



# Reflection Guide: Sunday, July 7, 2024

## Opening Prayer:

O God of grace and love, as we gather to reflect on your word and our call to be light in the world, open our hearts and minds. May your Spirit guide us as we seek to understand and respond to your invitation to shine brightly in our communities. Amen.

## Introduction:

Reflecting on today's sermon, we explore the theme of being the light of the world, inspired by Jesus' words in Matthew 5:14-16. Consider how these words resonate with you personally and how they apply to our community of faith.

## Reflection Questions:

### 1. Personal Reflection:

- a. How does the imagery of light resonate with your understanding of faith and discipleship?
- b. Think of a time when you felt God's light guiding you or illuminating a path in your life. What did that experience teach you about God's presence?

### 2. Community Reflection:

- a. In what ways have you seen Hilldale United Methodist Church embody the light of Christ in our community?
- b. How can we collectively shine God's light more brightly in Clarksville, especially as we approach our church's 70th anniversary?

### 3. Response and Action:

- a. Reflect on Howard Thurman's story and the impact of a simple act of kindness. How can you emulate this in your daily life?
- b. Consider practical ways you can contribute to the ministries and outreach efforts of our church, such as F.U.E.L. ministry, Good Neighbor Fund, or other community initiatives.

### 4. Living as the Light:

- a. What are some challenges you face in being a light to others, and how can our church community support you in overcoming these challenges?
- b. Reflect on the concept that our light originates from God. How does this perspective influence your understanding of humility and gratitude in service?

## Closing Prayer:

Gracious God, thank you for calling us to be the light of the world. May your love shine through us, illuminating darkness and bringing hope to those in need. Guide us as we seek to live out our faith in tangible ways, reflecting your grace and truth. May we continue to grow in our commitment to shine brightly in our community and beyond. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.

## Action Step:

As you conclude this reflection guide, consider one specific action you can take this week to shine God's light in your daily life. Share your reflections with a trusted friend or small group for encouragement and accountability in living out your faith.



## Weekly Reflection

### Shine, Jesus Shine!

*"...let your light shine before people,  
so they can see the good things you do  
and praise your Father who is in heaven."*

—Matthew 5:16b, CEB.

As a youth in Brazil I first encountered the song "Shine, Jesus Shine" around 1991 during my fifth-grade year at a Seventh-Day Adventist school. The song had been translated into Portuguese and it quickly became popular within Adventist circles. Every week, during chapel, students from first through eighth grades would sing it together, forming a musical backdrop to our worship. Initially, what captivated me about this song was not just its lyrics, but its melody. The melody evoked a uniquely Brazilian feeling known as "saudade"—a deep, melancholic nostalgia for something undefined yet deeply felt; something that has never happened and is yet expected; something that will never happen again and therefore deeply missed; or perhaps something that is yet to come that is felt deeply.

Over time, however, I discovered a deeper beauty in the song, realizing that both its tune and lyrics conveyed profound messages. While the melody stirred saudade for a reality I couldn't quite name, the lyrics pointed directly to something tangible and present: the illuminating power of God's love. In theological terms, we often refer to this dual experience as the "now and not yet"—the tension between the already experienced presence of God's kingdom among us and the longing for the fulfillment of a reality that is yet to come. But in the here and now, we can see and experience glimpses of the Kingdom—or as I often prefer to term it, Kin-dom.

Over the past few years, I have begun to borrow this language from Cuban-American theologian Ada María Isasi-Díaz, who introduced the word "kin-dom" to mainstream theological discourse in the 1970s. In her writings, Isasi-Díaz notes that "the coming of the kin-dom of God has to do with a coming together of peoples, with no one being excluded and at the expense of no one" (Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology*, 65-66). Kin-dom, for me, means the reality of God's power moving in and through us, bringing unity, liberation, and opening spaces where love invites all people into deep kinship with one another. This is a communal reality that allows us to be conduits of God's love, light, and grace to the world. As Jesus tells his followers in Matthew 5:16, and the song's lyrics remind us, all of us are called to let our light shine before others, not so they may see how good, perfect, or righteous we are, but so that God can be glorified.

Reflecting on my childhood experiences with "Shine, Jesus Shine," I see how it taught me to embrace both the longing for a deeper reality and the active participation in bringing God's kingdom to earth. The song's melody still evokes that sense of saudade, reminding me of the ongoing tension between the brokenness of our world and the hope-filled promise of God's redemption.

In our daily lives, we are called to embody this light—to live out God's love in tangible ways, to show compassion to those in need, and to stand for justice in the face of injustice. Each act of kindness, each word of encouragement, each moment of forgiveness, becomes a small but significant reflection of God's light in a world yearning for hope and healing.

This Sunday we will continue to reflect on the words of Jesus and we will also explore the teaching of the Apostle Paul, as we seek to better understand how to let our light shine in our daily lives. As we dive deeper into Matthew 5:16 and Philippians 2:14-16, we'll explore practical ways to embody Christ's love through our actions and witness.



Together, let us embrace our role as bearers of God's light, illuminating the path for others to encounter the transformative power of God's grace and truth.

I look forward to seeing you!