

DO NOT CURSE THE DARKNESS, LIGHT A CANDLE



BE THE LIGHT IN A DARK WORLD

Life under Roman occupation was brutal. Israel was controlled by a force that showed unimaginable violence. Their method of control was to inflict pain in a public manner that would deter anyone who was thinking of committing a crime against Rome. Crucifying someone in the presence of the general population was one method of upholding control. When Jesus of Nazareth stepped onto the scene and started His ministry, He already knew all about this, having experienced 30 years of Roman occupation.

When He started His public ministry, the crowds were stunned by His teaching. Note that He teaches biblical **doctrine**, setting the pattern later followed by Paul and Peter:

²⁸And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were **astonished** at his **doctrine**: ²⁹For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes. – **Matthew 7:28-29**

What the crowds had been used to, was the teaching of the scribes who probably were never compelled to speak the truth. They taught the law, but without any real life application. Why? Because they had no life in themselves. Jesus came as the Light and all of His teaching shows incredibly practical ways to apply doctrine in our daily lives. The apostle John describes Him as the Light:

⁹That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. – **John 1:9**

He came to the Earth as the Light that shows us the way and He desires of us to be light to those around us. Later, He would say this of Himself:

¹²Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. – **John 8:12**

In the sermon on the mount, a long series of teaching to the crowds, Jesus teaches them the value of a light:

¹⁴Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. ¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. – **Matthew 5:14-16**

His teaching could be applied for the benefit of those who would receive it.

There is a saying, “Don’t curse the darkness; light a candle”. Who said this is not important but the implications are. Jesus was telling the crowds that they had to be the light of the world, where “the world” is a phrase commonly used in the Bible to refer to those who are spiritually lost. Of course, it could also refer to those around you who simply do not know how to do the right thing, or what the right thing is. You, the light, must be the beacon for

those who are in darkness. Moreover, the light must be high enough for everyone to see. What does this mean for us, and those around us, today?

At the beginning of His teaching, Jesus uses the term “blessed” no fewer than nine times. He says that they who do the right thing against the backdrop of the immense unfairness of the system that rules over them, will be blessed. Then He introduces two examples that most people in His day knew, and needed – salt and light. Salt was a precious commodity, so much that the Roman soldiers were paid with salt, from which we get the word “salary”. In a world without electricity and where poverty ruled, light was the other important commodity. Homes were often dark and gloomy and needed to be constantly lit. Long before this, the psalmist already knew the importance of light:

¹⁰⁵Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. – **Psalm 119:105**

The lamp provides light for the immediate situation, where the feet have to tread in the darkness, and also lights the way forward, so that the person can see which route to follow. The use of a lamp with an oil candlestick is a very effective way to describe the Word of God – the Bible.

Let us get back to Jesus’ teaching. It is easy in our world of unfairness to try and blend in, not stand out, or “move under the radar” as some would say. While this seems to be the right way to do it, it turns out that it is not. It is easy to see the wrong things the world does and then, returning to the phrase we started with, curse the darkness. When we see someone doing the wrong thing, our reaction can either be to immediately try to correct or rebuke the person (curse the darkness) or hide away as if nothing has happened (no light). The problem is that the darkness, to use part of the phrase, does not know that it is darkness and neither does it know how to be light. Those around you who are in the dark do not have the answers, but you who walk in the light, have. This is exactly where we often fail. Instead of simply being the light, doing the right thing and pointing them to the truth so that they can follow it, we try to do it for them.

All you are called to do, is to do the right thing and be the light, no more. When those around you do the wrong thing, continue to do the right thing. Be the light, but do not poke it in their faces and blind them in the process. You will not convince them of the truth, but your actions will. Verse 16 of the quoted text states this:

¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your **good works**, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. – **Matthew 5:14-16**

Light the candle, and the light thereof will point the way. However, the more lights are lit, the more the darkness will recede.

CONCLUSION

What is the challenge for you today in your immediate environment? Do the right thing:

1. Hunger for righteousness (Matthew 5:6) – do the right thing;
2. Be merciful (Matthew 5:7) – do not judge;
3. Be a peacemaker (Matthew 5:9) – just be the light, do not pick a fight; and

4. If you are persecuted for doing the right thing (Matthew 5:10,11) – continue to do what is good.

We are just called to be the light and set a good example, no more.