

The Electromagnetic Radiation of a Wavelength, Visible to the Human Eye

Matthew 5:14-16

Two men were arguing over which one knew the most of the Bible. The debate went on for a while and then the first guy said to the second guy, "I'll bet you \$10 you don't even know the Twenty-Third Psalm."

The second man said, "I'll take that bet."

They put down their ten dollar bills, and the first one said, "All right go ahead, say the Twenty-Third Psalm."

Without a moment's hesitation, the second man began, "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom..."

And at that point, the first man handed the money over and said, "Here's the \$20. I never thought you would have known it."

Clearly neither one of these guys knew their Bible very well, which is too bad. The Scriptures represent the most important part of God's plan to communicate with his creation. They are the centerpiece of God's revelation—his revealing of himself—to all of us. Knowing the Bible is an important part of how we know God—how we know his mind and heart—and how we prepare ourselves to be the light of the world—to share what we know and believe with anyone and everyone.

We've been talking over these past few weeks about the idea of the 'active ingredient.' The active ingredient is the substance in medicine that makes the drug work—that makes us feel better. Whatever else makes up the rest of the pill or liquid, it's the active ingredient that makes it work—the part of a drug that actually heals us, that makes us feel better, the part of the medicine that's designed to restore our health.

We continue our series on what it means to be the active ingredients—to live our faith in a way that make our communities better, healthier, more shalom-filled

places. Active ingredients that bring the message of the gospel in authentic ways to the places where we live and work and study and shop.

This is a journey through what it means to be missional people in a missional church. Those are the terms we're going to use over these next weeks and months.

We find our missional habits and practices at the intersection of our minds and hearts—where what we know and believe about God, about the gospel of Jesus Christ—where all of that comes together in how we live as God's people in the world.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before all people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

Our text is the flipside of the passage last week about salt. In the 1-2 punch that Jesus was delivering to his listeners, this is the second strike. People came to Jesus to find out what he was offering—what was in this faith business for them, and Jesus turns it around so that the point was how this faith made a difference in how they treated others—what they were willing to share with the world.

He starts by appealing to their egos. 'You are the light of the world.'

Who wouldn't love to hear that? Who doesn't want to be the star of the game, or the head of the class, or the life of the party. 'You are the light of the world.' I can see the crowd feeling pretty good about that.

But it might have started to turn with the second line. 'A city on a hill can't be hidden.'

That one might have made them squirm a little. If you're going to be a source of light, then there's nowhere to hide—nowhere you can't be seen. This is one of the mixed blessings in battle of using radar. It helps you find what you're looking for, but it also let's other people find you. Nowhere to hide. I wonder how many

people got up and left after that part.

Then Jesus breaks the tension with a joke. 'No one lights a lamp and then puts a bowl over it.'

People would have chuckled about that one. Of course no one would do that—what a dumb thing that would be. Lighting a lamp and covering it with a bowl would be, well, it would miss the point of having the lamp in the first place.

Jesus would have agreed. 'When you light a lamp you hang it up so that everyone in your house can benefit from the light.'

And then he drops the bomb. 'Let your light shine where everyone can see it, so that they can see the way you live and give their own praise to your Father in heaven.'

Meeting Jesus in a meaningful way and not sharing it with someone else is like lighting a lamp and covering it with a nice big bowl. It just doesn't make any sense. It misses the point of having the light in the first place.

Meeting Jesus in a meaningful way brings with it the call to share and to live that story with the people around us.

We finally got around to seeing the movie, 'The Blind Side', last week. As a matter of fact, we saw it on Friday night and liked it so much we watched it again on Sunday.

The movie was based on a book that was about the changing economics of football. In 1985 Joe Theismann, the quarterback for the Washington Redskins, was hit so hard by a guy he never saw coming that he shattered his leg and never played again. Even now I can see some of you wincing—you remember how many times they replayed that tape. 'The Blind Side' partly tells the story of how NFL teams had to rethink the value of each player on their squads. Eventually, while the quarterback remained the highest-paid player on every team, the left tackle—the one who protects a right-handed QB's blind side—is now often the second-highest paid player.

But the book and movie also follow the story of Michael Oher, a poor kid in Memphis who has the physical ability to thrive in this new era of football, but who needs some help in getting his life in order.

The movie also tells the story of a Christian family and their response to a young person in need. The focus is really on the mom in the story, Leigh Ann Touhy, played by Sandra Bullock. The mom's story—and the story of the way her family responded—is pretty compelling. What surprised me, and one of the things I'm loving about the book, is that in this upper-middle-class white evangelical Republican cast of characters, person after person does exactly the right thing...explicitly because of their Christian faith.

The principal of the private Christian high school that took Michael in, a man named Steve Simpson, had a plaque on his desk with a verse from Second Corinthians. It read:

'God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in his good works.'

One of the amazing things that comes out in both the book and the movie is that the administrators of the school thought it was more important to give Michael Oher an education than to make a sports hero out of him. Principal Simpson, the one who had that plaque about sharing our abundance, admitted Oher to the school with the provision that he wasn't allowed to play sports until he could function on his own as a student.

Simpson didn't have to do that. In a part of the US that is football-crazy he probably seemed like he'd lost his marbles for keeping this potential star off the field.

'No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a bowl. They put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house.'

In the end these people acted as the light of the world—they believed and prayed and agonized over whether or not they were doing the right thing. Teachers,

parents, administrators all seemed to care deeply that what they believed would somehow help them make the right decisions about what to do to help this poor kid.

The family at the center of the story did their best to share the light of their love for Jesus with Michael Oher—and with the world. The point is that they started with their own home. They had two kids of their own—a young son and a daughter who was Michael's age. They were successful and respected in the community. They were proper Southerners who'd been educated in Mississippi and gotten rich in Tennessee.

The movie plays this part for laughs, but anyone who knows the South knows what kind of a social risk they took.

This conservative, white, wealthy, socially prominent family opened their home to a kid in need who happened to be an orphaned black teenager who was 6-foot, 5-inches tall and weighed 350 pounds...at 16 years old.

Here's the point—other than that you should go and see this movie and read this book today. Here's the point. Whatever else made up the values of this Southern family, everything was secondary to doing what their faith called them to do.

When they were presented with the need of Michael Oher, the Touhy family chose to fire up that lamp, hang it on a stand, and let it give light to everyone in their house and neighborhood.

'No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before all people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.'

So back to this idea of being 'the light of the world'.

The scientific definition of light goes like this: It's the electromagnetic radiation of a wavelength, visible to the human eye.

Now I don't know what most of that first part means, but the second part makes

perfect sense to me—the part about it being visible to the human eye.

So much about our faith is personal. We wonder and study and pray, mostly to ourselves. So much of our faith is personal.

But right in the middle of our private search for some kind of a connection with Jesus we get confronted by this little verse—so easy to breeze right past while we're looking for something else.

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 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. In the same way, let your light shine before all people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

That's what was happening in the story of 'The Blind Side'. The book described how the economics and values of professional football were transformed through a terrible injury and a need to protect the most important player on the team.

But the real story wasn't about how the values of football changed. The real story was about how the values of a family were transformed through their faith in Jesus Christ. How they took the gift of light that came from their encounter with the Messiah, and shared that light in their home and with the world.

Try this version of that same text.

'You are the light of the world. You can't hide it, and no one should even try. When you get a little light going in your own life, make sure your own house is lit up. Then let someone else experience it too. That's how they'll know that the God you talk about is real, by your actions, by the way you share your light.'

Our faith becomes real when it begins to generate some light.

Our faith becomes real when we live it and share it and make different decisions because of it.

Our faith becomes real when it is visible to the human eye.

Whatever it is that we believe about God, about the work of Jesus Christ to redeem and restore our lives, about the role of the Holy Spirit to empower us to be the people we were made to be. Whatever it is that we struggle to believe as Christian people, what matters is how it offers light to people who think that the darkness in this world is all there is.

“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before all people, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”

As we think about what it means to be missional people—to work and worship together as a missional church—keep those words in mind.

As we take a few moments to recognize the way some special volunteers here share their light with others, keep those words in mind.

Our faith becomes real when it is visible to the human eye.

How will you share that light with your world?

That was the point of that joke about the two guys who didn't know much about the Bible. Being the light of the world begins with knowing God's word, where we see what that light means and what it promises. It begins with entering the Scriptures and wrestling with what they teach. It's in that act of faith that we're refined into the disciples God made us to be.

My prayer for all of us is that we'll allow the refiner to enter in, to make his values our values, and send us out as agents of his light for everyone to see.

Amen.