

WEEKEND Edition 30 April, 01 May 2022 (Matt. 5:14-16)

Hello my 'Walking with Jesus' friends,

Hey, it's the weekend and I have an important question for us as we step into this weekend, two weeks after Easter: As you look around your part of our world, wherever you live, what evidence do you see that Easter, I mean the real Easter, the Easter of Jesus' death and resurrection, is making any real difference in how people live in your city, this weekend? *How is Easter honored in the education of the children of your city, or the health care provided in your city, or how business is transacted in your city, or the politics of your city, or even the entertainment which will be provided in your city this weekend?*

Yesterday I left you with Matthew, perhaps with a writing tablet and writing utensil in his hand, sitting on a hillside outside his town of Capernaum. He was remembering several months before, when Jesus was talking to a huge crowd of people on this very same hillside. It was Jesus' first really big audience message and the things that He said that day were radical. As Matthew now was reflecting on each thing Jesus said that day, he was trying to understand how he had watched Jesus actually live out what He had said, as His disciples watched Him day in and day out. What Matthew wrote that day is found in Matthew chapter 5. Yesterday we looked at what Jesus said about living like SALT in our world.

Today, Matthew tells us Jesus next said: ***"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way let your light shine before mankind, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."*** (Matt. 5:14-16)

We understand how light works don't we? Light penetrates or disperses darkness. It's a flashlight, it's headlights on a car, or streetlights, or a lighthouse on the shore. It's a candle in a dark room, it's a big chandelier in a palace, it's the motion detector light by your front door. Perhaps the best example is the sunshine each morning dispelling, pushing back the darkness of the night and illuminating our world with its brightness! So just as yesterday we asked what a Holy Spirit anointed human saltshaker looks like, today let's ask what a Holy Spirit anointed human flashlight is like?

A friend of mine recently gave me a very powerful flashlight that can either spread a wide beam, illuminating a huge area, or a very focused beam, almost like a laser, that focuses intense light to a very specific target. Every time I turn it on, I'm challenged in my soul to ask myself... *'Am I like this light? Am I adaptable so the Holy Spirit can use me to spread the light of Jesus over a wide area, or also focus me intensely on one small target needing the light of Jesus?'*

This thought causes us to ask ourselves: do our lives penetrate or dissipate the darkness in our world, or do we contribute to advancing the darkness?

Light was a favorite topic of Jesus. John writes this about Jesus coming to our world: **"In Him was life, and that life was the light of mankind. The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it... The true light that gives light to every person was coming into our world. He was in the world and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognize Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him.** (John 1:4-11) Do you see evidence of that where you live?

*Do you see people trying to extinguish the light of the truth about Jesus in schools or health care or businesses or politics or entertainment? What does the 'darkness' look like in the city where you live, my friends? Here's an important question: how many different churches, of all religions, are in your city? *What effect do those churches have on the darkness, the dysfunction, the crime rate, the abortions, the divorces, the child abuse, the alcoholism, the drug addiction, the pornography... all the evil in your city?**

John wrote that Jesus once said: **"I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness."** (John 8:12) Do you find that is true in your city? Are people who follow Jesus able to NOT walk or live in the darkness of your city? *Are the people who are Jesus followers in your city actually dispelling the darkness?* Remember the Psalmist wrote about God's truth: **"Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."** (Psalm 119:105) So here are a couple of questions for you and I to consider this weekend:

1. Have you found that when you follow Jesus closely, you do not walk in the darkness? I mean the darkness of deceit or unforgiveness or anger or jealousy or lust or vengeance or fear or retaliation.

2. Have you found that when you fill your heart with worship of our great and holy God and your mind with God's truth, it really does illuminate your path in life? Do you find the God honoring choices you want to make are much easier, the way forward much clearer, as you walk in the light of your relationship with Jesus?

3. Have you found that when you bring the light of truth, integrity, honesty into conversations or business dealings or social media or texting, that Jesus brings challenge and change there?

4. Conversely, have you found that when you do NOT bring the light of Jesus into a situation by simply keeping quiet or walking away or changing the subject or maybe speaking an untruth... that you simply contribute to the darkness?

Matthew wrestled with how to spend the rest of his life, after leaving the corruption and darkness of tax collecting and then spending several months with Jesus, and now facing life after Easter with Jesus was not always physically present. *I think it was Matthew's integration of these and other powerful things that Jesus had said, and as he walked in the light of Jesus' truth, trying his best to follow the Holy Spirit leading him, that Matthew found purpose in life.* Have we discovered that living in Jesus' truth light really is a secret to living life on purpose and with fulfillment?

Living these Jesus truths guided Matthew as he became a difference maker in his time. As Matthew wrote for us the story of Jesus which had changed his life, this powerful first book of our New Testament can change our lives too! So, this weekend I urge us all to look closely... are we discerning from the Holy Spirit how to properly bring the light of God's truth, the light of the Holy Spirit's wisdom, into every situation in which we find ourselves? *And are we consistently, lovingly, but reliably shedding the light of Jesus into every conversation, every relationship?* These are powerful questions aren't they, my friends?

Here's a tender song to help us consider this incredible challenge from Jesus about being HIS Salt and Light in our world:

Today's Scripture is Matthew 5:14-16.