

Introduction

Throughout this series, we have discovered that holiness is not simply an individual pursuit. God is forming a holy people who reflect His character, carry His presence and participate in His mission together.

Last week, in Preparing a Dwelling for Glory and A Holy Church That Multiplies, we considered God's desire to dwell among His people. We were challenged to consider our ways, reorder our priorities and accept responsibility as living stones in the house He is building.

This week, Ps Samuel turns our attention outward. Holiness is not meant to make the Church invisible or withdrawn. God calls His people to live as light so that the character of Christ can be seen through transformed lives and others can be drawn towards Him.

A Holy Church That Shines

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven."

Matthew 5:14–16 (NIV)

Biblical faith is deeply personal, but it is never merely private. Jesus describes His people as a city on a hill and a lamp placed where everyone can see its light. Christian life was never intended to be invisible. When Jesus transforms a person, something of His kingdom should become visible in that person's character, relationships, priorities and conduct.

God has called His people not merely to preach the light, but to live as light – displaying the character of Christ through holy lives and demonstrating the power of Christ through Spirit-empowered witness.

A Church may gather many people and still make little difference in its city. The purpose of the Church is not simply to draw a crowd, but to make Christ known. The gospel must be heard from our lips and its transforming power must also be seen in our lives.

Key Scriptures

- Matthew 5:1–16 — the character of the Beatitudes leads into Jesus' call to be salt and light.
- John 8:12 — Jesus is the source of the light we reflect.
- Ephesians 5:8–11 — we were once darkness, but now we are light in the Lord.
- Philippians 2:14–16 — believers shine like stars as they hold firmly to the word of life.
- John 17:15–18 — Jesus sends His disciples into the world while asking the Father to protect them from evil.

1. Christianity Begins with Identity Before Activity

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light.”

- Ephesians 5:8 (NIV)

Before Jesus tells His disciples to shine, He tells them who they are: “You are the light of the world.” Christianity does not begin with trying to produce Christian behaviour. It begins with receiving a new identity in Christ and then learning to live in a way that corresponds with that identity.

Paul does not say that believers once lived in darkness. He says they *were* darkness, but now they are light in the Lord. Through Christ, believers are forgiven, regenerated, reconciled, justified, adopted, united with Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Something fundamental has changed.

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

- John 8:12 (NIV)

Christ is the source of our light. Just as the moon reflects the light of the sun, believers reflect the life and character of Jesus. Our good works are not an announcement of how wonderful we are; they are evidence of what Christ has done within us.

We do not pursue holiness in order to manufacture a Christian identity. We pursue holiness because Christ has already given us a new identity.

Ps Samuel encouraged believers to begin each day by remembering who they belong to: “I belong to Jesus. Jesus Christ lives in me. The Holy Spirit dwells in me. I am no longer a slave to darkness, sin or fear. Today I will walk as a child of light.”

Identity becomes the foundation for daily obedience.

2. Holiness Makes the Invisible God Visible

Matthew 5 places the call to shine directly after the Beatitudes. This shows that light is not limited to spectacular spiritual activity. The merciful person shines. The pure in heart shine. The peacemaker shines. The humble person, the one who hungers for righteousness and the believer who remains faithful under persecution all make God’s character visible.

Holiness is what happens when the character of the invisible God becomes increasingly visible in the lives of His people.

Joseph demonstrates this kind of holiness. Betrayed by his brothers, sold into slavery, falsely accused and imprisoned, he continued to honour God even when righteousness brought no immediate recognition or reward. Holiness is lived before God, not performed in order to win the approval of the world.

Transformation itself becomes a witness. Bitterness gives way to forgiveness, fear to faith, anger to gentleness, selfishness to generosity and bondage to freedom. People should be able to see not simply that we have adopted religious habits, but that Jesus has changed us.

3. Holiness Does Not Hide from the World

Jesus called His disciples the light of the world, not the light of the sanctuary.

There is a temptation to confuse holiness with withdrawal, yet Jesus was perfectly holy while remaining remarkably accessible to broken people. He spoke with the Samaritan woman, ate with tax collectors, touched lepers and welcomed those whom religious society avoided.

His holiness did not require Him to avoid broken people. It enabled Him to enter broken situations without being corrupted by them. When Jesus entered Zacchaeus' home, His gracious presence led Zacchaeus towards repentance and restoration.

Ps Samuel identified two dangers for Christians living in a dark world:

- Compromise — entering the world and becoming indistinguishable from it.
- Isolation — remaining separate from sin, but also separating ourselves from the people Jesus wants to reach.

“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”

- John 17:15 (NIV)

Jesus offers another model: presence without compromise. We belong to Christ while living among people who have not yet received His grace. We engage the culture without conforming to it. Like a lighthouse standing where darkness and danger exist, the Church fulfils its purpose by allowing Christ's light to be seen where it is most needed.

Biblical holiness does not hide from darkness. It enters darkness without becoming darkness itself.

Our neighbourhoods, workplaces, schools, universities, businesses, sporting clubs and local cafés can all become mission fields. Wherever God places us, we are called to shine—not self-righteously or forcefully, but visibly, graciously and courageously.

Key Takeaways

- Biblical Christianity is personal, but it is never merely private.
- Jesus calls His people not only to preach the light, but to live as light.
- Christian activity flows from the identity Christ has already given us.
- Christ is the source of our light; our lives are meant to reflect Him.
- Holy character makes the invisible God visible in everyday life.
- Holiness is lived before God rather than performed for human approval.
- The Church must resist both compromise with the world and isolation from it.
- God sends us into ordinary places as visible witnesses to His grace and truth.

Reflection Questions

Ps Samuel concluded by asking listeners to consider who is close enough to encounter the light of Christ through their lives:

1. Who are the non-believers you genuinely know?
2. Who are you eating with?
3. Who are you listening to?
4. Whose questions are you hearing?
5. Who knows you well enough to observe your Christianity?

This Week's Challenge

Ask God to place one person clearly on your heart. Look for an opportunity this week to spend time with them, listen carefully and allow them to see the grace and character of Christ through you.

Consider how a practical act of compassion could open a natural gospel conversation. It may begin with sharing a meal, offering help, asking a thoughtful question, sharing part of your testimony or explaining why your hope is in Jesus.

Wherever and whenever God places you, let the light of Christ shine.

The goal is not to perform, pressure or present ourselves as “holier than thou.” It is to live openly as people who belong to Jesus, trusting the Holy Spirit to work through our character, words and actions.

Scripture Memory Challenge

“In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”

- Matthew 5:16 (NIV)