

Pentecost Sermon

June 3 and 4, 2006

John 15:26-27; 16:4b-15

Author John Trent

tells about Summer Church Camp.

He was a Young Life leader.

So he got to invite kids to come to camp.

Mark was one of those kids he invited.

He wanted to hear the good news of Jesus Christ.

He was sure that Mark would hear the speaker talk about Jesus
and that would change his life.

Well,

Mark's life was changed.

But it wasn't the speeches that did it.

The speaker was in charge of the schedule,
including meal times.

So, he was often talking with the cook.

The cook loved her work,
but it was exhausting.

She always looked tired.

Whenever she talked to the speaker,
he got up from where he was sitting
and gave her his chair,
and a moment's rest,
while they discussed meal plans.

Nobody noticed the speaker doing this—
—except Mark.

It wasn't eloquence of words that spoke to Mark.
It was a simple act of love and caring.

Mark said:

“If that's what it means to be a Christian,
I want to be one.”

This is Pentecost.

On Pentecost,
we celebrate the Holy Spirit,
who comes to us,
who lives in us,
who shows us Christ,
and works in us
so that we might reflect Christ in our lives.

In our Gospel reading,
it says that the Holy Spirit testifies or witnesses to us
about Jesus.

And then it says,
“You also are to testify.”

Or another way to translate that is:
“You are witnessing.”

A commentary I was reading
points out that when it says “You are witnessing”,
it is in present tense,
which indicates an ongoing process,
a repeated, continuous action.
The issue is not whether or not we will witness–
-we are witnessing.
The issue is whether or not our witnessing
reflects Christ or not.

When your family and friends see your life,
what do they see?
Do they see Christ?

The good news
is that the light of Christ is shining.
Jesus is shining in your life.
Jesus’ love is always there.
Nothing can change that.
The Holy Spirit shows us that love today.
And everyday.
Again and again.

What happens to that light of Jesus’ love?

There are four ways in which substances react to light.

Some are transparent–
–the light passes through them.

Some are translucent–
–they scatter the light.

Some are opaque–
–they bar the light.

Some are like mirrors–
–the reflect the light.

That's what we are called to be–
–mirrors–
–reflecting the light of Christ.

In what parts of my life
is the light of Christ being reflected?
And in what parts of my life
am I blocking the light of Christ from shining?

The light is there.
God is there.

What happens to that light
when it hits me?

Every time we have a baptism,
we hear the words:
“Let your light so shine before others
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.”

And as we say those words,
we light a candle from the Christ Candle,
reminding us that it starts with Christ's love.
And our light is a reflection.

We say:
Let your light so shine before others
that they may see your good works

and glorify—WHO?

Glorify you?

Focus on you?

Pay attention to you?

No.

Glorify your Father in heaven.

Glorify God.

Corrie Ten Boom writes:

**A woodpecker tapped with his beak
against the stem of a tree
just as lightning struck the tree
and destroyed it.
He flew away and said,
“I didn’t know there was so much power in my beak.”**

When we reflect Christ’s love,
there is a danger that we’ll get puffed up,
thinking the strength comes from us.
Know where your strength comes from.
As Corrie Ten Boom concludes:

**It is only the Holy Spirit
who can make a message good and fruitful.**

We’re the mirrors.
We’re reflecting what God has first given.
It’s not our strength.
It’s not our goodness.
We are glorifying our Father in heaven.
We are glorifying God.

That’s why today we are focusing
on “Letting our Lights Shine in Service”.
Not to build up ourselves.
But to glorify God,

by reflecting God's love.

But you know what,
when we serve,
God also gives us a sense of satisfaction,
a sense that we are doing what we are created to do.
It feels good to serve—
—even when it's hard work
—even when there is an element of suffering
that goes with it.

In the bulletin,
there is a list of ways you can serve—
—reach out
—reflect God's love.

In the narthex,
after the service,
there are things you can sign up to do
to help others.

These aren't the only things you can do to serve.
In fact, the list is endless.
These are possibilities.
These may fit for you.
Or God may be calling you to serve in other ways.
Maybe with your own family.
Maybe with neighbors.
Maybe with friends.
Maybe through the programs of Good Shepherd.
Maybe with service in the community.

I don't know what it looks like for you.
But I do know God calls us to serve.
To reflect the light of love that God gives.

And when we serve,
we are witnesses to Christ's love.

A pastor was teaching Sunday School one day,
6-year-old class,
filling in for the teacher who couldn't make it.

The pastor asked,
"What do you think Jesus was like?"

He probably expected an answer like:

- he was a Savior
- he died for us
- he was a preacher
- he healed people.

But one little boy raised his hand
and said:

"I think Jesus was like
my Sunday School teacher."

Reflecting the light of Christ.

You are witnesses.

You are witnesses to the love of God.

You reflect the light of Christ.

You give what has first been given to you.

You reflect the light.

This has been a tough week for Good Shepherd.

The funeral of Russell Brooks.

The death of Bill Wagner.

Several people seriously ill.

It's been sad.

The pain and grief and loss.

But's it's also been a time
to see how you, people of Good Shepherd,
how you reflect the light of Christ.

I've seen it in the families of Russell and Bill.
I've seen it in the ways you all
have reached out
in love and care.
I've seen it in the tears shared,
the words of hope spoken,
the good news of Christ's love repeated.
Sometimes the caring has come through words.
Sometimes through food
and hugs
and listening
and just being there.

This week,
in the midst of the pain and grief,
I have seen the light of Christ reflected in this place.
I've seen the light bouncing around,
shining from Jesus to you,
reflected to another,
and another,

and another--
growing in intensity
as it is reflected again and again.
And I give thanks to God for you.
For this community of faith
that reaches out in love and care--
--for one another
--and well beyond,
to people we don't even know.

I thank God for you.

You are witnesses.
You are shining the light of Christ.
It's my prayer that you may continue to grow in that light.
That you may continue to reflect that light
as you serve and care.

In those places in your life
where the light of Christ is shining--
--let it shine.

And in those places in your life,
where you are blocking the light of Christ,
let it in.
Every day,
the Holy Spirit is at work in you,
breaking down the walls,
building up the light.

Let your light so shine before others
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.

In Jesus' name,
Amen