

“Let your light shine”
Westminster Presbyterian Church
February 5, 2023 – Scout Sunday

Isaiah 58:6-9 and Matthew 5:13-16

by Rev. Patrick D. Heery

Note: In the midst of sermon writing, the church computer shut down and wouldn't restart, losing the sermon and the research. It's currently being repaired. So, I decided to preach from an outline, extemporaneously, trusting the Holy Spirit. Below is the outline, and it's fairly detailed, so hopefully it will still give you a sense for the sermon.

- I. The Dark
 - A. Most of us, we don't know real dark. There's always some light on at night.
 - B. Jesus knew real dark. The night was dangerous.
 - C. Now imagine someone lights a candle, a lamp. Light floods the area. Suddenly you can see. You feel safe.
 - D. Maybe you've had that experience camping. It's night, and you turn on your flashlight.

- II. You Are Light
 - A. Jesus says you are that light. You are the light shining in the dark. You are the one who can make people feel safe, who can reveal truth, who can help.

- III. Don't Hide, Shine
 - A. Jesus then says that light is meant to shine, not hide. What good is light if hidden under a basket? It doesn't even benefit you, let alone others. Light is only light when it's shared. I can't keep light to myself; it by nature spreads, diffuses.
 - B. [Put a hand over a flashlight.]
 - C. God has given you a gift. It's not meant to be hoarded. It's meant to be shared. Pass it on. God's trying to shine that light through you so that it will brighten the worlds of those around you—as well as your world. Jesus says, let your light shine.
 - D. If you have truth, speak it. If you see someone in need, help. If you see something that's wrong, say something, do something. If you have a passion, follow it. If you have a story, share it. If you have God, let that light shine.

- IV. The Unknown Scout (fog in London, scout led him to his destination, refused a tip, said he was just doing his daily good turn)
 - A. Brought alive the light in that man, like a candle lighting another.

- V. This Is Hard
 - A. It's easier and more comfortable to hide. Safer. I know. I have often hidden my light. And though I let it shine a lot more now than I used to, I still get this wrong probably as much as I get it right. You worry about what others will think or say. You worry that if you speak your mind, you might make a mistake, put your foot in your mouth. You worry that you're not good enough. I get all that.

- B. But I can say this: when I get it right, when I dare to shine my light, I am glad I did. It's worth it. Because those are the only times I am really me. Those are the only times I am in sync with God, and there is a power, and a truth, and a beauty, flowing through me that's bigger than me. And I may not save the world, but I can see how it makes a difference.
- C. When I was a kid, I hid a lot. I didn't speak up. I didn't let my light shine. Scouts helped change that. Two memories stick out: (1) leading prayer and (2) advocating for the younger Scout.

VI. You Have a Light in You

- A. You have courage you have yet to imagine. You have intelligence, creativity, love, kindness, strength just boiling up inside of you, waiting to burst. God is in you. And you are amazing.
- B. It's so important that we take the time to say this to each other, and to behave accordingly. Especially for our children. They say for every negative thing a child or an adult hears, they've got to hear ten positive things just to make up for it. Now there are a lot of our children out there, and adults too, who are just pummeled daily with the negative.
- C. Kids become what we say they are. If you tell a kid they're bad, that's how to come to define themselves. If you tell a child they are light, that becomes their reality.
- D. Scouting tells children they are light. The church tells children they are light.
- E. One of the best ways you can let your light shine is to tell others they are light too. Tell them they are children of God, precious and loved—and act accordingly. Tell them they are capable of great things, of courage and beauty and wisdom and goodness. And help remove the bushels, the things that would get in the way of that light, the voices that would silence the light.
- F. One candle to the next and the next and the next, until we have a bonfire of light. Amen.