

## Shine – 5

### Matthew 5:14

“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.”

We are called to be light to a world that desperately needs a relationship with God

- Light has some interesting properties and characteristics
- Light always affects and changes the environment it is released into
- When light stands next to darkness, light always wins!

### Matthew 5:14–16 (NKJV)

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

- We have been promised light and we have been empowered to make a stand against darkness

We cannot deny we live in dark times

### No Slide: 2 Timothy 3:1–3; 4:1-4 (NLT)

- Immorality, Cultural decadence, Infanticide, Racism
- Pornography, Unbridled consumerism, Voyeurism, Materialism, Terror, Jealousy
- Spiritual apathy, False prophets, Watered down preaching
- Hypocrisy, Moral relativism, Discord, Division strife
- Intolerance and unbelief

## The Lightning Flash

Lightning is light's most destructive form

- A lightning flash lasts less than a half-millionth of a second
- Their explosions shake the earth and bring destruction
- The average lightning bolt can instantly boil 250 gallons of water
- Hotter than the surface of the sun
- Summer skies can generate 50,000 flashes per hour
- 240 thousand people are injured by them annually

Lightning is often associated with the supernatural

- We see lightning flashing from God's throne in the book of revelation as well as other books in the Bible
- Lightning preceded the Ten Commandments
- The witches in *Macbeth* promise to meet "in thunder, lightning, or in rain."
- Zeus's weapon was a lightning bolt
- The Aztecs saw lightning as one of many powers of their god
- Captain Marvel and the Flash are among the superheroes who sport a lightning bolt as a symbol of their power

Over the **past three decades**, lightning has killed an average of fifty-one people per year in the United States

- Statistics indicate that 90 percent of strike victims survive
- Five hundred strike victims have survived
- Roy Cleveland, a ranger from Shenandoah National Park in Virginia has survived a record seven lightning strikes between 1942 and 1977

*“[Some] survivors awaken into temporary blindness or deafness, sometimes the concussive force of the strike—or the electricity itself—ruptures eardrums. Some victims report the taste of metal on their tongues. Now and then, survivors develop strangely beautiful pink and brown bruises known as Lichtenburg figures, which look like intricate henna tattoos of branching fronds. These bruises likely trace the path of electricity that forced blood cells out of capillaries into more superficial layers of skin.” – Outside Magazine*

### **Faith can sometimes be explosive or even destructive**

- In our zeal to share the Gospel we can sometimes overwhelm others with a sudden explosion of ideas that are foreign to them
- Many people have become victims of a “lightning strike faith”
- Sometimes scarred from ever hearing the truth of God’s love
- Some say they have been burned by religion that preaches hellfire and damnation instead of love and peace
- Some have had their faith scorched by materialism and hypocrisy they found in the church
- Some have been victims of church communities who have tried to dictate their behavior rather than except them for who they were

Many who react this way to faith are trying to protect themselves from the shock and destruction of “self” that must take place to serve God fully

In many ways God comes to us like a lightning strike

- He is sudden
- He is out to destroy anything that keeps us separate from Him
- He will drive out darkness in a flash of light that shocks us into a new reality
- He puts His mark of love on us
- God demands no less than everything!

**Luke 14:26 (NLT)**

<sup>26</sup> “If you want to be my disciple, you must hate everyone else by comparison—your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple.

Frankly it is easier, and safer to criticize the perceived flaws of a church or individuals than it is to give ourselves fully to a faith that will “change us”

- The same faith that enables you to move mountains is the same faith that empowers you to stand still as God changes us
- Stop trying to understand or make excuses for the difficult things that happen in life
- Start trusting God and watch things happen

**Psalm 91:2 (NLT)**

<sup>2</sup> This I declare about the LORD: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him.

The “storms of life” are a present reality as sure as the sunrise. It is common knowledge that lightning is generated in electrically charged storm systems

- The strike of God’s Holy Lightning is just what we need to get a glimpse of Him and a revelation of what He wants to do in our lives

### Revelation 1:17 (NLT)

<sup>17</sup> When I saw him, I fell at his feet as if I were dead.

There are many myths about lightning such as, “it never strikes the same place twice”

- It is true however that lightning always chooses the path of least resistance
  - I want to be in the path of the current of God
- Learn to resist evil and be open to God – James 4:8

A lightning rod does not attract lightning

- Instead, it can handle the enormous electrical current associated with the strike
- They are conduits for the power of the strike to safely find its way to the ground

If the lightning strike encounters a material that is not a good conductor, the material will suffer massive heat damage

Am I a good conductor of God’s powerful love?

- We cannot take the transforming power to others if it has not transformed us first
- There is no such thing as comfortable Christianity

Nuclear Physicist, Ernest Rutherford discovered the principle of a *half-life period*

- Shortened to half-life
- Term most used about nuclear waste and how to deal with decaying nuclear materials
- A common definition: “*the time it requires for exactly half the entity to decay*”

Some of us may have given up on our commitment to let our light *Shine*

- There is no place for half-life Christianity
- We must fight our tendency to slip, fall away, or slide back into complacency – **2 Corinthians 4:7-10**

Do you remember how you felt when you truly heard the Gospel?

- How about the way we felt when we first read a scripture and it penetrated our heart?
- We prayed fervently desiring God
  - But we’ve grown numb
  - We sit in church and go through the motions but nothing touches us

Our nation is trending toward nonbelief

- Barna Group “2015 State of Atheism in America”
- Millennials (20-40) increasingly dismiss religion, God, churches, authority and tradition
- 40-50 % of high-school senior fail to stick with their faith after graduation

Pew Research Center found

Despite strong growth in Africa and Latin America, Christianity is stuck in a rut

- Christians were 34.5% of the global population in 1900
- 33.3% in 1970
- 32.4% in 2000
- 33.4% in 2015
- Projected 33.7% in 2025
- 36% in 2050

Unless we are intentional in sustaining our faith, we are in danger of losing it

**Galatians 4:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how is it that you turn back again to the weak and worthless<sup>[a]</sup> elemental things, to which you desire to be enslaved all over again?

- The Galatian church was once “radioactive” in their faith
- They slipped back into a form of religion
- They began to spiritually decay and turn back to the things they once knew and held them captive
- Have I allowed the cares and worries of the world to choke the word? – **Mark 4:3-20**
- Money and “things” will never fulfil us
- Most studies show that 85% of what we worry about never happens
- Yet we rarely realize that our passion for God is dimming
- We have slipped into *half-life* Christianity

We must have oil for our lamps if we're to keep them burning

### Matthew 25:1–13 (NLT)

“Then the Kingdom of Heaven will be like ten bridesmaids\* who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. <sup>2</sup> Five of them were foolish, and five were wise. <sup>3</sup> The five who were foolish didn't take enough olive oil for their lamps, <sup>4</sup> but the other five were wise enough to take along extra oil. <sup>5</sup> When the bridegroom was delayed, they all became drowsy and fell asleep. <sup>6</sup> “At midnight they were roused by the shout, ‘Look, the bridegroom is coming! Come out and meet him!’ <sup>7</sup> “All the bridesmaids got up and prepared their lamps. <sup>8</sup> Then the five foolish ones asked the others, ‘Please give us some of your oil because our lamps are going out.’ <sup>9</sup> “But the others replied, ‘We don't have enough for all of us. Go to a shop and buy some for yourselves.’ <sup>10</sup> “But while they were gone to buy oil, the bridegroom came. Then those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast, and the door was locked. <sup>11</sup> Later, when the other five bridesmaids returned, they stood outside, calling, ‘Lord! Lord! Open the door for us!’ <sup>12</sup> “But he called back, ‘Believe me, I don't know you!’ <sup>13</sup> “So you, too, must keep watch! For you do not know the day or hour of my return.

It was typical for the bridegroom himself to go in person, often at night and without notice to bring his new bride home for the wedding festivities

- Before leaving she would receive the blessing from her relatives
- Often there would be a procession through her home town to her future home



*“Normally the bridegroom with some close friends left his home to go to the bride’s home, where there were various ceremonies, followed by a procession through the streets—after nightfall—to his home. The ten virgins may be bridesmaids who have been assisting the bride; they expect to meet the groom as he comes from the bride’s house.... Everyone in the procession was expected to carry his or her own torch. Those without a torch would be assumed to be party crashers or even brigands. The festivities, which might last several days, would formally get under way at the groom’s house.”*

– D.A. Carson – The Expositors Bible Commentary

In this story it is clear that each person meeting the Groom is responsible for her own lamp

- It’s also clear that having a lamp is not enough
- She must also have enough fuel (oil), to keep it burning brightly
- The original word for lamp is more like the word we would use for torch
- These “Lampas” were little more than a rag soaked in olive oil sitting in a ceramic bowl
- They would periodically have to fill the bowl
- Probably would have carried a flask with extra oil
- It was the realization that the lamp would become dim or even burn out
- You would have to plan for the journey

We want to be like the five bridesmaids who were wise  
The oil in our lamps is both the Word of God and the Holy Spirit

### Zechariah 4:1-3, 4, 6 (NLT)

Then the angel who had been talking with me returned and woke me, as though I had been asleep. <sup>2</sup> “What do you see now?” he asked. I answered, “I see a solid gold lampstand with a bowl of oil on top of it. Around the bowl are seven lamps, each having seven spouts with wicks. <sup>3</sup> And I see two olive trees, one on each side of the bowl.” <sup>4</sup> Then I asked the angel, “What are these, my lord? What do they mean?”

<sup>6</sup> Then he said to me, “This is what the LORD says to Zerubbabel: It is not by force nor by strength, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of Heaven’s Armies.

- It would have been normal to see the lampstand in the temple
- The unusual thing were the two olive trees
- God was showing Zechariah, and us that The Holy Spirit is enough to keep our lamps full and burning

### Isaiah 54:5 (NKJV)

<sup>5</sup> For your Maker *is* your husband, the LORD of hosts *is* His name; and your Redeemer *is* the Holy One of Israel; He is called the God of the whole earth.

- If Christ is the bride groom, then what are we?
- Hopefully we are the wise bridesmaids who have enough oil for the journey
- To keep our lamps burning bright!
- The groom is coming for a glorious church!
- What am I willing to do for Him?

Am I willing to let Christ make me pure and holy with the light of His word?

### Ephesians 5:25–27 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

- A glorious church!
- A triumphant church!
- A pure church!
- A worshipping church!
- A shining church!

### Ephesians 5:8–14 (NLT)

<sup>8</sup> For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light! <sup>9</sup> For this light within you produces only what is good and right and true. <sup>10</sup> Carefully determine what pleases the Lord. <sup>11</sup> Take no part in the worthless deeds of evil and darkness; instead, expose them. <sup>12</sup> It is shameful even to talk about the things that ungodly people do in secret. <sup>13</sup> But their evil intentions will be exposed when the light shines on them, <sup>14</sup> for the light makes everything visible. This is why it is said, “Awake, O sleeper, rise up from the dead, and Christ will give you light.”

- The light that Christ gives is eternal
- His light is not subject to decay
- It gives “truth”
- It “makes us good”