

Light Up the World

☆ **What you are** (vv.13-16)

☆ **What you do** (vv.17-20)

In the name of Jesus, the Light of the World, dear fellow disciples, reflectors of His light:

I heard the voice of Jesus say, “Come unto me and rest....” (CW 338:1) Have you noticed how little kids don’t want to admit they’re tired? “Mom, Dad, I don’t want to go to bed!” Do we ever really outgrow that? You need to relax. let someone else entertain you. You really wanted to watch this. But the backside of your eyelids...“I’m just too tired.” Much of the world falls into bed exhausted. Jesus invites, **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest...rest for your souls.”** (Matthew 11:28f EHV¹) Strange, but true. We have to come into the light to see our need for rest. Rested and refreshed in Jesus, we’re ready to **Light Up the World**. First, it’s...

☆ **What you are** (vv.13-16)

One conscientious Christian thought we needed Jesus’ *Sermon on the Mount* to straighten people out. This text is part of that most famous sermon – Matthew 5-7. But paying close attention, the Master Teacher is not telling you what to become, but **What you are**. **“You are the salt of the earth.”**

True now, more so then – salt is necessary to preserve meat. “Sodium,” “nitrates,” – salt. How else could they preserve meat from deadly rot? **“You are salt of the earth”** in the social landscape and climate concerns. The LORD promised Noah right after the flood that He would keep the climate producing food until the end of the world for you and all people. (Genesis 8:22) Your prayers can change history. There would be no Dead Sea, below sea level, deepest spot on the earth if the LORD could have found just ten righteous people according to Abraham’s prayer for Sodom and Gomorrah. (Genesis 18:32) Your preaching of God’s judgment on sin and our Savior’s rescue from wrath may seem powerless. But remember the most successful, most reluctant prophet Jonah? When he finally preached as commanded, that cruel city of Nineveh repented. Jonah wanted them destroyed. **“Salt”** preserved in spite of him.

Jesus who says, **“I am the Light of the world”** (John 8:12) also says, **“You are the light of the world.”** Light can’t help but shine. Don’t hide your light under a basket. **“Let your light shine in people’s presence, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”** This is not a call to self-righteous show. *This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine* – just by living as a Christian. Don’t be surprised when the worldly don’t like it. Jesus says through John: **“The light has come into the world, yet people loved the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil....But the one who does what is true comes toward the light, in order that his deeds may be seen as having been done in connection with God.”** (John 3:19–21 EHV)

Hidden light is worthless; so is saltless salt. They could not throw defective salt on a field or the plants would die. On the road at least it did no harm as everyone walked on it. **Salt** and **Light** – it’s **What you are**. Do you “walk the walk”? Or are you in danger of saltless, dim loss of faith? There is an uncomfortable, but accurate test. Years ago a newlywed described how her father looked at her checkbook and scolded her for “robbing God” by not giving back to the Lord as He was blessing her. Faith was still lighting her heart because she listened. Her father’s salty admonition she accepted and even told her pastor. For several years after they moved, she and her husband kept sending generous gifts

¹ *Holy Bible: Evangelical Heritage Version*. (2019). Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House. (800-662-6022)

for the Lord's work here at New Life. I pray the dear Holy Spirit to shine into the hearts of some of our members who sing God's praises, but rob Him of offerings by giving nothing back to God. If there is weakness, may God give strength. Where there is sin, may God forgive and empower us to do the good we desire by faith. Jesus spread His arms for the nails of God's wrath to crimson the cross with blood that washed our sins away. Redeemed, restored, forgiven – we are at peace with God. His love drives out fear for the second half of this sermon. It's all about being thankful. Gratitude is why you do...

☆ What you do (vv.17-20)

You know how religions go to extremes on this. First they say *you must do this or that in order to be saved*, but God assures you that Jesus did all God's law in your place. Then worldly religions lie the other way: *Sin as much as you want, because it's all forgiven anyway*. Jesus cuts both off at the knees.

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy them but to fulfill them. Amen I tell you: Until heaven and earth pass away, not even the smallest letter, or even part of a letter, will in any way pass away from the Law until everything is fulfilled. So whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Indeed I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and experts in the law, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” “Scripture cannot be broken.” (John 10:35 EHV)

Despite social media, Jesus means our same thirty-nine books of the Old Testament will never pass away, not even the tiny marks of Hebrew vowels and accents. Jesus fulfilled it all by His life, death and resurrection. One promise remains: Christ will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead.

Some well meaning Christians try to explain, “This *is* my body...This *is* my blood...” as if Jesus really meant “*represents*.” Or they insist on dedicating infants and children instead of following Christ's command to baptize literally “*all the ethnic groups*.” False teaching bears heavy responsibility. Jesus promises: “***If you remain in my word, you are really my disciples. You will also know the truth, and the truth will set you free.***” (John 8:31f EHV) Anyone who contradicts Jesus' Word “***will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.***” Someone who purposely opposes God's Word cannot be a Christian. All of us make mistakes in ignorance or try too hard to explain the mysteries of faith. So continuing education is vital for preachers. We need to keep evaluating all teaching by God's Word.

Being right with God is not about human effort. “***Pharisees and experts in the law***” tried so hard, yet their personal ***righteousness*** ran dry. God demands perfection. In baptism God's mercy gives infinite ***righteousness*** to cover our infinite sin. Think of your heart and life as a cup that must be full of pure, clean ***righteousness***. The dear Holy Spirit keeps filling you up through His Word and sacrament: “***Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.***” God doesn't stop: “***My cup is overflowing.***” (Psalm 23:5 EHV). The overflow blesses everyone you know. It's **What you do** in gratitude and glory to God.

In Jesus we have all we need to **Light Up the World**. A six-week-old baby girl caught a cold back in 1820. The doctor put mustard poultice on her eyes, leaving her virtually blind the rest of her life. Age 8, she wrote: *O what a happy soul I am! / Although I cannot see, I am resolved that in this world contented I will be*. She became a famous poet, a dedicated Christian. Age 44 – her first hymn: *We are going, we are going / To a home beyond the skies / Where the fields are robed in beauty / And the sunlight never dies*. February 5, 1864. You know Fanny Crosby better for one of our favorite hymns, *To God be the glory; great things he has done!* (CW 399) In glory at age 95 after writing 8,000 hymns!²

Light Up the World, dear Christian friends – it's **What you are** – **salt** and **light**; it's **What you do** – glorify God in heartfelt gratitude. And thinking of that overflowing cup of God's ***righteousness***, raise the glass to God's goodness in Christ. Cheers! Amen.

² Morgan, Robert J. *On This Day* © 1997. Thomas Nelson, Inc. DailyReader © 1999-2001. www.Laridian.com.
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