Bethel South Sermon Notes – *“Let Your Light Shine”*

Speaker: Ps Mike Gowans
Series: The Kindness Conspiracy
Scripture: Matthew 5:14–16, John 8:12, Genesis 1:3, John 1:4–9, 2 Corinthians 4:6–7, Philippians 2:14–15, Ephesians 5:8, Luke 7:47

Main Idea

Jesus never called His followers to complain about the darkness in the world. He called us to shine His light in the middle of it. As believers, we are not the source of that light—Jesus is. But when we receive His light, reflect His character, and release His love through intentional acts of kindness, we make the invisible love of God visible to the world around us.

God didn't save us simply to bring us out of darkness. He saved us to send us into the world carrying His light.

You Are the Light of the World [Matthew 5:14–16]

What if the greatest problem in our world isn't how dark things have become, but how many Christians have hidden their light?

We often complain about the condition of our culture, government, schools, and communities.

But Jesus never commanded us to complain about the darkness.

He commanded us to shine.

To illustrate this, Ps Mike had the congregation turn off the sanctuary lights and begin turning on their phone flashlights.

At first, the room was dark. But as more people turned on their lights, the entire environment began to change.

The darkness didn't have to agree to leave. It simply couldn't remain the same when light appeared.

Light changes the environment by simply showing up.

Jesus declared that His followers are the light of the world.

Notice that He didn't say we should *try* to become light someday when we're spiritually mature enough.

He said, **"You are the light of the world."**

This is more than a command. It's an identity.

As children of God, we are called to carry the presence and character of Jesus wherever we go.

The question we must ask ourselves is:

When I walk into a room, does the presence of Jesus in my life make a difference?

Does something change when we enter our workplaces, homes, schools, or communities?

Do hurting people experience the love of Jesus through us?

The Conspiracy of Kindness

Throughout this series, we've learned that:

- **Kindness begins with seeing people.** We cannot minister to people we refuse to notice.
- **Jesus moves toward sinners.** He didn't avoid broken people; He intentionally loved them.
- **We are called to stay salty.** Salt influences what it touches, and believers are called to influence the world around them.
- **We are called to let our light shine.** Our kindness makes the invisible love of God visible.

Salt influences what it touches. Light illuminates what it reaches.

Jesus calls us to be both.

Ps Mike shared three words that summarize how we can live out this calling:

Receive. Reflect. Release.

1. Receive the Light **[John 8:12]**

Before Jesus called His followers the light of the world, He declared something about Himself:

"I am the light of the world."

In John 8:12, Jesus explains that those who follow Him will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

This reveals an important truth:

We cannot give what we have not received.

Jesus is the source of the light.

We are called to carry it.

We never become the source ourselves.

The Light Throughout Scripture

Ps Mike highlighted a progression through Scripture that reveals God's plan to bring light into darkness.

[Genesis 1:3] — God Speaks Light into Creation

In the beginning, darkness covered the earth.

Then God spoke, and light appeared.

One of God's first recorded acts in creation was bringing light into darkness.

[John 1:4–9] — Jesus Is the True Light

John describes Jesus as the true light who came into the world.

In Him was life, and that life was the light of humanity.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

[Matthew 5:14] — Believers Become Carriers of the Light

Jesus then declares that His followers are the light of the world.

This reveals a beautiful progression:

- In Genesis, God says, **"Let there be light."**
- In John, Jesus declares, **"I am the light."**
- In Matthew, Jesus tells His followers, **"You are the light."**

God's plan has always been to bring light into darkness.

And now He desires to accomplish that through His people.

The Sun and the Moon

Ps Mike compared our relationship with Jesus to the sun and the moon.

The sun produces its own light.

The moon does not produce light; it reflects the light of the sun.

Yet even on a dark night, the moon's reflected light can illuminate the landscape.

This is a picture of our relationship with Christ.

Jesus is the true source of light, and we are called to reflect His glory.

The closer we walk with Jesus, the more clearly His character should be seen in us.

His love should become evident in our love.

His compassion should become evident in our compassion.

His kindness should become evident in our kindness.

His mercy should begin to flow through our lives.

Ordinary People, Extraordinary Treasure [2 Corinthians 4:6–7]

Paul explains that God has caused His light to shine in our hearts and that we carry this treasure in jars of clay.

We are ordinary people carrying an extraordinary treasure.

The power isn't found in the vessel.

The power is found in the treasure within the vessel.

We don't have to be the most talented, educated, or knowledgeable people to reflect Jesus.

We don't need to know every Bible verse or have every answer.

We simply need to be willing to let Him shine through us.

But before we can reflect His light, we must first receive it.

We cannot reflect Jesus if we don't know Him.

The first step is surrendering our lives to the One who is the light of the world.

2. Reflect the Light **[Matthew 5:14–16]**

Jesus uses two illustrations to describe His followers:

A city on a hill and a lamp placed on a stand.

Both communicate the same truth:

Light was never meant to be hidden.

Imagine buying a beautiful lamp, bringing it home, turning it on, and then covering it with a blanket.

That would defeat the entire purpose of the lamp.

Yet spiritually, Christians sometimes do the same thing.

We gather on Sundays, worship, pray, hear God's Word, and encounter His presence.

But when Monday arrives, we cover the light.

We return to our workplaces and begin talking, complaining, and behaving just like everyone else.

We overlook hurting people.

We ignore opportunities to encourage others.

We feel the Holy Spirit prompting us to act, but we talk ourselves out of it.

A hidden light cannot help a hurting world.

What Covers Our Light?

Ps Mike identified several things that can prevent us from reflecting Jesus effectively.

Fear

We worry about what other people will think.

We allow the fear of rejection or judgment to keep us from sharing our faith and demonstrating God's love.

Busyness

We become so consumed with our schedules and responsibilities that we fail to notice the needs around us.

Selfishness

We prioritize our own comfort and convenience over the needs of others.

Spiritual Complacency

We become comfortable receiving God's blessings without sharing those blessings with anyone else.

God's goodness was never meant to stop with us.

We are blessed to be a blessing.

Our Actions Make God's Love Visible **[Matthew 5:16]**

Jesus tells us to let our light shine so that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

Notice the progression:

People see our good works.

They experience the influence of God's light.

They glorify our Father in heaven.

Jesus connects our light to our actions.

Not simply what we say, but what we do.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus demonstrated the love of God through practical action.

When people were hungry, He fed them.

When people were sick, He healed them.

When people were rejected, He welcomed them.

When He encountered sinners, He offered grace and called them to repentance.

Jesus didn't merely talk about God's love.

He demonstrated it.

Our kindness makes the invisible love of God visible.

Kindness Creates Opportunities for the Gospel

[Romans 2:4; Titus 3:4–5]

Romans teaches that God's kindness leads people toward repentance.

Titus reminds us that God's kindness and love appeared and that He saved us according to His mercy.

This is why intentional kindness matters.

Kindness isn't a substitute for the gospel.

Kindness creates opportunities to share the gospel.

Sometimes the first sermon someone encounters isn't preached from a pulpit.

It's demonstrated through an act of kindness.

Someone notices them when everyone else walks past.

Someone helps them during a difficult season.

Someone offers to pray when they're hurting.

And that person begins to wonder why anyone would care.

Those moments can open the door to share the love of Jesus.

Our actions should make people curious about the God we serve.

Shining Is Not Showing Off **[Matthew 5:16; Matthew 6:1]**

In Matthew 5, Jesus tells His followers to let people see their good works.

But in Matthew 6, He warns against doing righteous deeds simply to be noticed by others.

These teachings aren't contradictory.

They reveal the difference between our actions and our motives.

In Matthew 5, the goal is for people to see God.

In Matthew 6, the danger is wanting people to see us.

The issue isn't whether someone notices our kindness.

The issue is who receives the glory.

We don't help people so they'll think we're amazing.

We help people because Jesus is amazing.

We don't serve to build our reputation.

We serve to reveal His character.

We don't shine to make our own name known.

We shine to make His name known.

The greatest compliment a Christian can receive isn't "You're such a good person," but "I can see Jesus in you."

The Darker the World, the Brighter We Should Shine

[Philippians 2:14–15]

Paul instructs believers to do everything without grumbling or complaining so that they may shine like stars in the world.

Our attitudes matter.

When we join in with constant negativity, criticism, and complaining, we begin to blend into the darkness around us.

But when our lives are marked by gratitude, generosity, joy, and hope, we stand out.

Paul didn't tell believers to retreat from a difficult culture.

He called them to shine within it.

A small candle becomes especially noticeable in a dark room.

The candle hasn't become bigger or more powerful.

The darkness simply makes its light more visible.

In the same way, we shouldn't become discouraged by the condition of the world.

We should recognize the opportunity.

- When the world becomes more hateful, we become more loving.
- When the world becomes more selfish, we become more generous.
- When the world becomes more divided, we become peacemakers.
- When people become more hopeless, we demonstrate the hope we have in Christ.

Darkness is not an excuse for the Church to retreat. It's the reason for the Church to shine.

3. Release the Light **[Ephesians 5:8]**

Paul reminds believers that we were once in darkness, but now we are light in the Lord.

Therefore, we are called to walk as children of light.

The light of Jesus was never meant to stop with us.

We must pass it on.

Remember How Much You've Been Forgiven **[Luke 7:47]**

Jesus teaches that the one who has been forgiven much loves much.

Ps Mike emphasized that one of the keys to loving Jesus and loving others is continually remembering how much we've been forgiven.

Not simply what God forgave years ago, but the mercy He continues to extend to us every day.

When we understand the depth of God's grace toward us, we become more willing to extend that same grace to others.

The revelation of how much we've been forgiven should transform how much we love.

We have received God's kindness, mercy, forgiveness, and generosity.

Now we have the responsibility and privilege of sharing those things with the world.

Final Challenge: Let Your Light Shine

The world doesn't need more Christians complaining about darkness.

It needs believers who are willing to carry the light of Jesus into it.

We have received His light.

We are called to reflect His character.

Now we must release His love into the world around us.

This week, ask yourself:

What is covering my light?

Is it fear, busyness, selfishness, complacency, or an unwillingness to step outside my comfort zone?

Where is God asking me to shine?

At work?

At school?

In my neighborhood?

In my family?

Through an intentional act of kindness?

Don't underestimate what God can do through one willing person.

A simple conversation, an encouraging word, a practical act of service, or an opportunity to share the gospel can become a moment that changes someone's life.

Receive the light. Reflect the light. Release the light.

Don't hide what Jesus has placed inside of you.

Let His goodness become visible through your life.

The darker the world becomes, the greater our opportunity to shine.

Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus declared, **"You are the light of the world."** What does this identity mean to you personally? When you enter your workplace, home, or community, do you think people experience the presence and character of Jesus through your life?

2. Ps Mike taught that we must first **receive the light** before we can reflect it. How does spending time with Jesus influence the way we love, serve, and respond to the people around us?

3. Fear, busyness, selfishness, and spiritual complacency can all cause us to hide our light. Which of these is the greatest challenge in your life right now, and what would it look like to remove that barrier?

4. Jesus taught that our good works should lead people to glorify God rather than ourselves. How can we demonstrate kindness and generosity in ways that genuinely point people toward Jesus instead of drawing attention to ourselves?

5. The *Conspiracy of Kindness* challenges us to complete one intentional act of kindness every week. Who is someone God may be calling you to encourage, serve, or share the gospel with this week? What specific step can you take to **release the light** into their life?