

Sunbeam Service
Matthew 5:14-16
Rev. Susan Bresser
August 29/30, 2009

We got a puppy on Wednesday ... a 9 wk old Springer spaniel. She's cute. She came into our family timid and shy and uncertain about her place in family. It took only one day and the switch was flipped and the light came on in her little life! She is ON – like 23 hrs a day. The one hour that she sleeps, she does so with one eye open because she's afraid she might miss something. Everything you know and remember about puppies is happening in my life right now. And I'm exhausted. Quite possibly the only thing that saves her is how cute she is.

So, the light came on.

Let us all hear these words from the Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Matthew:

You're here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world. God is not a secret to be kept. We're going public with this, as public as a city on a hill. If I make you light-bearers, you don't think I'm going to hide you under a bucket, do you? I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven.

So, when did the light come on for you? When did you flip the switch?
When did you begin to understand your role as a light stand on top of a hill?

My memories of Sunday school help me to understand the calling God has placed in my life. You know what we did in Sunday school? We sang ...

This Little Light of Mine ...

Sometimes the simplest of ideas can be the most profound.

We've been talking about missions during the month of August. We've had a sermon series that has highlighted the significance of missions in our world today. Scott & I have been encouraging you to take a chance, to take a risk in serving others because that's our mission as God's people ... and God has already equipped us. God has already given you the tools you will need. Jesus doesn't say to us to BECOME the light. Jesus says you ARE the light. The message from our scripture: You've already received the light. Don't hide it.

I'd like to stress that we are all called to ministry and mission; and it's our responsibility to share the light.

Here's what we know about LIGHT and how it might apply to you, as a minister of the faith. This is your encouragement for the field of missions.

Light is used to signal. Think of a lighthouse. For those who navigated the sea, the light from the lighthouse was important to help provide safe entry into harbors ... the light was important because it marked dangerous coastlines and hazardous reefs. Do you use your gift of light as a signal to help others navigate the choppy waters of life?

Light is used to guide. Think of those little lights that mark the corridors at movie theatres. It never fails. I get up at least once during a 2-hr movie. I tell Brent I'm going to the bathroom, but I'm actually getting more popcorn. And when I come back into the theatre its dark and my eyes don't adjust very quickly. If it wasn't for the lighted path, I would be sitting with a total stranger, reaching into their popcorn bucket and attempting to share their large soda with one straw. I'm very thankful for the lighted path. Do you use your gift of light to guide others when they are lost in the wilderness of life?

Light is used to penetrate the darkness. When I'm really tired, I really just wanna go to bed ... and for me, the darker the room, the better it is for sleeping. There are some nights when Brent feels that he has to read way into the middle of the night. Some evenings I ask nicely, "When are you going to turn off the light? Soon?" To which he replies: Your eyes are closed. How do you know I have the light on? Go to sleep." The bedside lamp might not give out a huge amount of wattage (?!), but light – whatever amount – still can penetrate the darkness. Do you use your gift of light to penetrate the darkness, to expose evil in the world – the evils of hatred and injustice – and work at destroying it?

Light is used to produce growth. Our world is green because of the earth's relationship to the sun and the light. Do you use your gift of light to encourage the growth of love? To encourage others to grow into better people, better Christians, better disciples?

Light does not exist for its own glory but to brighten up the world. Do you use your gift of light to brighten up the world?

We've been talking about missions all month because we so want you to live with servant hearts and servant lives. Mission is outreach. Mission is service. Mission is giving. "Doing" mission work does not mean that one must travel to the ends of the world. The mission field includes your backyard, your front porch, your office, your school, your grocery store, your health club, your doctor's office, your Sunday school class, your pew at the Sun Prairie United Methodist Church.

United Methodists have believed, from the beginning, that each one of us is called to participate in the outreaching ministry of Jesus Christ. John Wesley described this work in simple, practical terms: **"Do all the good you can, in all the places you can, to all the people you can."** Because we are people of the Light, we believe that putting our faith into action is at the very heart of our Christian calling.

I believe the truth is clear: We are called to be people of the light. It is also true that God gives us the freedom to ignore this calling, to fail to live up to it, to choose not to show the radiance that belongs to all of us.

We all have choices ... but that doesn't change the mandate from Christ.

Jesus did not say, "You are to be the light for the **church**." The Bible does not say, "When you come to church, turn on your light. When you come to the church, flip the switch." No ... Jesus said, "I'm putting you on a light stand. Now that I've put you there on the hilltop, on a light stand—shine!

SHINE! Be generous with your lives. When you open up to others, when you form light-giving and life-growing relationships with others, you will prompt people to open up with God.”

We have a new puppy at our house and her light is ON. She is brilliant with puppyness ... that’s her mission in life right now. She’s “on,” because she has come to understand that she belongs. She has come to learn that she belongs in the family, in the community of the Bressers, where she is loved, nurtured and cared for. At 2am I may be wanting her to move to your community ...

You too, can turn on your light, because you belong to the Kingdom of God ... you belong IN the Kingdom of God. You belong to the community of the faithful ... and it’s not just the Sun Prairie United Methodist Church community ... oh my goodness, no, because the world is much bigger than that. We belong to the community of the faithful; the global community of saints and sinners ... we are **all** invited to the community, thanks be to God for that. We belong to the Kingdom because God calls us all to a life of mission and ministry.

Is your light on? Is anybody home? Jesus says: Flip your switch!

It’s time to practice Sunbeam Service in the name of Jesus Christ.

*Jesus wants me for a sunbeam to shine for him each day.
In every way try to please him, at home, at school, at play.
A sunbeam, a sunbeam ... Jesus wants me for a sunbeam.
A sunbeam, a sunbeam ... I’ll be a sunbeam for him.*

