Overcoming the Darkness

Matt: 5:14-16

10/10/21

I love lighthouses. We have them around here in San Luis, Port Hueneme in Ventura, & Anacapa Island has one. Though I’ve never physically seen one, I admire them. Their strength, their looks, and their purpose. Before the days of GPS these lighthouses were vital to those who were traveling over the seas. If there was a storm or fog, or just complete darkness, the lighthouse would be the safety for the ships not to run aground! If it weren’t for the light shining in the light house certain doom would befall the ships and its passengers.

Now we all know that Jesus is the True Light. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we read where John the Baptist was called to preach the coming of the True Light that lights the heart of every man. But Jesus gave us some insight as to who would be used to broadcast or reflect His pure light to all the world.

* Matthew 5:14-16, *14 “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father."*

This morning, I want us to look at the church and see whether we are really being the light that He expects us to be. Is the light that we are giving to the world really the light of Jesus? Is our light growing dim, or is it shining brightly? It is my hope that by the end of this message, God will reveal to each of us just how brightly we are shining for him!

There’s a lighthouse offshore of the state of North Carolina that is located near the outer banks of the continental shelf. This is one of the most dangerous stretches of ocean in the world. Over the past 400 years, there have been more than 300 ships that have sunk in this small area. It has become known as "The Graveyard of the Atlantic". What makes this area so dangerous? The problem is a 14 mile stretch of sandbar, that is constantly shifting, called "Diamond Shoals".

Recognizing the danger in this area, and the need to warn ships at sea of the sandbar, the U.S. government constructed a lighthouse on Cape Hatteras in 1870. By Day the navigators could tell where they were on the coast by the unique paint pattern & design of the lighthouse as it is the only one in the world that painted candy stripe in black and white. And by night, they could tell which lighthouse it was by the frequency of the flash. \*Show Picture

The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is the biggest Lighthouse in the United States. It’s 210 feet tall (roughly 12 stories high) with 48" thick walls, making it the tallest “brick” lighthouse structure in the US. 1.25 million bricks were used in its construction and the internal cast iron staircase to reach the top has 248 steps.

What is the main purpose of that lighthouse? It was built to save lives and property.

When you think about it, the church’s mission should be the same as that lighthouse. The world out there is a dark and dangerous place. People are sailing through life in very dangerous waters and the devil is constantly throwing new obstacles in their paths.

* Have you ever been cruising through life feeling as though you were on top of the world then suddenly you hit a snag (sickness, disease, loss of job, troubles in the home) and it felt like your life was in shambles? Those are some of the shifting “sandbars” of life. The devil’s purpose is to steal your victory, destroy your life, and sink your ship into the pits of hell.

But thank God, there is a lighthouse for this dark and dangerous world. God has put a lighthouse in the darkness that projects a light onto the seas of life. This church, even though we may be small, has the same bright light to shine forth that the biggest churches in the country have. Our purpose is the same – Our purpose is to project the light of the gospel and to save souls from being destroyed on the rocks of sin.

As mentioned, many times, I am concerned that the church, in general, has forgotten its real purpose for existence. We have become to believe that our purpose is to supply the emotional, physical, or material needs of mankind, but that’s not our purpose at all.

* Our main purpose is not giving shelter to the homeless, or food to the starving, or improving the conditions of 3rd world nations, or counseling dysfunctional families, or working to correct abuse, comforting, and aiding the sick, saving the whales, or saving the rainforest.
* Our main purpose is not just to have fellowship with one another or to come together for times of praise and worship.

Jesus taught that the soul is more important than the body.

* 1 Timothy 4:8 *"Physical training is good, but training for godliness is much better, promising benefits in this life and in the life to come.”*

He also taught that eternity was vastly more important than time so that our focus should be on things eternal and not on the things of this world.

* Matthew 6:19-21 "*19 “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.*

The church’s purpose is to Send out the Light and to Rescue the Perishing!! We send out the light through missions and preaching of the gospel. We rescue the perishing by throwing them the only real-life preserver that matters, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We are fishers of men, but we don’t fish like a natural fisherman.

* We should never be satisfied with the quantity we catch, no matter how much the church grows.
* We should always be expecting greater things and praying for a greater move of the Holy Ghost.
* We should be constantly throwing out the net, baiting the hook, and we try to catch every kind of fish in the seas, and then we do all we can to see that none escape and go back into the world of sin again.

**The Light in Us**

The Light in the Cape Hatteras lighthouse is made extremely powerful and bright using prisms that focus the light as it reflects from mirrors to a central point or beam that is then projected through the darkness.

Originally it was whale oil that burned and produced the light, then there was a gas vapor that was used for a while, then came the invention of electricity and there were several 1000 watt bulbs installed that produced the light of 800,000 candles. Suddenly the light was much brighter and could be seen for 20 miles on a dark night. It flashed every 7.5 seconds.

But the church has the brightest light of them all. We have Jesus to shine forth in us and through us!

* Revelation 22:16 *" I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this message for the churches. I am both the source of David and the heir to his throne. I am the bright morning star.”*
* Ephesians‬

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is called "the light",

* 2 Corinthians 4:4 "*Satan, who is the god of this world, has blinded the minds of those who don’t believe. They are unable to see the glorious light of the Good News. They don’t understand this message about the glory of Christ, who is the exact likeness of God."*
* 2 Corinthians 4:6, *"For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ."*
* 1 Peter 2:9, *"But you are not like that, for you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for he called you out of the darkness into his wonderful light.*

If the light is to continue to shine and do its job, there must be a Lighthouse Keeper. What is the Keeper to do?

* His whole purpose is to Keep the Light burning at all costs. He had to constantly clean, maintain and repair the light. If the flame burned low, or the lenses and mirrors were dirty, or the wick of the old oil burner needed trimming, he had to go to work because lives depended upon him performing his duties.
* The first keeper of the lighthouse at Cape Hatteras was Adam Gaskins. He was on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 365 days a year and earned $333 per year & a place to live. Due to his hard work and those who followed him, the lighthouse burned for 129 years, 47,000 nights, without fail. These men and women who kept the light burning were called “Keepers of the Flame”.

Church, we are the "Keepers of the Flame!" As this world grows darker and gets ever closer to the shores of eternal judgment, there is a greater need for the light of the gospel to shine. We need to ensure our own light is shining bright by keeping to the scriptures, daily prayer, and keeping our relationship “on fire” and lit with Jesus There are souls in the balance who will surely sink into the depths of hell if we fail to let our light shine.

Most of the church world today will complain and moan about the sinful condition of this world, but where is the light that they are supposed to shine.

* *“Do everything without complaining and arguing, so that no one can criticize you. Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.”* Philippians‬
* Isn’t more productive to light One Candle than to Curse the Darkness.

Closing:

There came a time when the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was in danger. The constant wave action of the sea had eroded the shore to the point that many feared the lighthouse would collapse into the waters. Originally it was 1500 ft from the shore, but now the water was within 150 ft.

The decision was made to save the lighthouse by moving it 2900 feet Southwest and 1600 feet inland. In 1999, they jacked it up and built railroad tracks to the new location. But when they moved the lighthouse, something happened. They changed its purpose. It now became a park and a museum where people go to admire it, enjoy it, and learn, but it doesn’t save anyone anymore.

Unfortunately, in these “dark days” Life Saving Stations, or churches have become little more than Museums. Sadly, people aren’t being saved in them anymore. The congregation only comes to ease their conscience or to hear the teachers or to be entertained.

* All up and down the east coast are Yacht Clubs in every city. They started out as Rescue stations but through the years they found out it was more fun to socialize than to rescue. They forgot their purpose.

The sad truth is that the church has done the same thing. It no longer provides the guiding light of the gospel. Has the church forgotten its main purpose.

Even though they have moved the lighthouse at Cape Hatteras, the original problem still exists. Diamond Shoals is still a 14-mile shifting sandbar off the coast and that area is still called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic."

Church, we can’t afford to let the light of the gospel die. Jesus is the only hope that this world has. There is no other light and there is no other “Keeper of the Flame”. Jesus called you and I to be that “Keeper”. We are to be the witnesses of his love, mercy, and grace. We must tell the world about the Savior. We are their only hope!

* Acts 13:47 *- “For the Lord gave us this command when he said, ‘I have made you a light to the Gentiles, to bring salvation to the farthest corners of the earth.”* ‬

Let’s never lose sight of our purpose! Even as the waves of life pound on us, the darkness gets darker, let’s ever keep our eyes on our real mission! We can modernize, and bring in new technologies and innovations in ministry, but we must stay true to our purpose. We must allow Jesus’ light to shine in and through our lives, always searching for ways to bring the message of the gospel to a lost and dying world.