

Isaiah 58:1-12
Psalm 112:1-10
1 Corinthians 2:1-16
Matthew 5:13-20

Sermon February 9th, 2020

Jesus Is Our Light!

When we want to learn a new task one of the best ways to learn is by finding someone with experience in doing this task to show us how it's done. In most careers we often train with an experienced mentor first, before the boss is ready to unleash us to handle the task ourselves.

In seminary, we spend 12 to 18 months on internship being mentored by another pastor before graduating and becoming a pastor in our own congregational setting. For the first 3 to 4 months of the supervision we shadow the pastor. Then as the internship goes on we start to get a little more freedom to work. To experiment on our own. Still with the guidance and support of our supervising Pastor.

The first and only funeral I did on Internship was for an elderly lady who grew up in the Lutheran church, but never found a church home in her later years. Her family was not connected to any church for a long time, but wanted a Lutheran Pastor to do her funeral. My supervisor encouraged me do this funeral. He did show up to the funeral service to support me.

Anyways, during the sermon I started to preach on her and her late husband who had passed away a few years earlier. I had mentioned both their names several times. Unfortunately, I had remembered the late husband's name wrong, and so, after saying his "name" a fourth time their Son finally stood up tall and boldly corrected me. The look on my Supervisor's face was priceless. Kind of like when Jesus says to his disciples "Oh, you of little faith".

A few years back they created a requirement for new grads that stated that the first three years of their ministry they needed to have a mentor who they regularly connected with for guidance and support. I found this helped me out immensely in my first call.

It isn't just in the ministry where we see this apprenticeship model of learning. In most of the trades one often works with a senior person before answering calls on their own. Pipes might look easy to fix when we take out our plumbing for dummies book, but often times it is a lot harder when we start to take things apart. Doctors, nurses, spend a lot of time watching senior doctors, nurses work before they get one on one time with patients. Could you imagine a surgeon reading a text book and then being allowed based on just reading this book to open you up and go to work. No thank you.

For those of us who have played sports or invested in learning a musical instrument there are coaches and teachers who mentor us and help us develop our skills with the hopes that we will be able to shine our light before others just like they shone their light before others.

In our gospel this morning, Jesus says we are the light of the world. The you in this verse is plural. So, as a community we are invited to shine God's light on the people we encounter. This invitation goes back as far as when God invites Abram to follow. The people of Israel were shown God's commandments (God's light), which in turn taught the people how to love God and their neighbor. This light was supposed to guide Israel into reflecting this light to those they encountered in whatever empire they were living in.

When Jesus invites the disciples to follow, Jesus forms a community of believers who learn from Jesus' mentorship. They spend much time shadowing Jesus as he teaches and acts, reflecting God's love. Then Jesus starts sending them out to put their learning into practice, showing them guidance and support along the way. Jesus teaches them the commandments, how to love God and neighbor. Then invites them to go out and show this love to others. Or in other words, shine their light (the teachings of Jesus) before others.

In our baptism, as we see with Chloe this morning in her baptism, we are given a light to symbolize that we have been invited to shine our light before others. We are invited to participate in the life of the church, the light of the world, learning about what it means to follow Jesus, and then living this out in our daily lives.

Our Sponsors, or more traditionally, God parents, are invited to support us as we learn about our faith. Often times they will give their god child their first bible.

Our Parents too make promises to help us find opportunities to learn and grow in our faith.

As the church we are called to help teach and mentor new believers into learning what it means to follow Jesus. We teach them how to read and interpret the bible. We teach them ways in which they can worship. We teach them how to pray. We teach them how to live a generous life. We teach them how they can be Christ's healing hands and feet in our broken world. We do this with our words and our actions.

Our whole baptism is centered around the support and love of others reassuring us that through our baptism we become part of a community of believers called to shine our light before others with others.

We are the light of the world. We are invited to shine this light, the way of Jesus, so others can see. We are inspired to do this both individually and as a community,

because Jesus is our light. In fact, we are not really the light, but a reflection of the light. Jesus is the light. Jesus teaches us the way, because Jesus embodies everything about this way. I like what one biblical scholar said in a commentary I was reading. Douglas R. A. Hare said “The church is not the light itself but a window through which the light is to be seen”.

Jesus is our light, and this gives us the grace and wisdom to reflect this light before others. We experience this light when we hear the stories in our gospels. We experience this light when we pray. We experience this light when we see Jesus in the words and actions of others. We experience this light in the grace of God, which invites us to the font as we are. With all our bumps and bruises.

Jesus is our light, and invites us to shine this light in the world. As baptized believers, and also, as a community of believers. This is why it is so important to remember that we are there for each other supporting one another as we shine Christ’s light before others. This isn’t an individualistic invitation. This is a communal invitation calling on all believers to be Christ’s light.

This is why I find it is so important to find common ground and work together with other churches and faith communities to reflect God’s love in the world. Because we are called as a community to be this light, and when we gather as a community we shine a much bigger light on the world than if we go at it ourselves.

Let us pray, gracious God, thank you for shining your light in our lives. Give us what we need to shine our light before others. Or shall we say your light before others. In Jesus name we pray, **Amen.**

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