

20 September 2020

West Kirk of Calder & Polbeth Harwood

By: Rev Dr Jonanda Groenewald

Reading: Matthew 5:14-16

Hymn: CH4 465 Be Thou my vision

READING

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden.

¹⁵ Neither 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. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

MESSAGE

What a year it's been so far!

I am so thankful that we can be here in the church today, but we are a long way away from normality. Of course we would have preferred to not wear masks, to sing our hearts out and to blether to each other at the door, but we can't do any of these things just quite yet...

But today I would like to focus *not* on the things we *can't* do, but on the things we CAN do. Some of us can be here at church today, and that is a start!

And then I would also like to focus on the things we *have* to do...

Despite the fact that our whole world is upside down at the moment, God still wants to use us. Maybe even BECAUSE our world is upside down at the moment, God wants to use us.

In our reading we heard that Jesus said:

“Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

A very simple message, with a profound meaning.

We very often describe the world we live in today as “dark”, and that is because there are so many things in our world that is just plain wrong, things that go against the grain of what God wants for the world, things that upset us and make us sad.

But now Covid19 has added to the darkness of the world, to make our lives even harder than it was before.

But in this darkness, Jesus tells us that we should make our lights shine, so that the people around us can see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven.

See, it's up to *us* to make sure that this world is not overcome with darkness!

But now I know you might wonder: “How on earth we can do that?” We are affected by everything that's going on around us just like everyone else.

I'm sure that there have been times since the end of March that some of you have been paralysed with fear, or others have been drawn into that deep dark pit of depression.

We are all human.

So how can we let our lights shine before others, if we ourselves sometimes feel overwhelmed by darkness?

The thing is, we don't have to find this light inside ourselves. We get this light from an outside source, so to speak. From Jesus himself.

JESUS is the light. We don't have to muster up the energy to ignite a small spark of light from deep within ourselves... No. All we need to do is to allow Jesus to shine through us.

One of my colleagues once told the story of a wee boy who travelled through Europe with his parents one summer. And as you do, they visited plenty of the great old cathedrals.

As the lad visited cathedral after cathedral, the thing that impressed him most was the massive stained-glass windows, filled with portraits of the disciples and other saints. He was quite mesmerised by it!

Upon returning home, he was asked by his Sunday Club leader about his holiday on the continent, and what he liked the most.

He thought for a moment of those great churches and their grand windows and he said, “I loved the stained-glass windows with their images of the saints.”

“Okay! Can you tell us what a saint is?” the leader asked. His mind went back to those beautiful windows and he said, “A saint is a person the light shines through.”

Sometimes kids can be so *spot on* with their descriptions! I think that is a very a good definition of what a saint is. Of what *any* child of God should be: A person the light shines through.

We have no light of our own, but we need to reflect the light of Jesus to the world. We should allow Jesus to shine through us.

I’m sure you’ll agree that stained-glass windows can be amazing works of art! Just look here behind me! It’s oh so beautiful! It really makes a church building FEEL like a church, doesn’t it?

There are even churches where all the main stories of the Bible are illustrated in the stained-glass windows, so that in the days when not everybody could read the Bible for themselves, they could look at the images in the windows and see the Bible stories unfold before their eyes.

The thing about stained glass windows is, though, that if the light doesn’t shine through them, you can’t really see the images illustrated on them, and they don’t look that special at all. But the moment you switch the

lights on or the sun shines through them, THEN they come to their right! Then you can see every wee detail.

And exactly the same thing is true for us. Jesus is the light. If we allow Jesus to shine through us, all those around us will be able to notice what an amazing place this world really is, despite everything that is going on around us.

We should reflect the light of Jesus, like the images on a stained-glass window can sometimes be reflected onto the inside of the church.

So what does this mean? It means that if we really allow Jesus to shine through us, we will do our best to act like Jesus as taught us; to be who God wants us to be, with the help of his Spirit of course; and then people will be able to see Jesus in us, like we can see the images in the window in its reflection too.

There are so many things we can't do at the moment, but this we CAN do. Because God will give us the strength to do it.

And if we all do this, we will be like that city on a hill we read about – a city that cannot be hidden.

I honestly think that *this* is what our world needs at the moment. The light of the Lord: Love, laughter; care, compassion; healing, hope.

These are the things that can take the darkness away. Let's do everything we can to keep ourselves and others safe in these uncertain

times, but let's do it in such a way that we bring joy to them and ourselves to.

Not only because we have to, or because we can, but because we *want* to. Because we *know* that believing in God is a privilege, that comes with responsibilities too.

The brighter the light, the easier it is to notice all the good things we have in our lives. It's only when it's dark around us that we can't see the blessings that fill our lives.

So let's make our lights shine, and in this way bring glory to our Father in heaven.

Amen

HYMN

CH4 465:1-4

Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art -
Thou my best thought, by day or by night;
Waking or sleeping, thy presence my light.

Be thou my wisdom, and thou my true word;
I ever with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my great Father; thine own may I be,
Thou in me dwelling and I one with thee.

Riches I heed not, nor vain, empty praise;
Thou mine inheritance, now and always;
Thou and thou only first in my heart,
High King of heaven, my treasure thou art.

High King of heaven, my victory won,
May I reach heaven's joys, O bright heaven's sun!
Heart of my own heart, whatever befall,
Still be my vision, O Ruler of all

PRAYER

Eternal, ever-living, ever-present God,
in the struggles and joys of this day, we pray:

For everyone who is working hard to take care of those affected by
Covid19, whether this be physically, emotionally, or financially;
keeping us all safe;
keeping our country running;
working towards getting a vaccine...

*Help them to make the right decisions Lord, to lead us in the right way,
and help them to not lose hope.*

For those who can't be here with us in church today...

*Surround them with your love and help them to feel part of our
congregation, although they are at home.*

For those who are overburdened, weighed down, demoralised,
fearful or desolate because of what life has thrown at them...

God, be with them.

For those engulfed in pain and anguish, facing illness and death...

God, be with them.

For those troubled in mind and spirit, who find no peace or calm...

God, be with them.

For those alone and lonely, without friend or comfort...

God, be with them.

For those frightened and bewildered, who see no direction or purpose in their lives...

God, be with them.

Eternal, ever-living God,

bless them all in this and every hour,

in this and every step of life's journey.

*Please help us all to let our lights shine, to do good and be positive –
to the glory of your Holy Name.*

Amen.