

First Presbyterian Church of Birmingham
“Alleluia People: Audacious Dreams”
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Matthew 5:14-16

First, I want to take a poll. How many of you have been woken up due to light pouring into your bedroom due to a very mean person drawing the curtains to wake you up? A quite painful experience for all of us. No one enjoys this experience and their first reaction after seeing the light isn't to rise and shine and give God the glory.

We hear the word “light” all the time when referring to Jesus and other miracles that happen in the bible. This has created the thought that the light within can only be divine, but it's more than that. The shining of light in our own lives is what sets us apart from others, our gift to the world. Whether that light is through an art form, or a particular work ethic or even the ability to be approachable, to counsel others, like our Stephen ministers.

Finding your light for the world is not easy, especially when it seems like everyone else has already found theirs. I go to a high school where seventy percent of the seniors go to the University of Michigan or Michigan State, and it appears we will have plenty of doctors and engineers in the future based on what everyone wants to pursue in college. And good for them, but since I don't fit into that group and my talent isn't in those areas it makes finding my light a little harder. I have always loved acting, singing and dancing, the whole nine yards, but never considered it my light or my God-given gift until a couple months ago.

I was speaking with a friend about emotion because we had a big psychology test the next hour on that very subject. The conversation quickly went from discussing Piaget and Freud to what happiness is. Neither of us could come up with an emotional response to this, only a biological definition based on chemicals and such. Then my friend asked me, “Where are you happiest?” Another answer I did not have. I can be happy for all sorts of reasons and anywhere. Then he said to me, “How about the theatre?” I said to him, “I feel purpose when I'm acting. I know that what I am doing will be able to make a difference in someone's life if only for a second -- to give them the opportunity to look inside themselves.” My friend says, “Are you happy when you do that?” And I said, “Okay I get it, be quiet.”

I believe God wants everyone to have a calling, a gift to share, a light inside them and to bring it out one must be honest with themselves and realize when they are happiest and when they have a defined purpose. Those that have found their light in the world, keep doing you and try to increase your range of light to others so you can impact and give the feeling of God's light.

But what about those of us that still haven't realized our gift, our one thing that we can light up the world with? Or what if our gifts have changed over the years? I don't think that's a problem as long as

you don't stand still. Your light to the world is given to you from God to give to the rest of the world. I like to think of it as a duet between God and a person, which together they can build off of each other until that gift is fully realized. A person's light is created with God. God doesn't just hand you this gift and says go have a good time. No, it takes constant work and introspection to shape the gift you are given.

It is easier to just hide under that bushel basket and not have to take the risks that go along with pursuing your light. I have spent an entire day watching Netflix and shopping online for shoes instead of learning my lines or doing my biology homework because it can be so nice. But every time I say "I'll do it later," I'm straying farther and farther from my goals and the light that was placed in me.

It is easy to see others light in the world because their talents seem to shine brighter than others. But that's the world we live in that creates these idols and people that seem to out shine everyone else because of what they do or where they went to college. God didn't intend for us to realize our talents and throw them away because of the odds of success or the average salary of that job. God wanted us to pursue our passions and see them out until each person can look back and be proud of their life.

I know this sounds like a typical "get out into the world and do what you love speech to high schoolers," but why I am here today is because many of you have not heard this message for a while, I need to tell you that you are just as capable of finding your passion now as you were back in high school. Every person deserves to find that one driving force that makes them happiest. God will not give up, so neither should you.

When those blinds are opened and the light pours in, we pull our covers over our face because we fear having to face the light. The light, especially through Jesus, is the truth, but I will say it is easy to fear. John 3:19 says "Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead." The light given to each and every one of us can be scary because there might not be a lot of jobs in that career or we may have dismissed our talents as just hobbies we used to do. In this meditation I have listed excuses that we use to keep us where we are and not take the risk to do what we are called by God to do. Excuses will always be an option but never a solution to finding our purpose.

Accept your gifts and spread them to the world.

So, I challenge each of you to look inside yourself and find that one thing that makes you tick. What is your one passion that when you do it you lose track of time? Where do you see the largest impact of what you do in others' lives? The answer to these questions will lead you to amplify your God-given light so you can share it with others.

Let us pray.

Dear God, thank you for being with us today in this beautiful place of worship and always with us.

Whenever we are lost, you bring us back and whenever we are scared, you show us the light. Please guide us to find our light in the world, so we can use our gifts to light up the worlds of others.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.