

Matthew 5:14-16  
Your Purpose In Life

I remember hearing a phrase while I was in High School. High School is that strange stage of life that some wish to go back to while others wouldn't even dare dream about going back. I am guessing that gathered here today there are some who would like a chance to go back and others who wouldn't dare go back. There are days when High School can feel like all there is. High School is a pretty important time, but not the most important time. It was in High School that most of us began to really think about a future. Time starts pressing in on you, you finally get old enough to drive, you've been looking forward to driving your whole life, you drive, and then what? Graduation, then college, then marriage, kids, career, all mixed up in one huge bag, and then before you know it, you are watching your own kids go to High School and college and then all of a sudden you are the one telling the stories like your granddaddy used to tell about the good old days.

I remember hearing a phrase in those formative years called High School where the pathway to any road that I wanted was before me: "Aim for the moon and if you miss, at least you'll land amongst the stars." Has anyone ever heard that before? Shoot for the moon, land amongst the stars. Sounds fun, until you start thinking about the darkness that surrounds the stars! There are a dozen other clichés like that one that reveal a deep longing in every heart, a longing for meaning and purpose. Everyone here today wants to find out your purpose. Here is the good news, Jesus has come to show us our purpose. Jesus has come to direct our steps. Jesus has come to guide us and walk beside us.

You have been put on this earth for a purpose. Think about that statement. "You have been put here on this earth for a purpose." Your life has meaning. How do we know? Jesus has come, God has come taking on flesh to teach us, to guide us, to walk beside us. Jesus has come to not only show us the way to God but to be the way. It's the difference between looking at a picture of a beach and walking on the beach and feeling the sand in-between your toes, as the ocean breeze rushes across your hair, and you feel the warmth of the sun on your skin. Jesus has not just come to show us the way, he has come to be the way. Your life has purpose and Jesus has come from heaven to tell us and we get to encounter that purpose today as we hear the word of the Lord.

#### READ TEXT

Did you catch it? God not only has a purpose for you, the purpose that he has for you is glorious! It's not like you are the kid who shows up and gets the last job when all the other jobs are picked out. I worked a job one summer building an Ace Hardware, I felt like that guy. By the time the boss got to me he handed me a broom and put me on debris lookout. No, you today have marching orders from the King of Kings and his orders are pretty clear: You are the light of the world!

### **1. You are the Light of the World**

That's right, you. This you is in the emphatic position meaning Jesus is pointing his finger and saying, "You!" This pretty incredible. Remember where Jesus is and who he is talking to. He is talking to a group of Jews who were under the Roman occupation. But more than that, he was

talking to a people who were once walking in darkness who had received a great light. These were people who needed saving themselves and Jesus looks at this crowd that is following him and says, you, as you are following me, are the light of the world. Paul is going to say something similar to the Ephesians in 5:8-10 (the context is good too btw)

*...for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*

This ragamuffin group, a group that you and I have much in common with, received a word on that day that is the word for us today. For some strange reason, and I hope that you count it strange, otherwise I doubt that you understand grace, God has looked at me and you and called us the light of the world. This is the profound mystery of the gospel that amazing grace has found and saved a wretch like me. Isn't that a sweet sound? The sound of amazing grace that comes to you and me and transforms everything about us. We were wandering lost in the world until love found us. I hope that you understand what Jesus is saying. Peter sure did as he taught the message of Christ to believers. Listen to what he tells the readers of 1 Peter:

*But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9, ESV)*

How are we a chosen race? The chosen one (Jesus Christ - Christ is not his last name, Christ is a title it means anointed one or chosen one) has chosen you and me. We are the Chosen One's Chosen. We are not the Chosen One, we are the chosen ones. Let me make that more clear. Who is the light of the world? Of all the lives that have ever lived, who has touched more than all others? Jesus. The light of the world calls us the light of the world. This sounds confusing. How can we be the light of the world and he be the light of the world? He is the light of the world, we reflect his glory to the world. Here is the really good and awesome part of the story. Listen closely. Christ has united himself to our flesh so that he could unite us with himself. He became what we are so that he could make us what he is. He became sin, the light of the world became darkness, so that he could make we who were darkened the light of the world.

When Jesus unites us to himself what is true of him becomes true of us. Not that we become gods, but that we become God's. We become partakers of the divine nature. He chooses us and makes us a people for his own possession. How does he unite us with himself? Through his death and resurrection. By taking on flesh the immortal God died our death so that he could give overcome death and give us his very life. This is what Paul said in Galatians 2:20, *I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.*

Christ has come into darkness to shine the light of his presence. Has that light reached you? Have you seen him? Are you drawn to him so much so that you keep coming back to him over and over again? Do you delight in the warmth of his light? That is a life of faith. Jesus says to those who hear his voice, YOU are the light of the world.

## 2. God Intends Us to Shine

There is great darkness in the world, but there is an even greater light! I am tired of not believing that, aren't you? I am so sick of the phrase, "This is just a sign of the times." That probably comes from Christians who have done exactly what our Lord is telling us is ridiculous. They

have gone out and lit the lamp just to put it under a basket. There are many ways that you can put the light under the basket and the main way is by our choice to not walk in the light. That means that you choose to follow shadows. Think about it, when you ask away from light things get darker and darker and the more dangerous it becomes, the more likely you are to stumble.

We have to be careful in the way that we think about the work that God has called us to do. I have noticed a spirit that has caught many of you, it is a spirit of discouragement is a spirit of inferiority when we think about Christ and his purpose. The way that this spirit displays itself is through apathy. Apathy is a fun word. It is two words put together - pathos with the alpha negation. Pathos means passion so if you put the alpha negation, the a, in front of it the word is a pathos or apathy. An apathetic person is a passionless person. Instead of inferiority, instead of discouragement, instead of apathy, God intends us to shine as light in the world (Philippians 2:14ff). You light a lamp for one purpose - shine! Instead of hearing of churches closing left and right and getting discouraged, or hearing of our brothers and sisters who suffer for their faith and become timid, we should believe what Scripture says: *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* (John 1:4-5, ESV)

Many of us heard the tragic news of the Christians who went to Church on Palm Sunday in Egypt under threat of attack from ISIS. A bomb went off killing 49 as they came to worship. Most of us saw the picture of the mangled pews and blood stained floors. But I want to show you a picture this morning of what that church looked like last week at Easter:



The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

You are the light of the world, and God intends for you to shine. He has this plan for salvation to reach every tribe and every tongue and people, and in his wisdom he looks at you and says shine the light! Shine the light in your high school, in your middle school, in the band, on the football team, shine the light at your office, in your home, with your kids, at the line in the store.

You see:

## 3. When We Shine We Direct People to God

Look at verse 16. I want us to notice this phrase *in the same way*. Someone has gone through all this trouble to light a lamp, to bring light into the world. Let me ask you, who lit the lamp in your heart? God has lit the lamp in your heart. And if you have a heart burning bright for Jesus you will be living a life that brings glory to the Father. How do you do that? Simple, letting your

light shine. What is the light? Let others see Jesus in you. Let others see Jesus in you. Keep telling the story, be faithful and true. What story?

Matthew 5:3-12

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (ESV)

This light that we have to shine is a light that we get to kindle afresh each and every day. The closer we are to the flame, the brighter we will shine. Your purpose in life is to find yourself being lost in him. Your purpose in life is to be consumed with Jesus. It is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you. The life that you now live is a life of faith in the one who loves you and gave himself for you.

I wonder if you have given your life to him. I wonder if you have found what life is all about. I wonder if you are living his purpose for you. Let your light shine. Your light is him. You are the light of the world.