

# ***A CITY ON A HILL***



***“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”.***

***Matthew 5:14-16***

There are two symbols which Jesus uses to describe the body of Christ on earth as it functions during the closing days of this age

The one is the symbol of a shepherd going out after the lost sheep

The other symbol is that of a city set on a hill that draws people to itself by its light.

Now every assembly of believers which has any vision of its purpose and any power from the Spirit of God will be an expression of these two symbols.

It will be that shepherd going out after the last sheep...Scouring the streets of this world for the poor, the maim, the lame, the obnoxious and the blind, bringing them to the banquet table of God.

**It will never give up looking.**

**Nor will it ever give up hope of finding that one that's still lost.**

But an assembly of believers that is alive with God's life will also be that City on a Hill... that shines out into the darkness, and by its light draws people who are thirsty for God, who are looking for truth to itself.

Now, the symbol of the shepherd is really a description of our personal lives as followers of Jesus ... As we go about our business in this world every day we have our eyes open looking for that last sheep.

We're alert to recognize Lazarus at our gate, the woman at the well, anybody who is in any way ripe for the Gospel of God.

Tuesday morning, Ralph Hildebrandt and I were sitting in the office studying. A young man came in, sat down and began to weep. He said "the police just took my baby". And he's really upset. Then he went on to describe what happened to him as he was on his way over here to the church. He was walking along the street and a lady in a white Cadillac stopped and said to him, "young man, something awful has just happened to you". And she ended up telling him about Jesus and about the Kingdom. Now the woman in the white Cadillac was Pat Hernandez. Pat is driving along in her car and she sees this guy who is a lost sheep and she can see he's troubled.. It's just minutes after the police had taken his baby. Seeing his anguish, she pulled her car over to talk, reaching out to him in the name of the Lord.

And that's the Spirit of the Lord moving through a member of the body, reaching out as the shepherd looking for those lost sheep, and alert to that need when it's there.



But notice now where Alphonso goes, after this happens, he comes here to Messiah Church.

He comes to the city on the hill. He comes to a place where he had been only once before, again in a crisis. He sat down and he said, "I need to talk to somebody".

And so Ralph and I listened to him. And then we prayed with him. And then tried to take care of some of his needs. And we sent him on his way, knowing that he had seen God in his mercy.

What was it that drew Alphonso to us? ...

***A city set on a hill cannot be hid.***

We don't want people coming to us because we have a program for every human itch. Churches these days are into programs, programs for everything. That's not what we want. Nor do we want people coming to us because we provide quick service for needs that can be met by any one of a dozen agencies in this part of town. We want people coming to us because in their brokenness and in their spiritual desperation, they see light.

***You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.***

Now the symbol of the city on the hill is a description really of our corporate life as the body of Christ.

*Together* **we** are the light of the world, together **we** are the city set on a hill. Not as individuals alone, always together.

When we believe this and understand what this means and live this way, light goes forth from us and draws these thirsty, hungry ones, the ones who are looking for some kind of truth, desperate for some integrity, looking for healing for their own life, searching for God, they will come.

Now I can't say "I'm the light of the world". The only one who can say that is Jesus. But what I can say, looking at myself as part of this, motley crew, is **we** are the light of the world. Because that's exactly what Jesus tells us we are.

If **we're** committed to him, if **we're** walking in him, **we** are the light of the world.

*What an awesome thing.*

Now this episode, which happened with Alphonso is actually happening 100 times a day in the life of the flock. This kind of shepherding is actually going on all over the place. And all the time awesome evidence of it shows up when people are serious about trying to practice this shepherding. Its not about some kind of structure, or some organization that looks into each other's dresser drawers and tells each other when we can mail letters.

It's about reaching out to the people who are at that moment crying out in need and us being alert to that. That goes on in awesome ways when good shepherding is practiced.

Yet, out there in the darkness, is an army of people who are looking for truth, thirsty for reality, hungry for God and they will come among us when light goes forth from the city on a hill.

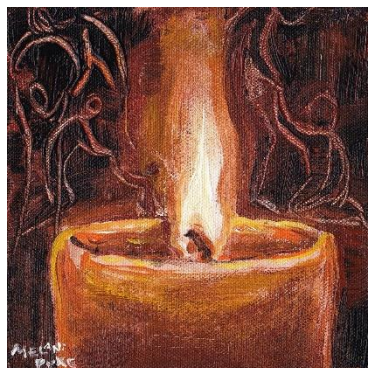
***"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven".***

In these verses is a four-fold word from the Lord **to us**.

First of all, Jesus says **to us**...

**Know what you are.**

**You are the light of the world.**



This is not something you try to achieve.

This is not something you work toward.

You are this because I tell you that you are the light of the world.. you followers of me.

***A City set on a hill cannot be hid.***

If we are disciples of Jesus, if we are truly committed to him... we *are* that city.

That's why your phone rings.

That's why people at work come to you and tell you the secrets of their heart.

That's why total strangers often will reach out to you for a word of comfort.

And the rougher things get out there, the more brightly will shine the city on a hill.

*Together*, not as individuals, but *together* as a body, we are the city on the hill.

This is something which is already a fact.

Not something we're trying to achieve.

The second thing Jesus tells us is to...

***Take off the bushel.***

***Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel,  
but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.***

Now, the thing that causes us to shine, that causes us to be light is our personal commitment to Jesus.

But that's the very thing we are inclined to try to hide.

Nobody is going to give you a hard time because you believe in God.

Nobody is going to be upset because you belong to a church.

But when they find out that you are serious about Jesus, they'll begin to wonder about you.

*You really believe in Jesus?*

*You're a follower of Jesus?*

*But I thought you were intelligent.*

You're going to get that. If you haven't already... we all get it.

And so we all often unconsciously develop a technique, a habit of concealing our relationship, of letting our relationship with Jesus be a low-profile thing.

What we're really doing is concealing it.

When we conceal it, what we're doing is putting our light under the bushel.

**Because our light is our commitment to Jesus.**

So to take off the bushel is to acknowledge openly and frankly where our commitment really is.

It's to Jesus...Jesus himself. Clear cut... to Jesus. Don't try to dress it up. And don't try to water it down. Let it be openly known who you belong to.



**Take off the bushel.  
Let your light shine.**

Let it be known *who* you belong to.

Let it be known *why* you live the way you do.

Let it be known *why* it is possible for you to still have such hope and still be cheerful when the world all over the place is falling apart.

The third thing Jesus tells us in this passage is to...

**Let our light shine.**

***Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”.***

Not only are we to come out from hiding, take the bushel off, but we are to make the world see deeds and hear words which are a direct match of the words and deeds of Jesus himself.

The entire discourse which follows this command to let your light shine, Matthew 5,6,&7, the Sermon on the Mount, is actually a description of Jesus own life, this is the way he lived.

He's the master, We're the disciples.

When we *together*... conform our lives, our actions, our behavior, our attitudes, the way we handle our money, the way we get along with each other, and all these things he talks about in Matthew 5-6 and 7, conform that to him...then the light shines.

Things begin to happen.

People can see this.

And when they see that light shine, the discouraged ones and the ones who have given up ever hoping to see anything that's true and reliable concerning God, will now take courage.. and they'll begin to glorify God.



Which brings us to the fourth thing he tells us in this passage...

### **He tells us to expect visitors.**

***“That they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”.***

How do they give glory to the father?

By coming to the city on the hill.

By coming to the place that gives them some hope.

Finding their way to the one place that gives them a reason to live.

So this passage in Matthew 5 is connected directly with Isaiah 60:1-4... the same Lord inspired them both.

***“Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. Lift up your eyes round about, and see; they all gather together, they come to you;”***



*Nations shall come to your light, and kings shall come to the brightness of your rising, they all gather together they come to you.*



**Expect visitors.  
The city set on a hill cannot be hid.  
They will come.**

But the city on the hill, for all its light, has many an empty room.

Each room has a name on it. And each room will be filled.

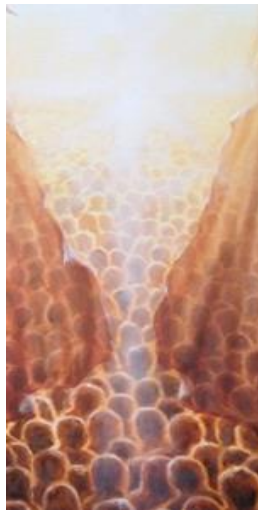
In the center of the city is a huge banquet hall. Where there is still many an empty seat.

Each seat has a name on it. Each seat will be filled.

Now, the thing which draws the ones who belong in those seats and in those rooms into the city is not the snappy music or the dynamic personality of the master of ceremonies, but the light...

**... the light which shines forth from these people.**

**This is what draws them.**



This is what draws people who haven't found their way yet, this light helps them to find their seat, to find their room.

**Just the light coming forth from these people.**

On the surface, the multitudes come and go, and we've seen this over the years and I'm sure it will go on and on. There will be times of gathering when the numbers increase and there will be times of sifting when they shrink.

But beneath the surface, on the level of the Kingdom, the numbers increase steadily.

**One by one they come.  
Until every seat is filled.  
And every room is taken.**

And they come because they are drawn by light ...shining forth from people...

Who together know what they are... the light of the world!

Who together, take off the bushel... of shame and self-consciousness and fear!

Who together let their light shine by living the light!

Who together welcome those homecoming children of the Kingdom with thanksgiving and joy.



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

***“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven”.***

*Prayer- Holy Lord, draw us together to you...together may we seek you in such love and adoration that your light shining in us is inevitable. Together may we be that city on a hill that draws men...that draws the wounded, the broken, the lost...to your healing light. May our love for you keep us from concealing where the light from us is coming from...may the joy of it pour out of our lips in reverence of you. Oh Lord may our lives and our lips sing... “we belong to you Jesus, we belong to you”. May we shine, may we shine brightly! May many see our joy, our unity, our love and come to the light, to find the hope, the healing they need in these dark, sad and hopeless times. And yes fill every room, fill every seat as we your Body welcome all with thanksgiving and joy.*

*Maranatha Mirror*

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