

22.8.14 pm

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Date: 22 April 2018

Preacher: Rev. Calum Iain MacLeod

[0 : 00] Well good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening.

It's good to be together again in worship and we are again thankful for those who have brought God's word to us over this weekend and for once more Calumene being able to bring God's word to us just now.

The intimations you received this morning and they're on the white sheets. I don't intend to take time going through them just now but if you haven't seen them you can pick them up on your way out.

Really I just wanted to extend a warm welcome to everybody on our behalf and it's good to see members from the Scalpe Congregation and the Leavera Congregation and those who are attending the conference.

We have very much enjoyed being part of that over the course of this weekend. And I'm going to sit down now and I know that David who has been chairing the conference has a word to say before he hands over to Calumene.

[1 : 08] Thank you very much for that warm welcome that you extended to the Harris Conference. We have enjoyed the few days that we've been here in Harris and we are indebted to the North Harris Free Church Congregation for the welcome that they have given to us today.

We are thankful to the session and to the Congregation and Service for the warm welcome that we have received with you for these services today. So we are indebted to you for this welcome.

The final service in construction with the conference itself will take place at 8.30. There will be a fellowship over in the hotel to which you are all most welcome.

There will be a cup of tea and a supper served immediately after the service to which you are all very welcome. It doesn't matter if you haven't been to other conference meetings.

You are all very welcome to join us and we would encourage as many of you as possible to come.

We've been blessed with the ministry and with the teaching we've received over these two days from the two guest speakers that we have had.

[2 : 17] And we'll hopefully hear a little bit more personal testimony from them tonight in our time and place as well. So you are all very welcome and we hope to see as many of you as possible at that service.

Thank you all. Well, can I say that it's a pleasure, it's a privilege to be with you in the Fellowship of the Gospel on the better side of the Clisha.

And it's been wonderful to have been a part of the Island Study Conference over these days. Shall we draw near to God in prayer as we unite our hearts at the throne of grace?

Let us pray. We come before you, O Lord our God, giving thanks that we can draw near to the very throne room of heaven.

We do so through our advocate with the Father. We do so in the name of our great high priest. We do so in the precious name of our Emmanuel, God with us.

[3 : 39] We thank you this evening that we assemble in the name of our mediator, Jesus Christ, our God, our God, our God.

Your Son, the Son of your steadfast love, our Savior. We thank you on this Lord's Day for the empty tomb.

We thank you for the resurrection of Jesus. We thank you for the resurrection of Jesus. We thank you that he abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.

We thank you that the gospel unites us together. And for the fellowship of the gospel, we give thanks for the many blessings that we receive from Calvary.

We thank you for the message of the cross. We bless you this evening for Jesus Christ and him crucified.

[4 : 51] We pray that you would draw near to us. We seek mercy. We seek cleansing. In and through the shed blood of the precious blood of the Lamb.

We thank you for our atoning sacrifice. And we seek your blessing upon us.

For it is the Lord's blessing that makes one rich and adds no sorrow. We ask that you would presence yourself with us.

Oh Lord, our God. We thank you that you tabernacle amongst your people. We pray for a felt sense of your presence here with us tonight.

Indeed, we seek. Oh Lord, that you would draw near to us with our respective needs.

[5 : 52] We pray that we would know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. And the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit within these walls.

As we worship you. Unite us as one in Christ Jesus. As we meet under the supreme authority of your word.

So we give thanks for the scriptures. We thank you for your inspired word. And grant us, we pray, to engage with it with reverence.

Grant us, too, a spirit of expectation. We pray that as we hear your voice speaking to us. So we will respond with obedience.

So we might respond with submission. Grant us, we pray, to subscribe to the scriptures. Give us to immerse ourselves into the word of God.

[7 : 01] So that we will, day by day, be given to know, in a greater measure, the word made flesh.

Jesus Christ, the author, the perfecter of our faith. So grant us, we pray, the blessings of the gospel.

As we sing your praises. As your word is proclaimed. Give us receptive hearts. We seek your blessing upon the congregation here.

Giving thanks, O Lord, for this very building. For this provision. We thank you for these days of conference.

And we praise you for partnerships in the gospel. And we seek your blessing upon your servant, David. We pray for him.

[8 : 05] We pray your blessing upon preacher and congregation alike. Remember, we pray, the Isle of Haras.

And grant that your spirit would move. As in past times. We seek, O Lord, days of spiritual awakening.

Nonetheless, we thank you for the many encouragements you give us. During these days of discouragement. Where your people are so aware of the powers of darkness.

In our land. But we thank you. That you are triumphant. We thank you.

That you are building your church. And that the very gates of hell shall not in any way prevail. And so we seek forgiveness.

[9 : 10] Be with us. Go before us. And forgive our sins. In Christ's name. Amen. We're going to read God's word together from the gospel of Matthew.

Chapter 5. Matthew's gospel. Chapter 5. And we're going to read verses 1 to 20. Matthew 5.

1 to 20. Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain.

And when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

[10 : 21] Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?

It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden, nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand.

And it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works, and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

[11 : 38] Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Amen. And may the Lord add his blessing to the reading of his own holy and inspired word. Well, as we seek God's leading and guidance, turn with me, if you will, to Matthew chapter 5.

Matthew 5. And our text is verse 14.

[13 : 00] You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. Amen. Now, over past days, we've been looking at the theme of living the Christian life in a 21st century world.

We've been looking at the importance of what it means to be grounded in godliness, the importance of subscribing to scripture, and tonight we're going to look at living in the light.

In other words, how all of this might be seen. It's seen, is it not, through visible discipleship and active discipleship.

So, living in the light, and we're going to look at what it means to live the Christian life in a 21st century world by looking at these two elements.

[14 : 25] So, let's begin by looking at a visible discipleship in light of the words of the Lord Jesus here in Matthew chapter 5.

Now, many of you are in business, and in the businesses of the 21st century world that we live in, it's not uncommon to subscribe to a code of conduct or a code of practice which informs all staff of the company's proper practice, rules of behavior, responsibility, standards, and expectations, that kind of thing.

Well, the Ford Motor Company, it's a global outfit. And interestingly, the aim of its code of conduct is to help its personnel the world over to understand and follow the company's policies and procedures.

What's remarkable about this template that Ford have, and I'm sure many other large companies like Ford, is that it's a universal template written in various languages and applied internationally, globally.

So, all personnel, if you work for Ford, everyone, no exceptions, all personnel are urged to learn and follow the standards of the said code.

[16 : 04] Well, the Sermon on the Mount, in chapter 5, spells out the definitive code of conduct and practice for living the Christian life in a 21st century world.

Here we have the discipleship directive, and it is the ultimate universal template. It is applied by Christ himself to all kingdom personnel the world over, and all kingdom personnel are urged to learn and follow the fundamental standards of this code of Christianity.

At its heart is the need for a dedicated discipleship, a visible discipleship, a living out of the Christian faith, as is highlighted in verse 13, as salt to influence the world for good, and light to illuminate the world for good.

So, light is our focal point tonight, living in the light in our world. Now, I want to begin by highlighting something very, very important that I believe is being stressed here and elsewhere across the pages of Scripture.

I want us to notice that the Lord Jesus, at no point in this passage or in his ministry, gives his disciples a license to be secret, low-profile, hush-hush disciples.

[17 : 56] Now, you might say, but what of the secret disciple, if there's such a thing? Well, there may well be secret disciples in here tonight, but such a person has no directive to live a concealed, anonymous, secretive Christian life.

Why is that? Because Jesus says, let your light shine. That is the policy here. It's the formula of discipleship.

Let your light give light and remove anything that might hinder you from witnessing for Christ. And Jesus illustrates this in a very powerful way.

In this passage, it's as if the Lord is saying, look, it would seem illogical, would it not? Irrational even, to place a lamp under a basket.

Why would you do that? A lamp is to be placed on a stand. Now, the people listening to Jesus, his disciples, would have understood this.

[19 : 12] Jesus is referring to the oil-burning household lamps, so a very common sight in Jewish homes in the world that was back then, and these lamps were placed on stands to give maximum illumination, maximum glow.

And Jesus is saying, that's where it belongs, on the stand. There it gives light. There its light is visible for all to see. There it emits and gives out light.

The symbolic significance of light is conveyed and applied by the Lord Jesus. Jesus expects nothing less of his first century and 21st century world disciples.

In the same way, Jesus says, let your light shine without holding back or obscuring your witness. In other words, Jesus is saying to us, in the language of discipleship, what I expect of you in the school of discipleship is full exposure, full visibility, no baskets or bowls or bushels permitted.

What was the basket anyway, or the bushel of the King James Version? Well, Jesus is talking of an agricultural bucket, a very crude looking thing, a grain measuring container perhaps.

[20 : 52] And it begs the question, why would you hide your light under a bushel? So Jesus is saying, the lampstand, the oil burning lamp on the lampstand, it's not an option, it's a requirement.

It's a powerful symbol here of an open and public confession of faith in Jesus Christ. And Jesus expects nothing less of you and I this evening.

Is there a message there for some of us? Can I ask, what have your Christian witnessed this evening? Are you hiding your light under a bushel? Is it time for the basket, for the bucket to be removed, the covering, the mask, the camouflage, the screen?

Is it time for all of the props to be taken away once and for all and to be cast for what to one side? Is there the need in your life tonight for a greater exposure?

Only you can answer that. But the Lord Jesus is speaking to us tonight and challenging us. Look here at the lampstand again. It's a public symbol.

[22 : 10] Open, unrestricted light that shines and gives light to all. Can I ask, has the light of the gospel been kindled in your heart?

But might it be that you've been holding back your light for some time, perhaps over many years? Maybe tapping into your Bible, but maybe not in public.

I remember as a teenager when I stayed in the McRae hostel in Stornoway and I shared a dorm with two other boys and I was afraid at times to allow my light to shine and I would read my Bible undercover when the lights went out.

I had a torch and I would be reading my Bible very discreetly in a very clandestine manner. but over time the torch was disposed of because it's not what Jesus is asking of us.

Jesus is saying let go, let your light shine. And maybe for some of us tonight the bushel, the bucket, the bowl remains in place.

[23 : 37] maybe some of us tonight are even masking our spiritual longing to let go and to allow for a greater exposure to the Christian life.

Is that the case? The Bible gives us every encouragement for a greater exposure. if we just fast forward a page or two and we come to chapter 8 in Matthew's Gospel.

So the Sermon on the Mount concludes and then it's as if Jesus resumes his ministry and something interesting happens.

Chapter 8 begins with Jesus coming down from the Mount and he's met by a leper. the leper pleads for mercy.

Notice that the leper is cleansed and then the leper is commissioned to do what? Go and show yourself.

[24 : 44] Go and reveal. Go and prove yourself. yes he's cautioned to be silent and understandably so to prevent the miracle seekers who had no kind of discipleship motive who were following Jesus for all the wrong reasons but this man this leper this healed leper is commissioned in the first instance to go and show himself to the priest.

Why? To fulfill the requirements of the law. Then crucially he would be able to rejoin his community and there let his light shine and make known the miracle of grace and healing that he has experienced through Jesus Christ.

And this is a pattern that you find in the gospels. If you are reading through Luke's gospel and you come to chapter 19 you meet a despised tax collector whose name is Zacchaeus.

He's a cautious seeker is Zacchaeus. Jesus invites him he exhorts him indeed you might say he commands him to leave the seclusion of a sycamore tree and to come into the light.

And Zacchaeus does so and Zacchaeus is exposed. but there is also an exposure of his longing for communion with Jesus Christ because he receives Jesus joyfully.

[26 : 29] And then there are others present who grumble at what has happened. This despised this despicable tax collector Jesus is having fellowship with him.

How terrible. How does Zacchaeus respond? We read that Zacchaeus stood in a very public way and said what does he do?

He testifies publicly openly visibly like a lamp in a lamp stand for all to see. And he says to Jesus I give of what I have and am without holding back.

What does Jesus say in response? Today salvation. What John in his opening few paragraphs in chapter one of his gospel refers to the light of life.

So in other words Jesus is saying today Zacchaeus salvation or the light of life has come to this house. And Zacchaeus sees the light and he lets his light shine.

[27 : 37] Will you do that tonight? Will you follow in the footsteps of the leper of Matthew chapter 8 and the Zacchaeus of Luke 19?

Think about it. There's something very restrictive isn't there about keeping a candle in a jar. If you have a Yankee candle there are alternatives.

Far better candles I believe on the main street of Tarburg. But in any case if you place the lid on that jar what happens is that the flame just begins to diminish and it all but goes out and then you lift the lid off and then suddenly immediately that flickering flame will double in diameter and emit greater light than what was the case a moment ago.

But then you say to me but what about Nicodemus? Was he not a secret disciple? Well perhaps he was when we first meet him in John chapter 3.

He came to Jesus by night. But Nicodemus is a fascinating character because the story of Nicodemus doesn't just end in John chapter 3.

[29 : 09] Interestingly we meet Nicodemus again in John chapter 7. What's changed? Well a lot has changed. Nicodemus has been pushing boundaries.

The lid has come off. The bucket the bushel the bowl has been disposed of. We know that because we meet him making a stand for Jesus in a crucible of hostile fellow scribes and Pharisees determined to condemn Jesus and Nicodemus remarkably stands up for Jesus.

You can read the account yourselves. Does it end there? No it doesn't. Continue to turn the pages of John's gospel. You come to chapter 19 and there's absolutely no sign of the said bushel or bowl or bucket.

It's gone forever because we see Nicodemus boldly and openly accompanying Joseph of Arimathea and they secure Pilate's permission to take the body of Jesus for burial.

It's quite remarkable isn't it? Over a period of time he lets his light shine. John knows exactly what he's doing by referring to Nicodemus on a threefold basis.

[30 : 43] Little by little Nicodemus nails his colors to the mast of discipleship. I wonder if that's a picture of you tonight. Are you holding back?

Perhaps you've even thought well you know I would like to come to the midweek fellowship time of prayer in this building. I would like to do that but you've been holding back.

Well I wonder if tonight we've come to a defining moment in our lives. I wonder if tonight God is speaking to you. God is prompting you and God is saying to you go there.

You've stayed back long enough far too long and there is now a window of opportunity but I want to take it even further than that.

I want to say to you tonight commit to Christ. Trust in Jesus. Let go. Whatever the baggage might be. Whatever the issues unresolved might be.

[31 : 49] Whatever it is. Dispose of it. And trust in Jesus. Jesus. There's a wonderful passage. There's a wonderful text in 1 John.

If we walk in the light as he is in the light we have fellowship with one another. As did Joseph and Nicodemus. Believe me if you come into the fellowship of the church you will find it much much easier to let your light shine.

As you stand shoulder to shoulder with others you will discover the joy of fellowship in the gospel. If we go back to Exodus chapter 3 40 years now here's a thing 40 years Moses is hiding his light under a bushel.

we meet him on the far side of the wilderness. He's been living life quietly on the periphery if you like somewhat detached and then God intervenes the God who dwells in an approachable light. God reveals himself in a flame of fire to Moses out of the midst of a burning bush. What happens next? Moses is commissioned to go into the darkness of Egypt as an envoy and deliver the people of Israel from Pharaoh's tenery.

[33 : 33] He's asked to go in and engage with this tyrant. Let your light shine Moses. Go. And Moses submits.

What do we see happening? A faintly burning ember is rekindled at the burning bush. A flame of fire is reignited and Moses enters Egypt on fire for the Lord.

Again, I want to ask, are some of us here tonight living our lives at the far side of the wilderness as it were? on the periphery of the Christian life, not far from the kingdom, is the Lord speaking to you? Is God probing you, urging you to let your light shine before others so that you too can make a meaningful difference in our 21st century world?

The fields out there are white for harvest. The harvest is plentiful but the labourers are few. And Jesus is saying to us, let your light shine.

[34 : 49] Think of Gideon back in the Old Testament in Judges chapter 6. Where do we meet Gideon? Well, not unlike Moses. He's beating out the wheat in the wine press under a ruthless Midianite oppressive regime and he's hiding his light.

God calls him to let his light shine. The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valour. God says to Gideon, go in this might of yours and save Israel from the hand of Midian.

And Gideon submits and Gideon goes on fire for the Lord. Will you do that tonight? Perhaps some of us here are being challenged.

Perhaps God is speaking to us in our Christian lives. Perhaps we're anxious about letting go and serving the Lord in a more comprehensive way.

Perhaps God is opening doors for us, but we're holding back. Is he saying to you tonight, let your light shine? he's exhorting you to give a greater exposure.

[36 : 11] Remember the exhortation of the prophet Isaiah as he speaks to a somewhat subdued Israel.

His exhortation to the people of God of his day, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord. Is God speaking to us?

And then secondly, we come to active discipleship. Visible discipleship, active discipleship.

Matthew 5, this passage and many other passages, perhaps John's gospel in particular, makes it very clear to us that God has come in Christ to bring light and to dispel the darkness.

The one who speaks and presses the disciples here for a more active discipleship is the Lord Jesus, the light of the world, the burning bush personified in the flesh.

Where do we see the light of the knowledge of the glory of God? In the face of Jesus Christ. He's the prophet Malachi's son of righteousness. His light shines full bright.

[37 : 31] And so must your light and my light. We are called, in the words of Paul in Ephesians 5, 8, to be children of light. Again, remember the words of Isaiah 42, 6.

Israel's mission is to be a light to the Gentiles in a dark world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.

Imagine it. Jerusalem. Imagine the temple. Imagine the feast of booths. The temple lights shining in the darkness of the night.

Think of, I don't know, the Wallace monument. Think of various beacons. Think of Edinburgh Castle as you're approaching it in the darkness of night.

It's the first thing you see. You know you're approaching Edinburgh. You know that you're getting closer to Princess Street because you see the castle. Attention grabbing monuments like that which emit light, a shining, radiating light on the darkest of nights.

[38 : 47] and Jesus is saying that is your commission. Let your light shine. Let your light shine before others that they may see your good works, that they may see what you're about and who you represent.

The Messiah you mirror as the moon radiates the light of the sun. So every first century and every 21st century world Christian is called to emit the light of the glorious gospel of Christ.

We are called to be living letters, epistles read by all men. But ah, you're saying you've mentioned good works. How do we reconcile good works with the gospel?

Is there not a hint here of the pharisaic of self-righteousness? Where is Jesus coming from? When Jesus says let your light shine before others that they may see your good works and give glory to your father who is in heaven.

Well, let's be absolutely clear that there is nothing self-righteous or pharisaic about these words.

These words, good works, are infused with grace, instilled with active faith.

[40 : 10] When you let your light shine, Jesus is saying be prepared to commit yourself to a greater exposure because when you take that next necessary step to the path of discipleship, what happens?

You become more involved. You become more proactive and energetic in the kingdom. You want to be. as you let your light shine, you want to volunteer your services.

You're not hiding anymore. You put up your hand and you say, here am I, well I do. You offer your gifts and your talents and your time and your energy because you've allowed these things to be unearthed for Christ's sake.

Hitherto you have held back on some kind of self-imposed leash, but not anymore. When you let go, what happens? Faith has a greater scope to be exercised.

We become servants, we become labourers, we become active, cheerful givers. Your goal is to work for the Lord, to engage in good works for Christ and his kingdom.

[41 : 30] That's why we're told that faith without works is dead. and there is no shortage of work and work you will if you embrace the discipleship directive.

If the bucket or the bushel is cast to one side, you will spend and you will be spent in the good work of the kingdom. And you're assured that he who began a good work and you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

and you're motivated as you contemplate this great assurance. You were taken from darkness to light and the light of life in Jesus Christ will not fuse or blow or experience an outage.

I remember the first bike my father bought me. I'm not sure that Bradley Wiggins would have done much with it but I was very proud of it and it came with a dynamo back in the day.

The more you pedaled the brighter the light. And in a sense Jesus is saying the more you and I engage with scripture the more we actively cement ourselves into the fellowship of the gospel the more we anchor ourselves to the throne of grace so your light will shine and be seen by others.

[43 : 11] In Exodus 34 you will read of how Moses' face shone the skin his face shone after he had been talking with God and it didn't go unnoticed.

We are called to live out this good work of grace in our Christian lives. And do we not aspire to do so in every aspect of our Christian lives?

Paul says to Titus and Titus 2.7 show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works. He mentions integrity and dignity and sound speech.

Such actions show, prove, highlight our commitment to Christ. And yes, whilst it's true that our good works will never earn our salvation, true faith always results in a changed life for good.

And glory is given not to you and I but to God, our heavenly father. It was Billy Graham who said, we aren't only called to be Christians, to become Christians rather, we aren't only called to become Christians, we are also called to be Christians.

[44 : 48] There's a difference. He also said that Christianity is not a spectator sport. It's something in which we become totally involved.

And God is giving us the opportunity tonight to review and if necessary revise some aspects of our Christian lives or those of us who may be at the periphery of the Christian faith.

There's a greater commitment required. The next step is necessary. Little children, John says, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

Our calling, Paul says, to the church at Philippi in the midst of a crooked and twisted 21st century world, yes, is to shine as lights in the world without blemish.

I began by quoting Henry Ford or at least I spoke a little of his legacy but the founding father of the Ford Motor Company once said there is a most intimate connection between decency and good business.

[46 : 09] He believed that the main purpose of his corporation should be to serve. To serve customers, employees and communities alike.

And may God grant each and every one of us to have this as our discipleship motto tonight. So that there might be a more visible, more active discipleship directive for us to embrace.

May God grant us to let our lights shine. And may we do that without holding back. May we do that to the glory and honour of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who is in heaven.

Amen. Let's bow our heads in prayer. Lord our God we give you thanks and praise for the discipleship directives of the gospel and grant us grace to respond with obedience.

Perhaps our hearts have been convicted tonight, challenged, stirred, warned. Give us we pray to respond with a humble submission but also with enthusiasm.

[47 : 53] Give us to see that as we let go as we say with sincerity of heart the world behind me, the cross before me, no turning back.

So we follow Jesus, we deny ourselves and we take up the cross this day and every day and give us to do just that.

we ask O Lord that you would take from us any lingering bowls or buckets. We pray that the bushel would be disposed of once and for all and give us, we pray, to stand up for Jesus as Nicodemus did.

Give us, we pray, to have the boldness of Moses and Gideon. Give us to know the joy of the Lord as our strength as Zacchaeus did and others like him.

For Jesus sake, Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit remain with us all.

[49 : 10] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.