

Theme: Parables of Jesus

“This Little Light of Mine”

Message written by Tami Bradshaw for June 18 and 19, 2022 Summit Church Durango

Weekly Memory Verse:

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hid. -Matthew 5:14

VIDEO

Opening Idea

Today I want to encourage you and inspire you. I want to remind you that you are good. Actually, not just good, but VERY good! God created you along with the sun, moon and stars. If you are in a season of hiding your glorious self, take heart and come out from under the bed. You are meant to shine.

My name is Tami and I am married to Jeff Huber, the senior pastor here at Summit Church. Jeff and I came to Durango 20 years to serve this faith community. I have participated in ministry here in different ways over the years. Most recently I have been on the teaching team for Sunday Morning Summit kids.

SLIDE IMAGE OF FIREFLY

Along with Sandra Mapel and Joni Bender I have been trying to share my faith with 4th and 5th graders. In preparation for class, I recently read a cute story about a confused child. At church, the child's Sunday school teacher introduced her students to parable of the lamp. Our text for today. She read aloud from Matthew, “Let your light shine before people so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in Heaven”. The teacher then encouraged her class to start singing the song “This little light of mine.” But as they started singing, the confused child started looking around to their back side with curiosity. After the song the teacher asked the child, “Is everything okay?” The

child replied, "Do I look like a firefly to you?" The teacher said "Well, no, of course not." The student asked the teacher with frustration, "Well then, how am I supposed to shine? I don't have a great big light bulb on my butt!"

That is the question I want to explore today. How do we let our light shine? Jesus said that he is the light of the world. Jesus also said, "You are the light of the world." Jesus calls you (and me) to join him in the mission to light up the world.

Let's go back to the beginning. I've heard it's a very good place to start. Let's look at the first day of creation:

BIBLE (Genesis 1:1-5 NRSV)

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was morning, the first day.

Now, let's turn to three days later. This is an appropriate passage as we will observe the summer solstice on Tuesday.

BIBLE (Genesis 1:14-19 NRSV)

And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and for years, and let there be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights-the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night-and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

God created light on the **first** day but the sun, stars and moon were not created until the **fourth day**. Interesting! I wonder what kind of light was created on the first day if it was not the sun. I believe this is one those places in the bible that

needs to be read as poetry. An artistic expression of the wonder of creation. It also illuminates the different ways ancient folks thought about light.

Both in the bible and in our modern times we have a sense of light being that energy that comes from the sun. On Tuesday we will observe the summer solstice. The day of the year that has the most sunshine in our hemisphere. It's going to get a little bit darker every day from now until the winter solstice just before Christmas. I guess we could call that literal light.

We also refer to light more symbolically. We use phrases like She has shiny eyes. He's all lit up. It sparked an interest in them. A light bulb went on over my head. God created light and shines light on us; and somehow God shines light through us from the inside out.

Jesus used common images and phrases from his time to teach. Some of his teachings we call parables. Short stories that compare one thing to another. Parable literally means to throw along side. Let's put a lamp next to the Kingdom of God. Most parables refer to the Kingdom of God. Today, we are going to focus on the parable of the lamp. We can find the parable of the lamp in three of the gospels; Matthew, Mark and Luke. Let's take a look at Mark first.

BIBLE (Mark 4: 21-25)

He said to them, "Is a lamp brought in to be put under the bushel basket, or under the bed, and not on the lampstand? For there is nothing hidden, except to be disclosed; nor is anything secret, except to come to light. Let anyone with ears to hear listen!" And he said to them, "Pay attention to what you hear; the measure you give will be the measure you get, and still more will be given to you."

(Refer to basket and lamp.) Here is a basket and here is a lamp. The kingdom of God is like this. The kingdom of God is NOT like this. (Put basket over lamp) A lamp is not serving its purpose if it is hidden away.

In the same way, God's Kingdom is not meant to be hidden. In time, God's mysterious Kingdom will be fully realized. And those us who follow Jesus are called to help reveal it. It might be helpful to think of the Kingdom of God and the light of God in a three fold way:

Slide The Kingdom of God and the Light of God:

- 1. Jesus himself**
- 2. In the soul of every individual**
- 3. Aspects of our current faith communities but not yet fully realized**

The kingdom of God is now and not yet.

At this time there is some hiddenness and mystery in our understanding of the kingdom of God just as there is mystery in the creation and nature of light itself.

But we do know that it takes light for us to see. It takes light to see glimpses of the Kingdom and to share the Kingdom with others. Whoever has ears to hear, whoever responds to Jesus with an open heart, whoever has a desire to learn- even more insight will be given. You will receive more. You will be able to share more.

I invite you to ask yourself these 2 questions:

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What can I do to be more open to what the Holy Spirit is revealing?

What dark places in my life do I need to allow the Light of God's love to shine upon?

When we are asked to shine our light, we are not being asked to interact with a forced cheerfulness. We are not being asked to be more extroverted or outgoing. We shine our light best when are real. When we are authentic. When we put our true selves up on a lamp stand instead of hiding it under a basket. There is no one who can shine a light quite like yours.

I find it challenging (to say the least) to live into my calling to ‘let my light shine’. It takes real courage and spiritual training. At work just the other day I found myself moved to tears and thoughts of despair as my co-workers discussed the horrific school shooting in Uvalde. We discussed Matthew McConaughey’s recent speech to the White House. We talked about the green high top tennis shoes used to identify the body of a 10 year old student named Maite Rodriguez. Her little body was so mangled by gunfire that the shoes were the only thing about her that was recognizable. Dark stuff.

There is something about this story that just about does me in. It makes me want to point angry fingers at other people in blame. It makes want to holler in rage. At the same time it makes me want to hide under my covers in bed and just give up. It makes me want to curse the darkness.

For my Lenten devotional I used a book called “Good Enough.”

SLIDE Image of Good Enough Cover

I highly recommend it. In the book there is a beautiful prayer that I really connect with. It’s called “A Prayer for Hope amid Despair”. It feels like a modern day Psalm and I turn to it when I begin to feel like overcome with darkness.

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Oh God, here I am again. Hopeless. Overwhelmed. Angry. The world is so broken. People are so cruel. The vulnerable are once again dying ,ignored, oppressed.

I want to have hope but it feels so futile. What good is any hope if nothing seems to change?

God, give me a new heart to love what You love. Give me a new spirit to be faithful as You are faithful. Give me fresh eyes to see how You see.

I want to be a person who is not mired in inaction in the face of despair, but who works to realize your vision for the world. Who participates in unleashing Your kingdom of peace and gentleness and justice and love.

***May I be a person marked by bright hope in the midst of the darkest of hours.
May I be an Easter person. Amen. (Kate Bowler and Jessica Richie in Good
Enough page 224)***

This prayer reminds me of the Psalms. If you have not read the Psalms in a while I invite you to revisit them. In many of the Psalms you read people pouring out their hearts to God. Giving God their grief, fear and anger. When we talk to God about our feelings, it brings them out into the light. Into the light where there is space for healing and transformation.

Sometimes there is an inner battle going on between despair and hope, between dark and light. By staying connected to God, we have the power we need to fight to remain in the Light.

Not too long ago I visited a bone health practitioner out at Mercy. My doc said that he was concerned about my bone density. So, in addition to the possibility of medication, one idea the doc suggested was to try boxing to improve bone health. Boxing! Honestly, I would usually not be open to that suggestion. Except for a few kick boxing classes back in the 80's boxing has not been a part of my life. But, the doc said there is a great boxing gym in town owned by Katy Kopec that is super fun.

And then I had one of those light bulb moments! Katy Kopec is my daughter's speech therapist. I had heard Vika mention that Katy also teaches boxing but I couldn't picture it. Katy has such a gentle, loving presence. I went with my daughter when she went to her first speech therapy appointment with Katy. I was moved to tears by the way she skillfully and compassionately ministered to my daughter. Katy shared her light with Vika and now Vika's light is shining brighter.

I thought well, if Katy is teaching boxing, then I want to give it a try. So Vika and I had a semi-private boxing lesson. Let me tell you, I felt alive in a way I haven't in awhile. Katy taught me how to stand and how to shift my feet. I felt empowered. I felt ready to engage world and not get knocked down. I felt ready to fight. To fight for what I believe in, to fight for hope and love and light.

I was so inspired by Katy that I wanted to share who she is with you. I see her as someone who is shining their light so bright that it encourages the people around her. In turn, those folks lives shine bright and encourage the people around them. Katy graciously agreed to allow us to video tape one of her classes and to sit for an interview. Let's take a look at the video that Stacey, our Creative Arts Director put together.

VIDEO Katy and boxing

Just as Katy mentioned, I believe we are called to take hold of the life to which we are called. We are called to let our light shine. All of our good fights are in one way or another a fight to be a light. A light for good. A light for love. A light for healing.

No one else can be quite like Katy. We are each unique, created in God's own image. When God created light, He called it good. When God created you, He called it very good.

There is so much suffering and heartache in the world. Don't let it overwhelm you. Hold fast to your calling. More than ever we need to be Jesus Christ toe the world. Fight the good fight of faith. You have a choice: are you going to curse the darkness or will you light a candle?

Sing this little light of mine

SLIDE

This little light mine

I'm gonna let it shine

This little light of mine

I'm gonna let it shine

This little light of mine

I'm gonna let it shine

Let it shine, Let it shine, let it shine

Closing Prayer