of a public place, saying “look at me!” for some example of anything other than sniveling and shivering of fear. “Uncomfortable” doesn’t begin to say what I dread about even the thought of that. I’d not want any of that, but only (deeply) to run and hide (with lights out) if another moment has to pass with me so-positioned and visible. “Social Anxiety Disorder” I fight (I’m fighting it right now, in a lot of levels quite consciously. It’s a phobia beyond just the fear of public speaking if I let it be

Yet Jesus spends pretty much His entire first sermon convincing me why I **can** (and have-to) overcome this. Not only does He tell me how I can; He also tells me that I **must** …

**Text**

… because, apparently, the world’s in need of **me**. Not me **for me** it’s not, but **me reflecting Jesus** it **absolutely is**, something He says I’m **always doing somehow (in some Good way) whether I know it or not**. “**You are** **the light of the world**”. And Jesus says that of me and all of you who are **baptized believers (bound to Him by water and promise, staying in that gracious way with Him)**. It’s a **statement of fact** that He pronounces upon us in this sermon of His. He started by saying (just before this) that we’re the “**blessed**” **ones** who **are**, for instance, the Good-way “poor in spirit” (spiritually needing Him and knowing it, pointing deliberately toward Him and His satisfaction of that need; it’s us “blessed and mourning”, having been **reborn** into a gracious life of repentance for forgiveness. We mourn our deficits and discomforts … and fears … and do-so all because we know our flaws yet meet them with command of Jesus’ against them and through them / His Words and strength. “Blessed” us who **are** **that way**, starting His sermon to us by **telling us of that**, moving then to also say that for “Curt or Mary or Tegan or Duane or Ed, or any of you by name, “you **are** also the **light of the world**”.

And, so, Jesus calls us “**salt** of the earth”, so **flavor**, then “**light** **of the world**”, saying **embrace that**: “as the Father sent Me, so **I am sending each and all of you**. **Don’t worry** about what you’d say before governors and kings (drawn there), for **in that hour, you will be** **given that**” so not you who really speaks, but your mouth, the Spirit of the Heavenly Father, He will be **speaking through you**. **You are** the **light of the world and the earth’s salt**”.

Probably one of the better things we do as the Church gathered together in Christ is pray for the world. That’s a Good work before men (on their behalf and for their sake we pray together for “all people according to their needs”). Remember for whom we pray together: “for people from every tribe, nation, and language, for the many in this world who live in the darkness of depression, anxiety, and mental illness, for those grieving, for those in public offices of authority and care in governance, for those poor or homeless or hungry or oppressed, for those sick, injured, and recovering all over this world, the prayers of righteous people have great power” God says in the book of James.

The 1st Corinthians text is included here so that we hear what this means. In verse 5, understanding isn’t (so much) the issue as is “faith”, being told that “our trust isn’t to rest in the wisdom of men (our own included), but in the power of God”. This is “maturity” as the next verse calls it, “imparting” and knowably participating-in a “secret and hidden (but not totally to us / revealable) wisdom of God. “What God has prepared for those who love Him is that we are the light of the world, so shine.”

**Application**

Preaching and leading spiritually a congregation is not natural for me. This **pedestal** of a pulpit, lights dimmed with all eyes encouraged to be **on me**, as I say to you (for fifteen minutes) what I assembled into words and supposed that you needed to hear, **scares me by concept beyond what about anything else could** (if you could see my knees knocking, **THAT’S** the **other reason** why pastors where robes).

But it’s never really **my** words, and I don’t invent their direction out of some creative thin air. I’m not an artist, naturally pouring-out what I don’t care about you liking or not. I’m comforted (actually **empowered**) by the fact that I’m but a **vehicle** when I’m doing any of Jesus’ good works, none put **me** out there but Him out there propping **me** up as but a visual and mouthpiece, but **He** the Words and the boldness and whatever ability can be mustered **through me**. I love that God gives me His Words to say in a forum even public where He knows they need said, so beg for more intimate settings where those Words can flow even easier. I’m blessed to know myself **one** “light” among **ya-all’s light from Jesus**, **we** emboldened to act and say and do and shine as is His promise that **we do**.

There are things **light in you to this world** that **scare you** … I know that. But I also know that you do them **anyway**. You do them confident that Jesus **wills it and He’s your strength**. You **boldly** pulled into a church parking lot, letting your neighbors (this town) see you and your car here and worshipping God; you (I know) don’t apologize for your priority Christ’s way which isn’t hidden (know that) in your workplaces or schools or houses and neighborhoods … it’s **noticed**. “Lord, **always** help us to be Good shining light **wherever we are**. Help us to **shine (and always) because of Your shining**. In Your name we ask this, +Jesus. Amen”, and may the peace of God that passes human understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.