

**Sunday 9th February 2020 Let your light shine before others...
Isaiah 58:6-12 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 Matthew 5:13-20**

3rd week of thinking about Jesus - the light of the world

2 weeks ago we thought about Jesus coming as the light of the world to dispel darkness from the nations... The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light Isaiah & Matthew

Last week we thought about Jesus as the light of revelation - how, as His light shines within us, it shows up the bad bits as well as the good ... Harriets mirror!! And this is part of God's refining process so that we may become more like Him

Today we are thinking about this phrase that Jesus told His disciples. 'YOU are the light of the world... let your light shine before others '

What does light do?

-Means we can see things

-Gives colour to things

-Gives energy to plants through process of photosynthesis

-Can be focused like a laser... ties in to last week in that when God shines His light into part of our lives where He wants to work it can feel a bit like a laser!

Light does many many different things... these are just some.

For me, one of the down sides of light is that it attracts moths and other night flying creatures! I really don't like flying moths... if it is day time and I see them resting, then I can appreciate the beautiful patterns on their wings.

But turn on a light indoor, on a summers evening, with the widow open and then have to deal with the flapping of a moths wings as it bashes against the light.... UUUUGH!

It's not just moths

I remember when I was travelling in Australia. We were staying in a back packers place in the middle of nowhere... somewhere near Alice Springs. The lights were on in the shower block just a short walk away from our rooms. The only problem was that from about 7/8 feet high, up to the roof, there was a gap, about 2' where you might imagine there could be a row of windows. Instead it was just a gap. No window - glass or otherwise, no netting or screening.

SO as you took your shower you were constantly bombed by all manner of insects as they were attracted in to the building by the bright lights that were shining!!! Trauma!!!

I tell this story, not just as a confession to my dread of small flying insects at close proximity

But as a very real picture of how I understand this reading from Matthew of Jesus' teaching.

Jesus says to His disciples here not - I am the light of the world But

YOU are the light of the world... let YOUR light shine so that God the Father may be glorified

In other words... His disciples were to be markedly different from those around Him. The light of Christ was to so shine in and through them that others may see and be attracted to Jesus and His gospel, His way of living, His Kingdom.

Jesus uses different pictures to mine

He talks of a city built on a hill being unable to be hidden. For me, although I have never been, I think of somewhere like Edinburgh... set right on top of that hill. On a clear, dark night I am sure that when all the city lights are turned on, Edinburgh must stand out so clearly

He also uses the picture of lighting a lamp and not hiding it under a bushel - a basket of some kind.

I imagine a modern day equivalent would be.... people do not light the lamp at the top of a lighthouse and then black out all the windows so no-one can see it.

A lamp is lit in order for people to see it and use the light that comes from it.

We, as Christians, as followers, as disciples of Jesus, are called, by Him, to be the light of the world. He tells us that we are to let our light so shine before others that they may see our good works and give glory to God.

We, each and everyone of us, is expected to take the light of Christ, within us, to a dark and broken world, to give light and warmth, and attract others to Jesus.

How!!!

Well - Isaiah tells us in our reading... one of my favourite passages of scripture

The people Isaiah is talking to think they know all about worship and all about how God wants them to live and be

They have learned lessons from their time in exile and now they have returned to being faithful to their God - Yahweh - and dutiful in their religious observances. They have stopped their worship of the other gods that local nations have and they think they have it sorted.

But Isaiah breaks the news to them. Their form of fasting makes no difference to God and it is almost as if God is not listening to them! Read the first few verses of our reading from Isaiah

God does not want mere religious observance. He wants a change of heart that means His people look outwards and bear His light to the dark and sad and painful parts of His world.

It is not about fasting and humbling themselves just so that God notices them

It is not putting all their focus on getting the worship 'right'

It is about worshiping God with all our hearts, and being passionate participants in His world, taking His light with us to shine into the dark places.

What did Jesus say? Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself. Luke 10:27

Isaiah talks about

- loosing the bonds of injustice
- undoing the thongs of the yoke so that the oppressed can go free (Yoke ties 2 cattle together)
- sharing bread with the hungry
- giving shelter to the homeless and clothes to those without

BECAUSE when we do these things, with God given love in our hearts, then His light shall break forth in us just like the light that bursts forth from the sun each morning.

Bishop William Temple said this

"The church is the only organisation on earth that exists for those who are not its members"

Our times of corporate worship are crucial to our Christian lives. But we are not to then keep that precious light under a bushel. We are to take that light and let it shine brightly from us, as a church and as individuals.

A small light can light a room
Church is to be light amongst our communities
How can we light do that?
Through acts of love and mercy and justice
NOT to earn a place in the Kingdom
but BECAUSE we are part of the Kingdom

Lent challenge

Foodbank

CAP

Bracknell Night Shelter

Camberley All Night Cafe

Yeldall Manor

Do we, as individuals and as the church, stand out like a beacon on a hill
OR do we blend beautifully with our culture like a chameleon?
Because they are very different pictures.