

**Let your Light Shine**  
**February, 9, 2020 Epiphany 5**

Isaiah 58: 1-9a  
Matthew 5: 13-20

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You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. This is the message of the gospel today, but what does this mean? How are we to be salt and light? What does it look like? Salt is used for flavouring, or enhancing flavour. When looking into the words in the passage, and it talks about salt losing its saltiness, that doesn't happen on its own, it is only by contamination. The literal translation for 'lost its taste' is becomes foolish. So, we lose our seasoning for the earth, the world, for enhancing life, when we fall to foolish ways or lose our sense of purpose or don't stand up for our sense of purpose and knowing what is right. We are to let our light shine, so others may see our good works and give glory to God. If people see the love and care we offer to others, by what we say and do, our light, God's light shines. It is God's grace working in and through us that allows us to be salt and light in the world.

As we are in Black History Month, let us take some examples of salt and light from the black community. A few months ago, Film and Faith went to see the movie Harriet, about Harriet Tubman who escaped from slavery and then went back to free many others over the years through the underground railroad. She was a strong woman of faith and there were many times in the movie that it was clear she was not alone, that she drew on God's guidance in her journey. Her light was so strong that she would not be steered away from what she knew God was calling her to do, as is clear in this clip.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hM1L\\_jJy4ak](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hM1L_jJy4ak)

What touches you as you see this scene? What feelings are brought out in you from this, that may bring out the best in you? The director of the underground railroad here, had some serious and legitimate concerns. It could be said he was trying to put her light under a bushel, for a time, but Harriet would not be swayed. She knew God was with her and leading her to free more slaves, even if she didn't have the skills or training. She trusted God's grace and love being in and with her as she went through some very dangerous situations. On her first trip back, she went to free her husband but she discovered he had remarried thinking she was dead. She then ended up bringing back other members of her

family and understood God had a different idea or plan for her than what she originally intended. She could have wallowed in the loss of her husband, and while she was grieved, she also embraced the opportunity to save others when it arose. Her being in tune with God's grace, love and guidance allowed her to let her light shine.

In the old testament reading of Isaiah, the people of Israel are complaining that God is not noticing their fasting and faithful piety, they thought their light was shining. The problem is that they are fasting and worshipping faithfully but it is not affecting their lives outside of the synagogue. They continue to serve their own interests and treat people poorly, oppressing their workers, and do not loose the bonds of injustice, let the oppressed go free, feed the hungry, house the homeless, clothe the naked. Fasting is worth nothing if these kinds of action do not follow. If God's gracious love is not extended to all. William Barber understands this. He is a black preacher and founder of [Moral Mondays](#) in North Carolina and [Repairers of the Breach](#). That phrase 'repairers of the breach' is from the same passage of Isaiah 58 in verse 12 which indicates that after God's people respond in the ways mentioned above, "Your ancient ruins shall be rebuilt; you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; you shall be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets to live in." William Barber acts for justice and leads others to do the same in the public sphere. He doesn't just preach fighting injustice, he lives it. He spoke last month at a public gathering honouring Martin Luther King and did not hesitate to preach the gospel in this public context.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TslKsalQTMc> (starting 8:45 to 11:12)

He reads the gospel in a way which contextualizes it for our time and their context. Later on, when talking about Martin Luther King, (22:30) he calls out the governor who introduced him, saying politicians can't say they love Dr. King and then refuse to support his agenda of justice and dismantling racism. Rev. Barber clearly stated that Dr. King would not have supported a wall to keep people out and then invited people to stand if they were against the wall. To stand if they would support the use of the resources for health care for everyone as republican Teddy Roosevelt encouraged. The Reverend William Barber is clear in his commitment to Jesus, the gospel and justice in the Old Testament in calling people to account who are not living up to those values. That is what his movement is about. He lets his light shine.

Letting your light shine doesn't mean doing incredible or amazing things, as these stories indicate. Sometimes it may seem like that, but most often it is in the day to day things that connect us with one another, with ourselves and with God. When we can be grounded in who and whose we are, our light shines. Reflect for a moment when you felt a real connection with someone or felt like you made a difference to a person or their situation. What enabled that to happen? I wonder if it was an open spirit, being in tune with yourself, trusting God and the gifts you have to offer, not second guessing yourself but being present to yourself and the person you were with. That is your light shining. We let our light shine when we visit someone who is lonely or shut-in. We let our light shine when we bring a meal to someone who is sick or grieving. It is when we cooperate with God's grace in and through us. It is the grace of being able to love like God loves, of recognizing that we and each one of us is made in God's image, to love. When we remember that we are enough, that we are blessed to be a blessing. When we open our heart, in touch with love and compassion, our light shines.

Sometimes that light gets covered up. That is what the passage is talking about when it says, no one lights a lamp and then puts it under a bushel or a basket. It can be daunting to stand up for what we believe in or address issues of justice. Sometimes it is hard, sometimes we are busy, but most the time there are also other ways our light is shining and we don't need to do it all. God understands our full and complicated lives and for every time we don't do something we think we should, there are many more times that we do live up to God's love, letting our light shine and being salt of the earth.

We let our light shine when we volunteer in the community, whether that be at church or in an organization important to us

We let our light shine when we support things like INI Café and ICF breakfast to take steps toward reconciliation.

We let our light shine when we offer a ride to someone who can't drive.

We let our light shine when we take time to be with our family.

We let our light shine when we offer extra time on a search committee because there is a vacancy.

We let our light shine when we raise concerns for the homeless and poor in any context.

We let our light shine when we share posts like the [videos](#) of the TRC Calls to action.

We let our light shine when we spend hours phoning congregational members as part of carrying out our Action Plan recommendations.

We let our light shine when we speak up for what we believe in even when it may not be popular.

We let our light shine when we seek to live out our faith beyond Sunday morning.

We let our light shine, when we remember and know by God's grace that we are loved, loveable and a blessing to others.

We let our light shine when we seek to be present to each moment, to each person and trust in God and ourselves

May we know God's love is with us as we let our light shine, and seek to be salt of the earth, enhancing life. May we know God's grace when we feel we don't measure up, remembering that we are good enough, that we are enough. May we be light to the world, hope for the lost and forsaken, and grace for all who need it.