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LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

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Matthew chapter 4 reports that Jesus had been going all around Galilee, teaching and healing every kind of disease among the people: epileptics, the blind, demonized, paralyzed, every kind of sickness - - and great multitudes followed Him.

Matthew 5:1 (NAS) says, *And when He saw the multitudes, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.* (Note that when He started preaching the greatest sermon ever, "**He sat down.**" Since I have to sit down when I preach or my knees get wobbly, I wanted to point that out.) A huge crowd was spread out before Jesus - mostly poor people, fishermen, shepherds, many sick people. Jesus started His amazing sermon with what we call "The Beatitudes," which turned the world's values upside down: "Blessed are the meek and humble, blessed are those who mourn, those who are persecuted," etc.

The next section reads: *You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how will it be made salty again? It is good for nothing anymore, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:13-16, NAS)

"YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD!" What? What does he mean? We're just working people, common people, not holy people, not priests or Pharisees or Sadducees. Jesus, what do you mean by that statement?

On another occasion, Jesus said, *I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in darkness...* (John 8:12) Yes, amen! You and I can certainly agree with that, but we know that we don't have any light any more than the crowd sitting on that hillside. Of course, we have come to understand that when we come to Christ we do have light, but it is a reflected light, like the sun and the moon, or the sun and the earth. From space the earth is a beautiful, blue planet, when it is reflecting the sun. But without the sun it is dark and would soon be a dead planet. So whatever Jesus meant when He said, You are the light of the world, He didn't mean that we are to bring glory to ourselves.

Remember that from the beginning the disciples kept arguing about who was the greatest. In Mark 9:34 they were walking on the road and began disputing about who would be the greatest. On another occasion in Luke 9:45 they were having the same argument and Jesus set a little child before them. Then in Luke 22:24 in the Upper Room, on Jesus' last night among them, they were still disputing as to which of them should be considered the greatest. John and James said, We're the greatest! (Their mommy had already gone to Jesus and asked if they could sit at His right and left hand in the coming Kingdom.) Bartholomew and Matthew both insisted they were the greatest. Peter said, I am definitely the greatest since I am the one that got the revelation about Jesus being the Son of God.

Now, flash forward about two months later, after Jesus' trial when Peter denied Him three times, after the cross and the resurrection, after the time on the beach when Jesus asked Peter three times, "Do you love Me?" (allowing Peter to recoup his self-respect), and after the day of Pentecost when Peter received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, a drastic change has happened to Peter. In Acts 3, when Peter and John were going to the temple and healed a lame man, all the people ran up, saw the lame man walking, and started looking at Peter and John as if they were gods. (I love this.)

So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: ***"Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."*** Acts 3:12,16 (NKJV)

What an amazing change in Peter's attitude. That is a picture of letting your light shine - - boldly praying for a man right out in the open, but when the man was healed reflecting the glory back to the Lord. And when Peter wrote instructions in his little letter about how to give a witness to unbelievers, he said, ***Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have, but do this with gentleness and respect.*** 1 Peter 3:1 (NIV) So we are always to remember that it's Him, it is Christ who is the Light, and we hope we can reflect a little of His light, but we must be humble and give Him the glory.

God Himself is humble, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The HOLY SPIRIT - never calls attention to Himself, but always glorifies Jesus.

JESUS, THE SON - was born in a stable and died on a cross. That is amazingly humble. When He healed the deaf, crippled, blind, ***The people praised the God of Israel.*** (See Matthew 15:31) And Jesus said, ***Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*** (Matthew 12:29)

The FATHER - When I was a new Christian, I didn't tell anyone but I thought God must have a big ego, always wanting people to praise Him and bow down to Him. I eventually learned that God doesn't have any ego at all, for ***"God is love,"*** and love is always outward to others, never inward. Love is not just a quality of God, it is His very nature and essence. The fact is that I am the one that has a problem with ego and pride, not God, as He has shown me innumerable times. The only time I am completely safe from that pride and not thinking about myself is when I am praising and thanking God, or when I am showing love to someone.

Lucifer was an exalted angel, but because of pride (he wanted God's glory), he fell and became Satan. Adam and Eve also wanted to be like God and their pride caused them to fall. Pride is universal. Our basic problem is pride and rebellion. A few weeks ago Pastor Kirk had a big cross up here at the front, and the congregation was given little forms on which you could check off your sins and problems and place them at the cross. About 800 people filled out those cards, and 44% confessed to a problem with pride. So a lot of people are having a struggle with pride. Not only 44%, but the other 56% either don't realize they have pride or they are too proud to admit it. (Ha!)

Pride is like people that eat garlic. I have some dear friends who are constantly focused on nutrition, and they must eat a half pound of garlic a day. When they come in the room it sort of knocks you over, and they are totally oblivious. That's a picture of people with pride. You want to hold your nose, and they have no idea.

We are born with a desire to be significant. The two things little kids say when they are learning to talk are: "Let me do it!" and "Look at me!" I don't think that is from a child's sin-nature. God wants us to be significant, and we are significant to Him, and we are to glory in our significance to Him. But we get it twisted and want to get glory from men so that it becomes pride, and it stinks.

I confess that as I grew into manhood I had a lot of pride. I couldn't help it, I was so doggone good-looking. You may find that hard to believe, but I used to look like Brad Pitt. Now I look like a gravel pit. The Bible says that the years eat up our beauty like moths eat up wool. The moths have been chewing on me big-time. Sometimes when I glance at myself in the mirror, I laugh out loud. Sometimes I cry. And I don't want to scare you, but if you live long enough, this is the way you're going to look, more or less. You better run for the Botox! Or stop taking pride in how beautiful you are, or how rich, or how smart, or how good. It's all going to pass away, believe me.

Pride makes you an enemy of God, and who is going to win that battle? 1 Peter 5:5 says, ***God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.*** And the next verse says, ***Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time.*** God's desire and plan is to exalt you and me at the proper time, His time. But in the meantime, you are to "Humble yourself." It's an inside job. It's your work, my work. God is not going to do it for us. If we are proud He may bring us down, He may humiliate us for our own good. But we can react to that in resentment and hardness, or we can humble ourselves. It is our choice.

- Pride is the reason it is so hard for people to accept Christ, it takes **faith**. Jesus said we have to come to Him like a little child. Faith seems so anti-intellectual, so ephemeral, so squishy. Besides that, "What are my family and friends going to think about me?" (That is called the "fear of man.") Maybe someone needs to hear this today: If you don't humble yourself you are going to live and die without God, and there is nothing humorous about that. The way we come

to God, the only door, is by faith in Jesus. You had better decide, friend, because one day the door will close.

- Pride is also the reason it is so hard for people to forgive others, and Jesus said if we don't forgive others God will not forgive us.
- Pride is not something that is settled when we accept Christ as our Savior, it's an ongoing, lifetime struggle. There is an old saying from the Jewish Rabbis. "When does a man overcome the last bit of his pride?" "Fifteen minutes after he dies." There is a lot of wisdom in that saying.

Jesus warns in Matthew 6 about how we can let pride infiltrate our religion. He talks about giving, praying, and fasting so that we get glory and recognition from men instead of from God. ***So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and streets to be honored by men.*** Can you imagine such a thing!

Oh, that reminds me, I forgot to put my tithe in the offering plate when it was passed around. Would an usher please come and receive my offering. I am such a faithful giver that I don't want to miss. (The usher came up with an offering plate, and I stepped to the front of the platform, took out some real paper money from my wallet, and as a trumpet fanfare sounded from the PA system, waved the money around and dropped it in the plate. I then looked up to heaven in a very holy way, if I do say so.) We would never act like that!

A couple of weeks ago, four of us guys returned from spending a week at the Dream Center in Hollywood with Clayton Gollither's ministry, Hope for Homeless Youth. One morning I arose early and walked about four blocks to a Starbucks on Sunset Blvd. In the past Sunset Blvd. was a glamorous place, but it has become shabby with poverty, drugs, and crime. I got a Grande and a cup of oatmeal and was sitting at a table when I smelled something bad. I looked up and a homeless guy was shuffling past me. He had a beard down to his waist, filthy clothes that smelled of stale sweat and other things, and he was so repulsive that I felt myself shudder. He walked to the back of the store and stood around, and I felt guilty because of my attitude, so I went over and got him a Grande and a cup of oatmeal. As I walked up and handed it to him, a thought came to my mind: "I hope the waitress is watching!" God have mercy on me. So I thought I would come back and start a Pharisees' Club. You can sign up at the Small Groups Desk if you qualify. (Note: As I have reflected on that experience, I have been wondering: was that thought an inner expression of pride, or was it a temptation to pride? I'm not trying to exonerate myself but to really understand. I will try to develop this idea a little more next month.)

Think with me about the contrast between pride and humility as the disciples shared the Last Supper. Remember, the disciples just had a big argument about which of them was the greatest. ***Jesus.....rose from supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel...Then He came to Simon Peter. And Peter said to Him, "Lord, are you washing my feet?"*** Peter very reluctantly allowed Jesus to wash his feet. (John 13:3-6, NKJV)

Were you ever in a church where they washed each other's feet? One time when I was a pastor a group of 12 or 15 of us were in a prayer meeting when one of the ladies said she felt we were supposed to wash one another's feet. I didn't really want to do it, but most of the others agreed with her, so we did it. I didn't mind washing other people's feet, but I didn't like for them to wash my feet. I felt very uncomfortable. I know how Peter felt. Just imagine if Pastor Kirk came to a meeting and wanted to wash your feet.

Now let me read the rest of this account, and I want you to see something: ***You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher*** (Stop! Note that Jesus reversed the order of these two titles. He is subtly declaring that you cannot claim Him as your teacher unless He is first of all your Lord! Some churches or groups say that Jesus was a great teacher, but He was not divine. "Nonsense!" Jesus implies. "If you don't confess Me as your divine Savior and Lord I cannot be your teacher or example.") ***If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master, nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them.*** (John 13:13-17, NKJV)

What I want you to see is that there is no difference in these instructions from Jesus to the church than His instructions instituting the Lord's Supper. There is no indication that this is a figure of speech. If you read His words, it seems clear that He intended for us to literally wash one another's feet as a regular rite among believers. I think the church has by tacit, unspoken agreement chosen to ignore this teaching because it would be too humbling. Don't get nervous. I'm not suggesting that we institute it. If we did we would probably start bragging about how humble we are over at the Canyon View Footwashing Vineyard Church.

True story I heard a number of years ago: A certain church with a beautiful brick building had been in a certain community for over a hundred years. Families had been a part of the congregation for several generations. But there had been a falling out between two of the members, and the hard feelings had been taken up by their families and extended families and friends, so that over a period of years it had fractured the congregation. Now when people came into church on Sunday morning, they headed for the right or the left side of the sanctuary and sat with their own group and never looked at or acknowledged the bad people on the other side. The "worship service" was a time of tension. Finally it grew to be too much, and Group A told Group B that they should go somewhere else and start a new church since Group A had over the years contributed far more to build and maintain the church facility. Group B disagreed angrily. So the two groups decided to take the matter to court and got their own attorneys.

Someone read in 1 Corinthians that Christians are not supposed to take Christians to court but to settle things among themselves, so since the two groups realized they were going to be in a costly, no-win situation, they agreed to let a trusted senior pastor, a regional overseer, arbitrate the matter. The old gentleman was well aware of the situation and agreed to arbitrate if the two sides would promise in advance to do exactly as he ruled. They agreed.

On the night of the big meeting, the church was full, with Groups A and B in their different packs. The pastor said he had come to a decision, which he would render as soon as they performed a certain function recommended by Jesus. He then read the passage from John 13, as a number of ladies who had been prepped brought in pans of water and towels. He said that the two groups were to wash each other's feet. With much shock and resistance, they slowly started to obey his instructions. An old gentleman named Bill, dressed in a three-piece suit, got down on his knees and started washing the feet of another old guy named Henry. In a few minutes, Henry said, "Bill, you and I have gone fishing and hunting together for 40 years. You were the best man at my wedding. What in the world is going on in our church?" Tears were running down Bill's cheeks. He said, "Henry, I don't know what's going on, but I'm sick of it!" Henry got up from his chair, raised Bill up and embraced him. By now, both of them were weeping and asking one another for forgiveness. The same thing was happening all over the church. And so the civil war was resolved, just as Jesus intended.

I have an assignment for you if you will accept it. If there are any couples here that have tension, friction going on in your marriage, I suggest that you wash one another's feet today or this week. I especially hope that husbands will wash their wives' feet. Or maybe there is a situation where there is tension at work or at school. You can't wash someone's feet, but do a humble act of kindness if it is at all appropriate. Ask the Lord to guide you.

Now please bow your heads: Use your imagination and picture yourself sitting in a dimly lit room. Maybe you are depressed, or angry, or resentful, or frustrated, or hopeless, or guilty, or filled with anxiety. Jesus enters the room. He is dressed like a servant. He has a pan of water and a towel. He removes your shoes and socks and starts gently washing your feet. He is washing away your anxiety, guilt, fear, sins. And you notice the nail prints in his hands. Friends, God really and truly loves you. He has not come to condemn you but to die for you, to cleanse your heart and your conscience, and to save your eternal soul. Spend a time of silence and let Him love you and serve you.

MINISTRY

Dave Soderburg, Rick Miller, Banjo Joe and I drove out to Hollywood in Dave's Prius, which we called a carita because it felt like four big guys in a bathtub, and had a great time ministering at the Dream Center. We saw people saved, healed, and delivered from demons (Really!). Glory to God. I will give a report about it next month.

God Bless,

Glenn

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