

“Let God’s Light Shine”

NT: 1 Peter 2:9
Matthew 5:14-16
Acts 13:47-49

Did you know steeples, like the new one we have on this building, newly dedicated this morning, and the Holy Bible, the inspired Word of God, have something in common? Steeples and the Bible have similar purposes. Each stand to point people and lead people closer to God. Each provides direction, guidance, and identity.

First, let us investigate steeples.

The early church believed that the church could communicate the truth of the Bible in pictures and symbols to those who were illiterate. The goal was not to create idols in which to worship, but to provide visual reminders and inspiration to encourage the worship of God more. To do this, storied stained-glass windows began to appear as well as the construction of steeples.

Early church architects designed grand cathedrals and churches that had intricate, soaring steeples. Why? We believe for two reasons. One is because of what I just mentioned. The steeple was believed to help the congregant in his or her spiritual mindset. The visual presence and verticality complement the mission of the church to look up and reach up and to maintain a heavenly frame of mind. The steeple also helps the architect with a design feature that enhances the overall harmony of the architecture. The vertical lift gives the architecture a more graceful and pleasing look. It is often believed among architects that the shorter the building, the more squat the appearance; the taller the building, the more graceful it becomes.

Interesting Note: Tall steeples were also believed to inhibit evil spirits from entering the church which many Christians believed plagued church buildings. Even the extremely steep roofs, sharp steeples, and gargoyles were added to churches in great numbers by parishioners hoping to drive away evil creatures.

With the symbolism of spiritual inspiration and architectural harmony, steeple towers often housed bells. The church bells were useful for safety and security. The bells helped to communicate community emergencies like fires. When necessary, the steeple bells also served to call town hall meetings for the community. The sound of the bells made it easy to find the church and the height of the steeple allowed people to see where the church was located, even if they were new to the town. For the sound of the bells to be heard, the steeple had to rise above all the other buildings in town so that the sound would not be obstructed.

Now, let us investigate the Holy Bible.

Psalm 119:105 says, "God's word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." This is a metaphorical statement meant to emphasize the wisdom that comes from following God's instruction. Historically, the mission of handing out Bibles to people was an effective way to share the good news of Jesus Christ. The good news of Christ's love for us is such that everyone on earth should know that God loves them and that they are important. This is why the printed word was so valuable and why scripture began to be translated in a variety of languages. Without this mission, we might not have the English versions of the Bible we do. The Holy Bible remains the number one book in the world printed and shared.

Likewise, today, the gift of a bible, or in our case a series of bibles designed for certain development stages, is for the purpose of guiding, directing, and helping each reader identify more with God, understand their purpose and worth as a child of God, come to believe and have faith in God, and learn how to live a more Christlike life. I have shared the quote before and I think it is fitting for us anytime, "The bible that is falling apart usually belongs to someone who is not."

Today, our celebration of the steeple and the bibles symbolize our call to let God's light shine!!! The New Testament has at least three texts that point us in that direction. If you just got a new bible, you can try to find these texts and highlight them.

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

(1 Peter 2:9)

"You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, 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 in heaven."

(Matthew 5:14-16)

"For so the Lord has commanded us, saying, 'I have set you to be a light for the Gentiles, so that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.' When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and praised the word of the Lord; and as many as had been destined for eternal life became believers. Thus, the word of the Lord spread through the region."

(Acts 13:47-49)

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we have a call from God to let God's light shine in us, through us, and around us, for all to see and know the wonders of God's love.

Susie and her mother were visiting Grandma. Susie had learned a new song — at least it was new to her. Over and over again she sang: "This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine." "I like that little song, Susie," Grandma said, "where did you learn it?" "At Sunday school,"

answered Susie. "Well, well," said Grandma, "now I'll sing a song for you that I learned in Sunday school when I was a little girl." And Grandma sang just as lovely a song as Susie did. This was her song:

"Jesus bids us shine with a pure, clear light, like a little candle burning in the night; In this world of darkness, so we must shine— You in your small corner, and I in mine."

These songs tell us that those who have accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior should be a light shining out to others. Our light doesn't have to be a big one. Even just a small light looks bright when all around it is dark. If we let even a little of God's light shine out in our lives, it will be bright in this dark, sinful world around us. The song the grandmother sang continues:

"Jesus bids us shine first of all for Him; Well He sees and knows it if our light grows dim: He looks down from heaven, to see us shine— You in your small corner, and I in mine."

"Jesus bids us shine next for all around; Many kinds of darkness in this world abound, Sin and want and sorrow; so we must shine— You in your small corner, and I in mine."

Let us make no mistake. There is a need for God's light to shine.

In his sermon called *Keep the Light Burning*, Darren Rogers offers, "Benjamin Franklin wanted to interest the people in Philadelphia in street lighting. He did not call a town meeting nor try to persuade the people by talking about it. He acted upon what he considered a good idea. He hung a beautiful lantern on a long bracket in front of his house. He kept the glass polished and carefully trimmed and lit the wick every evening at the approach of dusk. The lamp helped the people see the pavement ahead; made them feel more secure at night. Others began placing lights in front of their houses. Soon Philadelphia recognized the need for street lights.

What does this tell us? Be the one today to light up your neighborhood with the light of life. Let it shine. Let your light shine TODAY!"

To close, I would like to offer a reflective story about when we are to let God's light shine.

A young man who had recently heard the good news of the gospel came to believe in Christ. A little while after this, a teacher asked him: "What have you done for Christ since you believed?" He replied: "Oh, I'm a learner."

"Well," said the teacher, "when you light a candle do you light it to make the candle more comfortable, or to have it give light?" He replied, "To give light."

"Do you expect it to give light after it is half burned, or when you first light it?" He replied, "As soon as I light it."

"Very well," was the reply, "go thou and do likewise... begin at once."

(From a sermon by Jeff Strite, Top Models, 5/20/2012)

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, let God's light shine! Hide it under a bushel, NO! I am going to let God's light shine and I look forward to you joining me!