

Epiphany 5 / February 8, 2026

Matthew 5:16

"In the same way let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

Let Your Light Shine and Give Glory to the Father

Light and darkness are common motifs in the bible to express good and bad, ignorance and knowledge, blessing and curse, to name a few. Jesus opens the eyes of a man blind from birth and for the first time he can see the light of day. Most importantly, Jesus gives sight to the spiritually blind so we can see Him as our God and Saviour. In the gospel of John, Jesus is described as *"the true light who enlightens everyone."* Jesus enlightens our sin darkened minds with the knowledge of God as loving Father. That's not how people naturally see God. People have typically seen God or the gods as angry, vengeful, capricious, uncaring and just downright malevolent. The gods of the human religious imagination demanded the most unholy human sacrifices, including children. Examples of this can be found all over the world in civilizations that never had contact with each other. In the letter to the Colossians Jesus is described as *"the image of the invisible God."* In the gospel of John, Jesus tells the disciples that whoever has seen Him has seen the Father, *"the Father and I are one."* Jesus came into the world to enlighten our understanding of God, calling Him 'Father' and making Him known as love.

Prayer is an important part of religious expression no matter how God is worshiped or conceived by the human imagination. Jesus taught prayer in the 'Sermon on the Mount'. He said, *"When you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think they will be heard for their many words."* The Gentiles in the ancient near east did not think of their gods as being watchful or overly concerned about them, at least not for their benefit. The gods of the ancient near east were quick to take offense and speedy in executing vengeance. When their devotees came seeking their blessing and benefit, the gods had to be enticed, wooed and convinced to take notice and to help. In the book of Kings, the prophets of the fertility god Baal danced, shouted, whipped and cut themselves in an attempt to get their god's attention. Kings says, *"There was no voice, and no one answered."* When Elijah spoke, the Lord answered immediately and decisively. The Lord answered, because He loved His people and was attentive to their needs. Jesus said, 'Do not pray with the heart of pagans, hoping to be heard, *"for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him."* God knows our needs, because He loves

us. God knows our greatest need is forgiveness of our sins and healing in relationship with Him. He shines the light of His love in forgiveness and healing onto us through Jesus. He shines the light of His love in forgiveness and healing in Jesus onto others through believers who shine the light of His love on them. Jesus says to us, 'Let your light shine so that others may see, believe and give glory to the Father in heaven.'

There are two kinds of spiritual light in the scriptures; the inner light of human reason and God's light that illuminates those who believe in Him. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus says two things regarding light. First, He says, "*Let your light shine*" and later, "*If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness.*" How can light be darkness? Light is darkness when it is human reason, blinded by sin to the light of the glory of God. Light is darkness when our thinking is turned away from God and His ways to our selves and our wants and desires. Light is darkness when people envision God and the gods as capricious, selfish, vengeful beings; as did the people of the ancient near east and people all over the world in ancient times. Light is darkness when people commit ritual murder, including the murder of children, thinking they are offering a service to God or the gods. The light of human reason is darkened by sin to the knowledge of God as He is in His being and as He reveals Himself in Christ Jesus.

Jesus comes into the world, into human lives, into our lives, to enlighten our spiritual darkness about the nature of God. Jesus shows that God is good, kind and loving of all that His hands have made. Jesus comes into the world to dispel the darkness of sin that blinds our eyes to the nature of God. Jesus comes to open our eyes to see, first the darkness of our sins, that through faith He may open our eyes to see the light of God's love in forgiveness and healing in Him through the sacrifice of His cross. In the gospel of John, it says of Jesus, "*The Light shines in the darkness.*" The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness of people was so great they did not comprehend it. In their spiritual darkness many people resisted Jesus, understanding neither Him nor the Father who sent Him. But the light continues to shine in the darkness and in the lives of some, overcomes the darkness. John says, "*But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the power to become the children of God.*" Jesus shines His light into the hearts of those, who by the word and working of the Holy Spirit, believe and receive Him as their Saviour. Jesus calls us, who have received Him and believed in His Name, to shine His light into the lives of others, so they too may see, believe, receive and give glory to the

Father who sent Him and who loves us. Let your light shine so that others may see Jesus, receive Him as their Saviour and give glory to the Father.

We shine our light by making Jesus known as the Saviour of all people. He is the Saviour of all people by virtue of His humanity, His fulfillment of the righteous requirements of the law and by His sacrificial death to atone for the sin of the world. We shine our light by making Jesus known as the Saviour, especially and truly of those who believe. Jesus is the Saviour of those who believe. It is through faith that Jesus enters the human heart, dispelling the darkness of sin and disbelief. It is through faith, inspired and created by the Holy Spirit that people receive the knowledge of God as loving Father. People naturally think they become children of the light, no matter how they conceive of the light, by doing things that make them worthy of being children of the light. The Jews of Jesus day apparently believed they were children of the light, children of the heavenly Father, through birth and by obedience to the laws God gave their ancestors through Moses. They were legally children of the heavenly Father through birth into the covenant community. They were truly children of the heavenly Father and children of the light, through faith in the promises God made in the covenant. Faith made them children of the heavenly Father, children of the light. Faith in Jesus now makes people children of the heavenly Father. In Him and through faith in His name we are children of the light.

The scribes and Pharisees were very diligent in seeking a righteousness that would make them acceptable to God. It was a righteousness based on obedience to the laws of God, not on faith in the promises of God. There is nothing wrong with the laws of God or with being obedient to His laws. They are good and holy. They are expressions of the holiness of the Lord. It is good to walk in the light of the law. The psalmist sang, *"Your word O Lord is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."* However, God did not give His law that we would become righteous through it. To make this point Jesus said, *"Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."* We need a different righteousness to enter the kingdom of heaven. We need the righteousness of God that comes through Jesus and is received through faith in Him. St. Paul, the former Pharisee, knew exactly what kind of righteousness Jesus was speaking about. In the letter to the Romans he wrote, *"But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Christ Jesus for all who believe."* He tried a human righteousness based on obedience to the law and realized its futility.

He received the righteousness that gives peace, forgiveness and life with God when He received Jesus into His heart through faith. Jesus is our righteousness. We let our light shine by making Jesus and His righteousness known through the words and ways of our lives, making Him known as the Saviour of all people, especially of those who believe.

In the gospel of John, Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* Jesus enlightens our darkness with the gospel of forgiveness and the knowledge of God as our loving heavenly Father. Jesus said, *"Let your light shine so that others may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven."* Our light is the light of Christ shining in our hearts. We shine the light of Jesus by walking in love as God defines love in the commandments. The two great commandments; 'You shall love the Lord your God and your neighbour as yourself' are fulfilled in love, Jesus' love shining through us. The scribes and Pharisees did things that expressed their sin darkened human righteousness, so that people would praise them. We do things that God considers good, that express His righteousness, so people will praise Him. We do things that God considers good; loving Him and loving others, in order that people would see Jesus shining in us and come into the Light of the knowledge of God through faith in Him. Let your light shine that people may see Jesus through you and come to know God as their loving Father through faith in Him. God grant this in our lives. In Jesus' Name. Amen.