

Living in the Light by Bob Knowles

Romans 13:8-14; Matthew 5:13-16

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Way back...deep down, in the far away reaches of infinite time, God said: "Let there be light!" And there was light. And that light was the light of the world – the world coming into being: rising...falling, twisting...turning. From violent upheaval and cataclysmic fury came night and day, heaven and earth, continent and sea, and Life! And God saw that it was good!

Then, way back, when the world was new, when mountains shone and seas sparkled, and a mist covered the face of the earth, God breathed – the breath of life; And man became a living soul: thinking...dreaming...groping...hoping. Woman was made to be by his side and together they walked and talked with god until they took unto themselves the knowledge of good and evil. Then God decreed that henceforth individuals must choose for themselves. And live – and die – by that choice.

And then, way back, when the life of humankind upon this earth had become confused, and we knew not from whence we had come, nor the reason for our being, God said: "Let a Child be born to lead humanity out of the darkness of despair and doubt." And that Child was Jesus, born under a star's heavenly light; and He became the Light of the world – guiding us to God – compelling...commanding...condemning...comforting. And God said: "This is My Son; I am pleased."

Since that time when the hinge of history swung open the door that leads to Everlasting Life, The Light of God's Love in Christ has shone forth in the darkness, And God's Word has been proclaimed with power throughout the world. And some – with eyes to see and ears to hear – have seen the Light and heard the Word and have found Life. But others, blinded by the glitter and glamour of worldly wealth, and deafened by the cacophony and clamor of commerce and cruelty and corruption, have wandered and wondered with empty hearts, neither seeing, nor hearing, nor understanding as God has sought to bring them unto Himself.

And now has come our time upon this terrestrial sphere. In the fleeting instant of three-score and ten, each must make a choice for Life – or for death. The Light of God's Love in Christ shines yet for you and me; By its brilliant beam we too may be guided along the pathway that leads to Eternal Life. Walk swiftly, surely, steadily, day-by-day, hand-in-hand with Christ. Listen, for God says of each of us: "This too is my child; it is good; I am pleased!"

- Praise God for Life poem

Jesus called His disciples "The salt of the earth...the light of the world." Paul picked up on the theme of "light" in his letter to the church at Rome when he wrote: "Clothe yourself with the armor of right living, as those who live in the light." This is what is required of all who

would be disciples, that we pay attention to Him who is called “The Light of the World;” that we give Him our total commitment, willing to live under the exposure of the light of truth, accepting the responsibility of becoming involved, working and witnessing in His name. He calls us today to a life of full participation in the mission and ministry of the Church which is the Body of Christ in the world, responding to all areas of human life and need. We are called to be the light of the world, shining in the darkness of despair and doubt.

Those who answer His call face enormous odds. We live in a small world where geography now includes outer space, where urban sprawl creates complex problems related to everyday concerns of housing, food, water; where population begins to crowd available space, where poverty, ignorance, disease still afflict millions, where humanity’s needs press in on all sides. It is often tempting to seek seclusion and security in some safe suburban or rural sanctuary, to yield to the philosophy of “I don’t want to become involved.” But we are inevitably involved in all of humanity. Christ still calls us to follow Him, to live in the light, to witness to His truth – by proclamation and by direct action. A second-hand commitment is not adequate. We cannot sit back and assume that elected and appointed church representatives, paid staff, should and will be able to accomplish all that needs to be done in the name of Christ. We cannot afford to retreat into a cozy, comfortable, confident and complacent church, seeking personal fulfillment and happiness and reassurance, but never responding to the challenge to become involved in ministering to the desperate needs of the world. Our religious faith ought to disturb us and stir us out of our apathy and self-centeredness. Part of our task is to comfort the afflicted. Equally important is to afflict the comfortable. The church is not merely an organization; It needs to be an organism – living, pulsing, moving – recapturing and reaffirming its sense of mission as individually and corporately we witness to the faith that enables us to live in the light and to be the light.

We live today in a secular world, filled with atheists who deny the very existence of God. Unfortunately, there’s another large group, many of whom are often listed on church roles, who might be designated as “apatheists” or those who might claim to believe in God but whose words and actions proclaim that God doesn’t really matter in human life. We cannot afford to be apathetic about our faith. Church people are sometimes likened to the priests and the Levite in the parable of the Good Samaritan, viewing the misery and injustice of the world, but passing by on the other side because they have holier things to do and can’t or don’t want to get mixed up in messy or controversial situations. Certainly we do need to participate in that which is holy; sincere worship is a particular and necessary kind of witness. Our witness must also be made outside of the church building, in the marketplace and in the factory, in the schoolroom and at the counters of commerce, at the bridge table and the bowling alley and the stadium, at the cocktail party and at the hospital bedside. An honest and serious encounter with the secular side of life is an essential part of our Christian calling. We find new meaning and purpose for our own lives as we try to help others find meaning and purpose for theirs.

Our everyday life is our mission field, and our mission starts where we are. Requiring us to try to bring reconciliation to those with whom we have daily contact. On Trueblood in his book, "The Company of the Committed" writes of what he calls the strategy of penetration, reminding us that Jesus likened His followers to: salt – which must penetrate meat to preserve it; leaven – which must penetrate the dough to make it rise; light 0 which must penetrate the darkness to dispel it; just as His Gospel penetrated the lives of individuals. In the section of the Sermon on the Mount known as The Beatitudes, Jesus spoke of the state of blessedness or happiness and the qualities which lead to it – qualities which are not always popular in today's competitive society, but nevertheless characteristic of those who live in the light. "The poor in spirit" those who know their need of God, who lack arrogance and pride and demonstrate true humility; "The meek" those who are gentle and lowly and who claim nothing for themselves; "Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness" and justice, that is after the Will of God, after goodness; "The merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers" those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires. Jesus proclaims that true happiness will be known by those who hold high standards of conduct and morality and stand against evil and injustice of any form.

Few followers of Christ will ever know perfect happiness; human frailty and imperfection and propensity to sin are all part of the human condition. The good news is that we can be forgiven when we lay our sins before God in true repentance. In spite of our imperfections we can still live in the light of God's love and we can lead others to that light which dispels the darkness of sin and evil. So don't hide that light of faith under a bushel basket, but let it shine that others might benefit, not because you're a perfect example – the epitome of Christian discipleship, but because God's Love motivates your life. Let your light of faith shine before others, not for self-aggrandizement or glory, but that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

We are called by Jesus Christ to live in the light. It is imperative that we respond faithfully to that call.

When Christ speaks, saying: "I need you." What is one like I to do? Run and hide? But where, but where? Turn where I will and He is there. Or deafness feign: "I did not hear." I lie – I know that He is near. Christ will be heard, His voice breaks through. I hear Him saying: "I need you!"

When Christ speaks saying: "Sinner, come." Why should my heart be stricken numb? He can't mean me; my life is pure. But the – again – I'm not so sure. I look within, and there I see a devil looking out at me. I cannot cry out – my voice is dumb; But still Christ calls: "Sinner, come."

When Christ speaks, saying: "Follow Me." What then is my life to be: Safe, secure, a mountain-top high, remote from the needy passing by? Or will it mean taking up His Cross? To know rejection, suffering, loss? Have I the strength to do His Will? He speaks – my troubled heart is still.

When Christ speaks, saying: "Disciple, go!" How can anyone say, "No!"? I struggle not to press my claim to own my will, yet hold His Name. My life is not my own to use; There is no other path to choose except the one His followers know, who hear Christ say: "Disciple, go!"

- *When Christ Speaks* poem