

It seems like just yesterday I was hanging Christmas lights on my home, and now it's time to put it all away. I love looking at the glorious Christmas lights glowing outdoors on a dark night. Last month I was in Texas for a meeting and one evening we were at the home of a dear friend who lives out in the country. The Christmas lights on the few houses in this little neighborhood boldly screamed into the darkness, "You can't hide this celebration!" We read in the Gospel of John, *"The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it"* John 1:5. Indeed, as hard as the world around us does its best to quench the Light of Jesus, it cannot be snuffed out.

However, I have learned that we can allow it to be hidden, either by omission or commission or simply a failure to understand the mission! As the old children's Gospel song, "This Little Gospel Light of Mine," reminds us, "Hide it under a bushel? NO! I'm going to let it shine!" We must be intentional about allowing the light of Jesus shine through us! His light shines brightly, even when we fail to shine it because He is the Light of the World!

His radiance has always brightened the world from the beginning and became visually clear at His birth. You remember the story of the Magi? Matthew records: *"When they [the Magi] saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. And going into the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they fell down and worshiped him. Then, opening their treasures, they offered him gifts, gold and frankincense and myrrh"* Matthew 2:10-11. The light of the star guided them to the Light of the world! These enlightened Magi were filled with a new light that day. As the shepherds who came to the manger no doubt repeated the miraculous story of an angelic appearance and an encounter with the Savior over and over to all who would listen, so, too, I imagine, did these Magi. Light shatters the darkness. In fact, I once read that there is no such thing as darkness, but rather it is the absence of light. When light breaks into darkness it always has an impact.

This fact is true for each of our lives too! The light of Jesus' love has broken through the oppressive darkness in our lives to help us walk as children of the light! I really love the way that John puts it in His first Epistle. He writes, *"This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we **walk in the light**, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin."* This is our hope and joy! So let your light shine so all the world can see Jesus living in you! Let Jesus be seen in 2019. Let Him be seen in your word and deeds. Let His light shine where you live, work, fellowship, and even, dare I say it, where you worship!

Jesus says, *"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine** before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* Matthew 5:14-16. This isn't just some hopeful wishing. Jesus doesn't say, "You are becoming the light of the world," or "You may become the light of the world." He says, "You ARE the light of the world!" The light of faith in us will naturally result in the "good works" seen by others. That's often how Jesus is seen, by His visible work in and through each of us who claim Him as Savior. Jesus, the Light of the world, is counting on the

ones He has filled with His light to shine His love and lead people to Him. That, my friends, is each one of us!

The truth is Jesus is seen in us, whether positively or negatively. As believers we have already been chosen in Jesus, but we do have some choice in how His light will be displayed in our lives. So Paul writes, *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you **shine as lights in the world**, holding fast to the Word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain”*Philippians 2:14–16. Imagine if we could truly keep in mind that we have been made bearers of the light, and He gathers us in worship to inspire us, but also to send us out into the dark world shining that light. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:6, *“For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*Let me encourage you to do everything you can to not allow Satan and his power of darkness to mar the brilliant light of Jesus in your life!

May Jesus be seen in 2019 in our churches, in our homes, in our work places, but most of all, in our lives! May we aspire to live for Him in all we do, recognizing when we fail, and we likely will, that His grace and love covers a multitude of sin! Perhaps a good way to start, especially as you look to the New Year, is to make some growth commitments to help you shine His light. That could be a commitment to worship more regularly, or to get involved in the life of your congregation by somehow serving. Perhaps it could be a commitment to regular daily devotions. Maybe it is finding some community organization that you can serve as a servant of Jesus! There are countless opportunities all around you. Jesus says, *“Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear”* Matthew 13:43. With ears open to listen, and hearts of thanks for His love, let your light shine so that Jesus is seen in 2019.