

**Matthew 5:13-20**  
**February 5, 2017**

***“Let It Shine!”***

[Immediately after the Reading of the Scripture, the video titled, “*Shine Your Light*” was shown.]

The beauty and power of sharing the Light is inspiring! The Biblical revelation of the full Truth about the Light leads to greater impact on our lives and on the lives of many others. So, let’s take a brief Biblical stroll down memory lane, so to speak.

We find in the introductory verses of the Gospel of John, the story of how God Created everything by means of “the Word”. Additionally, we are told in **John 1:4-5**, ***“The Word was the Source of Life, and this Life brought Light to people. The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.”*** We later learn “the Word” took human form in Jesus. It is through “the Word” that both Life and Light have been given to us. The darkness in the world has never put out the Light!

Returning to the Gospel of Matthew, we find another expression of the Light. This time it is not the Light – Jesus but the Star, which guided the Star Studiers to find Jesus. We are told in **Matthew 2:1b-2**, ***“Soon afterward, some men who studied the stars came from the East to Jerusalem and asked, ‘Where is the baby born to be the king of the Jews? We saw his star when it came up in the east, and we have come to worship him.’”*** It was the Light of the Star, through which God led the Star Studiers to the Son of God and the King of the Jews!

A little later in Matthew – after the Star Studiers had left, Mary and Joseph were led by God’s Guiding and Protecting Light as described in **Matthew 2:13-15**, ***“After they had left, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph and said, ‘Herod will be looking for the child in order to kill him. So get up, take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you to leave.’ Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and left during the night for Egypt, where he stayed until Herod died. This was done to make come true what the Lord had said through the prophet, ‘I called my Son out of Egypt.’”*** That experience enlightens us because the Divine Parent called Joseph to take Mary and the young Jesus to Egypt – to take them away from their home country – to make them Refugees, and, so, protected and saved toddler Jesus from King Herod’s plot to murder him! That Light or Leading from God was aligned with the Prophetic Tradition in the Old Testament, which frequently revealed God’s commands to welcome the foreigners – the immigrants and the refugees. In Luke’s report of the Parable of the Good Samaritan, Jesus taught we are to love our neighbors, including those rejected by society – those considered to be the most undesirable – yes, even the Samaritans. Many faith traditions have engaged in ministries to immigrants and refugees based on those Biblical insights. As one of his first official actions, President Trump signed Executive Orders which at the very least, temporarily banned refugees and immigrants, especially from 7 Muslim majority nations, from coming to the United States. Numerous lawsuits have resulted with the vast majority of Federal Judges ruling to provide relief from the Executive Orders. Some Refugee Ministries have made public statements in response to the President’s Executive Orders. Here is a sampling of a few of them: Church World Service announced, “We are in an unprecedented time in the United States. ... President Trump’s Executive Order restricting refugee resettlement

will affect the CWS Immigration and Refugee Program immediately. This is a time of uncertainty. But it is not a time to give up. We will not stop fighting for those we serve. Please stand with us, choosing hope over fear and helping CWS continue to support the needs of this vulnerable population and others at home and abroad. Join us as we send a strong message to the world that refugees and immigrants are welcome.”

World Relief wrote, “The world changes. The Church’s calling doesn’t. Still we stand. On Friday, January 27, the new presidential administration announced significant changes to U.S. Immigration policy, including a substantial reduction of refugees allowed to enter the U.S., as well as funding cuts to the Refugee Admissions Program — and to resettlement agencies like World Relief — that compromise our ability to adequately care for refugees and immigrants.”

**HIAS (originally Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) stated, “Donald Trump has issued a number of executive orders targeting vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers, which means your voice of opposition is more critical than ever.” “History has taught us the deadly consequences of slamming the doors of this country shut on people just because of who they are and where they are from. We must prevent this administration from repeating the mistakes of the past.”**

The “Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. decries the executive actions on immigration enforcement taken yesterday by President Trump as well as actions on refugee resettlement expected later this week. These actions portray immigrants and refugees as criminals and threats rather than seeing them as God’s beloved children. In our society, rejection of the immigrant — ‘the other’ — still runs deep, whether due to fear, ignorance, racism or selfishness.

By building walls and turning away refugees we ignore Christ’s call to care for those in need and to love the stranger among us as we love ourselves.” (*“Relief agencies sound a red alert”* by Fred Clark)

Focusing on the identity of the Light, the gospel author wrote in **John 1:6-9**, **“God sent His messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the Light, so that all should hear the message and believe. He himself was not the Light; he came to tell about the Light. This was the Real Light — the Light that comes into the world and shines on all people.”** This quotation reveals the Truth that Jesus is the Light for the World and the Light needed by all people.

Considering how Jesus identified himself to be the Light, we read in **John 8:12**, **“Jesus spoke to the Pharisees again. ‘I am the Light of the World,’ he said. ‘Whoever follows me will have the Light of Life and will never walk in darkness.’”**

Jesus is the Light of the World but you and I also have a call – a role in continuing the sharing of that Light to all people. Jeff Strite told the story of “A young man who had heard the Gospel” and “accepted Christ. A little while after this, a Christian teacher asked him: ‘What have you done for Christ since you believed?’ He replied: ‘Oh, I’m a learner.’

‘Well,’ said the questioner, ‘when you light a candle do you light it to make the candle more comfortable, or to have it give light?’ He replied, ‘To give light.’

‘Do you expect it to give light after it is half burned, or when you first light it?’ He replied, ‘As soon as I light it.’

‘Very well,’ was the reply, ‘go thou and do likewise ... begin at once.’” (From a sermon by Jeff Strite, Top Models, 5/20/2012)

Are we to go and do likewise – shine light like a burning candle? One way we might think of our role in the sharing of the Light is revealed in the following “What If” video.

[The video titled, “*What If*” was shown.]

Returning to our Gospel Lectionary Reading, remember how the Text described our call from Jesus about sharing the Light. Jesus tells us and all of his followers in **Matthew 5:14-16**, “*You are like Light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead it is put on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house. In the same way your Light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.*”

In addition to the “What If” video’s great suggestions, let’s also recall this congregation’s commitment to be a “**God Is Still Speaking**” Church – one which Listens to and Follows our Divine Parent’s Call to Agape Love all people! There are plenty of persons, who have either experienced rejection from churches or are afraid they will be abused by judgmental legalists in a local church. What if we showed everyone Radical Hospitality – Welcoming them no matter who they are or where they are on life’s journey? What if we help those whose economic or health issues leave them in distress? What if we seek Justice for the powerless, Safety and a new life for refugees, Comfort for the grieving or hurting, and Welcome and Acceptance to the rejected?

**Every time you find someone hurting, in need of meaning or purpose, or in need of God’s Agape Love, Forgiveness, Healing, and New Life, let your Light shine to bring Light to their darkness! Amen.**