

City on a Hill, Part 1: Going Public, 2/3/17

Each February, we intentionally focus on World Missions. In doing so, we highlight local missions opportunities that we support or sponsor: Sunday Breakfast Mission, Urban Promise, The Door of Hope, DE Prison Outreach, ESL to name a few and encourage you to get involved. And each year we highlight global missions and bring in a guest speaker. This year that guest is **Raphael Anzenberger** and we are excited to have him and Karen and their family with us this month. (Son-in-law of George and Nita Berghane). Raphael Anzenberger is a French evangelist, church planter, and author. His newest role is as the director of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries for French speaking countries. Raphael has a passion to raise a new generation of Christian world changers and to equip the church to bring the light of the gospel in a secularized culture and he will be our guest preacher next week. We invited Raphael this year specifically because of his expertise on equipping the local church to be a light...because we saw the need to focus our theme for missions month not so much on those Jesus has sent as lights to the ends of the earth, but those Jesus has sent in the seats right now as lights to our own community. Our families, our offices, our neighborhoods and our city.

This was driven by some statistics I read recently. Less than 70% of Christians believe we have a responsibility to share our faith with others. This is down from 90% 20 years ago. **Only 30% have shared their faith with at least 1 person in the last 6 months.** Citing reasons why Christians don't share their faith more- Fear that they may offend someone or be rejected, others say that their faith is personal and private. Others say that they wouldn't know what to say or how to deal with objections. Which makes sense because **Only 3% of churches have equipped their people to share their faith.**

This is what this missions month will be all about. Dealing with these fears, equipping us to carry our faith into the world in a series called **City on a Hill**, which comes directly from the Scripture reading we want to examine today from Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:13-16.

Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ 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. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

From this passage we want to answer the question: **How do we let our light shine in the world?**
4 Points: must **#1 Recognize the World's dire need for light.** If you have ever been in utter darkness for any length of time it has an incredibly disorienting and dislocating affect. We sleep with blackout curtains...I like it pitch black. Sometimes I have to get up in the middle of the night to use the bathroom and usually it happens on the way back to bed as I am groping around, I inevitably trip over the laundry basket at the end of the bed, or catch my thigh on the corner of the bed. Jesus is saying that the natural state of humanity is spiritual darkness, groping, disoriented and in dire need for light.

At the turn of the twentieth century there was great optimism about humanity's own ability to bring its own kind of light to the world. *Can we doubt that presently our race will more than realize our boldest imaginations, that it will achieve unity and peace, and that our children will live in a world made more splendid and lovely than any palace or garden that we know, going on from strength to strength in an ever-widening circle of achievement? What man has done, the little triumphs of his present state... form but the prelude to the things that man has yet to do.*

-H.G.Wells

Wells saw the self-salvation, the redemption of humanity just around the corner. 20 Years Later, after the devastation of two world wars, he writes. *Homo sapiens as he is pleased to call himself is played out. His depravity has come near to breaking my spirit.*

The popular Band The 1975, lamenting the darkness of the world- I'd love it if we made it. *Access all the applications, that are hardening positions based on miscommunication, Truth is only hearsay, We're just left to decay, Modernity has failed us.*

The hope of modernity, through the advancement of technology has not delivered on what it promised, it is actually just caused more hatred and decay. These are not Christians saying this. The world recognizes its own darkness. Humanity has brought failed attempt after failed attempt to save and fix itself with its own version of counterfeit light. But the Bible tells us what we know deep down. **Blank Slide** The world is broken, and has been broken from the first fall of mankind in the garden, leaving mankind groping in decay and darkness in desperate need of spiritual vitality. Do you see the world through the eyes of Jesus? If you walk into room with all the lights on, you won't turn on your flashlight. It's only when we see the world for what it is that we will shine bright.

#2 We must go to the source of all light. Now Jesus is going to talk about how we are called to be light in this darkness of humanity. But before we make ourselves the heroes of the story, I believe it's critical to put Jesus' words in a larger theological context. Otherwise we are in danger of thinking that if we just are kinder and love each other more that we can fix everything. That's not Christianity, that's humanism.

Before Jesus ever calls us light, Jesus is called the light in John 1. Jesus breaks into the darkness of humanity as the light. What does it mean that he is light? **Light exposes what is hidden.** He exposes the reality of the sin in us that loves to hide in darkness and exposes our complete inability to fix ourselves, he pointed to the deep problem of our hearts- rebellion against God and selfishness. Light means- **that he is gloriously good and completely pure and beautiful.** In him dwells no darkness. Light means- **Guides us to truth and reality,** like a flashlight leading you onto the path out of the dark woods. Jesus says I am the way out of the darkness.

The light Jesus shines is the Gospel: **The gospel is that our sin has left us in darkness and spiritual decay. We are separated from God who is pure light because of our darkness.** But

because of his great love God sent the light of the world, Jesus Christ to save us. He did this not only by living as perfect light, pure and never sinning, but by absorbing all our darkness in his body. All our sin. He took all of it and kill it through his sacrificial death in our place. But death could not defeat him. He rose again to life so that we too can dwell in his light for eternity as his children. Now we can live the rest of our lives not for the darkness but in the light of his love and grace that changes us from the inside out.

The point I'm making is that the light we have to offer other people is not merely being a good person or trying to be loving and accepting of others. Great, yes that's important. But the light is a PERSON and what he has done. It is Jesus. **We become light when Jesus ignites our lives, setting our hearts aflame, turning to him as the source of light.** Have you been lit by Jesus? Summarized in John 1.

John 1:9, 12-13

⁹The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. ¹²To all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— ¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

#3 Carry the LIGHT of Jesus in the World

¹⁴"You are the light of the world. Let your light shine before men..."

Christians- "Little Christs" Just as Jesus is the light, when we are lit by him, we become the light. Just as Jesus' Light exposes darkness as we live differently. When your life shines, when it comes into contact with others, the beauty of your life shows up what is there in darkness. Just by being there, just by showing up, you reveal the dishonesty in the business, the gossip in the office, the racism in the neighborhood, the corruption in the political, promiscuity in the party. We must guide people to the light of Jesus.

We are ¹⁴a city built on a hill that cannot be hidden.

When you travel up Jerusalem from the Galilee region your ears pop as you climb elevation Up to Jerusalem, because Jerusalem was literally built as a city on a hill. In ancient times before electricity of course, The light from that city would penetrate the darkness for miles and miles. The imagine here is that the community of Jesus, the churches in Wilmington, should not just shine light in their church buildings, but that the light of Jesus should shine for miles and miles...into our communities, office complexes, homes. Everywhere.

One for Wilmington's mission to be a city on a hill in Wilmington. Derrick Parks says, What if Wilmington goes from being called "MurderTown" to "Mercy Town"

#4 Overcome your Fear of Shining your Light.

A city built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Neither 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.

What holds us back? Why do we hide it under a bushel? Like the song goes...

1. That's not my personality. I'm an introvert, I'm not good with people, I just wouldn't know where to start.

There are a handful of people in this room who for whom walking up to a stranger and starting a spiritual conversation is not particularly difficult. Maybe because of practice, or their personality, or they have a gift. But for virtually everyone else, that is not how it is going to happen. But it can happen through relationships you build and shared experiences you have, by living differently and by being available to others in need. But do not let your personality or awkwardness be the excuse for never opening your mouth to anyone. The greatest barrier for most of us is our comfort. We must push through that if we are going to be light.

2. Let the professionals do it. Nate, that's why we hired you! Let the evangelists do that. I agree with Chuck Colson- The world is not changed through big evangelistic rallies and campaigns but through backyards and BBQs.

If you had a power outage in your neighborhood and your neighbors all lost electricity...but let's say you were a prepper. YOU were ready! You had tons of candles, flash lights, an extra generator and you knew that they were in utter darkness. You wouldn't call on someone else across town, you would walk over! You are the closest light of Jesus to your neighbors.

There are places where I can't go that you can. I don't have access to the 17th floor of the Hercules building...but maybe you go there every day! I don't have access to the football team or marching band, but you do! Or the Starbucks, or the Wilmington Moms group that you are a part of...Can you imagine if I just showed up at the daycare you work at and Hi everyone, my name is Nate. Hi do you have a child here? Uh, no but I just want to tell you about Jesus. Can you all circle up for a second, criss-cross apple sauce? Sir we are going to have to call the police. Or if I just jump behind the counter at the bank you work at? That wouldn't go well for anyone. But you are there. And Jesus has a light there. YOU!

The tradition of the Greek Orthodox on Christmas eve is to take the light with you, out the door into the car, and home and then to your home and light up the home.