

Sermon Matthew 5 13 20 5<sup>th</sup> S af Ep

Sermon: 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

Text: Matthew 5:13-20

Theme: We are the light of the world.

Goal: To show that we are the light of the world by God's grace, and what our tasks are.

Dear Friends,

**Introduction:** While our children stayed with us when we arrived, we visited the lighthouse at Cape Point. It's something amazing to imagine how it was built so many years ago. It is easy to reach the lighthouse now, on good roads, steps to climb the mountain and by the coach that carries us up. But when it was built, there were no facilities there. It wasn't a tourist attraction.

The lighthouse didn't grow by itself there. It was built by some people. It has a double task: It gives hope and direction to the sailors when they see the light in the darkness of the night at sea, because they know that someone is watching upon them; and it warns the sailors that there are some dangerous rocks hiding in the water. Lighthouses play a very important role in the story of ships and sailors around the world.

## **I – We are the light of the world**

Jesus says in our text: “You are the light of the world.” Like lighthouses, we are built by our Lord and Savior in strategic places around the world to shine our light and to warn people about danger. We are not lights by ourselves and we don't have the power to shine by ourselves. God made us lights by His grace when He called us to be His children by faith in Jesus, forgiving our sins and accepting us in His Kingdom. This happened in our Baptism, when the light of faith was ignited inside us, giving us the new life. In our Bible Study last Wednesday, one of the points was how we were raised up with Jesus in His resurrection to a new life in our Baptism. Jesus' death and resurrection swept out the darkness and brought the light to the world.

I don't know if you realized that this is the only comparison that Jesus applied

for Himself **and** for the Christians. He is the door, the true vine, the life, the truth, the way... but He never said that we are the door, the vine, the life, the truth and so on. But He said that **He** is the Light of the world (John 9:5), and He said that **we** are the light of the world as well! - An African scholar wrote: “The light that comes from His disciples is not their own, but shines through them on account of their remaining in the true light, Jesus, their Lord. They need to be connected with Him in the same way as a light bulb needs to be connected to a generating plant if it is to give light.” (ABC 1120).

“You are the light of the world. A city 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,” says Jesus. - A lighthouse cannot be hidden. If so, it loses its meaning. - Therefore Jesus says:

## **II - Let your light shine**

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

As I said before, the light of faith was lit in our hearts when we were baptized. . From then on, the light is shining and cannot be hidden. For us, as Christians, this is something natural, part of our new life in Christ. Christ is in us and we shine Christ's light through our deeds in our lives. But for the others, who are in darkness, our light shows that there is hope and, at the same time, warns against the danger of walking in darkness. The end will be terrible!

You can take a light, a lamp or a candle into the darkness and illuminate it; but you cannot put a darkness into the light! See how important our role is as Christians and as light to the world! It is at the same time a privilege to shine in Jesus' name, and a big responsibility as well to show to the world where the true way is to follow: Jesus. God loves the world, the sinful world, and wants to bring people back to Him in His Kingdom. Therefore He put the Christians as lights to the world, to show the way to all. God could take us to His heavenly kingdom just after our baptism, to guarantee our salvation. But He leaves us here with the task to be lights to the world, to serve our neighbor.

*“As God's adopted children we are new creatures, with the mind of our Savior. Therefore we show that new life and bring glory to our Father in heaven. An example: a child brings glory or shame to the parents through his behavior. So are we in respect to our heavenly Father.” (LCMS WM 44).*

*“Disciples who display the qualities spelled out in Matthew 5:1-12, (as we have heard last Sunday in the Beatitudes: to be meek, to be merciful, to be a peacemaker...) play an important role in the society. They will influence society and make the earth a better and more wholesome place.” (ABC 1119). “Only the Word of God, as communicated by Christians, can dissipate the darkness of sin and the satanic world. Not only does the world need to **hear** the verbal message of Christians, but it also needs to **see** the embodiment of that message in human life and actions.” (Series A, 56). “This is particularly important today when the world sees every lifestyle as an alternative style over which nobody may express any opinion. The life of God's people should be an example to the rest of the world and should bring them to Christ” (LCMS WM A 44)*

*“An example is more worthy than one thousand words” says a proverb. This can be applied to this text as well. Obviously, God’s Word is important and fundamental. But, as St. James wrote: “Faith, by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.” (James 2:17). So, as we have the Word of God, let us practice it in our daily lives.*

### **III – Light and salt**

The other statement that Jesus says in this Gospel is: “You are the salt of the earth.” Salt preserves and gives taste. So are the Christians in the world: We are here to preserve and to give taste to the world. The world is still standing because of the Christians and because of those whom God still wants to call to His Kingdom to complete the number of the saved.

The story of Abraham praying for Sodom and Gomorrah is a picture of God’s love and of God's judgment. God intended to destroy both cities because of their sinful lives. But Abraham's nephew Lot and his family were living

there. Abraham began to pray and to plead with God (Genesis 18:16-33):  
“Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it? ... And the Lord said: if I find fifty righteous people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake.” - And so Abraham pleaded if there were forty...thirty... twenty... ten...and there were no ten righteous people in the city. God took Lot and his family out of the city and destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as a strong judgment upon them and as a warning to the future generations.

There are more than ten Christians in the world and therefore God is sparing the world. He is giving chance to repentance and is calling people to His Kingdom. This is our role: to be salt and to be light, by God’s grace, and to be His instruments to preserve and to save the earth until the big Day comes, according to God's plan. Let us work while it is daylight.

Conclusion: An atheist was arguing with his Christian friend, speaking against Christianity. The Christian friend asked him: Do you believe that the world would be better or worse without the Christians? And the atheist agreed that the world would be much worse without the Christians and that the Christians play a very important role in the society. - The heavenly Father was glorified by this good testimony of that Christian.

Through the Word and the Sacrament, God gives us strength and preserves us in the true faith and in good deeds for this life and for the everlasting one. We pray after the Lord's Supper: *“In your mercy strengthen us by what we have received, that we may grow in our faith in You and in love for one another.”*

May God's mercy shine in us daily and through us to our families and to our neighbors, so that our heavenly Father would be glorified and praised for ever! In Jesus’ name. Amen.

Pastor Carlos Walter Winterle  
Cape Town, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2011

