



## Have You Let Your Light Shine Or Have You Been Stinking - 12th July 2020

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### Transcript

A very good morning to you all from Salford Methodist Circuit. It's lovely to be here with you once more. Today is 12th July 2020 and it is so good to have the light of God shining upon us this morning as we come to worship Him. I'm going to begin with Psalm 27 verse 1.

*A Prayer of Praise*

*You, Lord, are the light  
that keeps me safe.  
I am not afraid of anyone.  
You protect me,  
and I have no fears.*

As we ponder on these words, we sing hymn number 462 from Mission Praise, which is 'May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place'

### **Hymn: May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place**

*May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place.  
May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place.  
May the fragrance of Jesus fill this place.  
Lovely fragrance of Jesus,  
Rising from the sacrifice  
Of lives laid down in adoration.*

*May the glory of Jesus fill His church.  
May the glory of Jesus fill His church.  
May the glory of Jesus fill His church.  
Radiant glory of Jesus,  
Shining from our faces  
As we gaze in adoration.*

*May the beauty of Jesus fill my life.  
May the beauty of Jesus fill my life.  
May the beauty of Jesus fill my life.  
Perfect beauty of Jesus,  
Fill my thoughts, my words, my deeds,  
My all I give in adoration.  
Fill my thoughts, my words, my deeds,  
My all I give in adoration.*

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We're back with the Psalms once more; I'm going to read from Psalm 19 verse 14

*Let my words and my thoughts  
be pleasing to you, Lord,  
because you are my mighty rock  
and my protector.*

And I'm going to read from the Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 5 verses 23-24

*If you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that  
someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar.  
Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God.*

Shall we take some time to pray? Thank you.

Lord:

We look back at the week that is behind us.

We think of the people who you have been in contact with

The people you have been able to touch and those you have been safe  
distancing from. Now think about the people who you have spoken to on the  
telephone

or in touch with via the internet.

We think about this very morning.

What was the very first thing that came into your mind?

When you woke, was it, "we thank you for this brand new day Lord"? or was it a  
morning that you just didn't want to get out of bed?

We now come to the moments before we came to worship,

Was it a peaceful time for you or was it a rush to get to your phone?

Maybe your internet connection put obstacles in your way?

Try to be still. You are here now, you are here, take a deep breath and simply  
be with God.

Lord we come to you and we lay before you anything that would distract us from  
worshipping you in this hallowed time, this time set aside for you and you alone.

We bring before you all that we are sorry for and ask for your gracious  
forgiveness. We know that we can come to you always.

[Silence]

Amen.

Shall we say the Lord's Prayer together?

*Our Father, who art in heaven,  
hallowed be thy name;*

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*thy kingdom come;  
thy will be done;  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
as we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the kingdom,  
the power and the glory,  
for ever and ever.  
Amen.*

Let's sing together, let's sing hymn number 471 from Singing the Faith, Lord I Come To You

## **Hymn: Lord I Come To You**

*Lord, I come to you,  
let my heart be changed, renewed,  
flowing from the grace  
that I found in you.  
And Lord, I've come to know  
the weaknesses I see in me  
will be stripped away  
by the power of your love.*

*Hold me close,  
let your love surround me;  
bring me near, draw me to your side.  
And as I wait,  
I'll rise up like the eagle,  
and I will soar with you,  
your Spirit leads me on  
in the power of your love.*

*Lord, unveil my eyes,  
let me see you face to face,  
the knowledge of your love  
as you live in me.  
Lord, renew my mind,  
as your will unfolds in my life  
in living every day  
by the power of your love.*

*Hold me close...*

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I'm going to read from the Gospel of Matthew now, which we will reflect upon. Matthew chapter 5, verses 14-16.

*You are like light for the whole world. A city built on top of a hill cannot be hidden, and no one would light a lamp and put it under a clay pot. A lamp is placed on a lampstand, where it can give light to everyone in the house. Make your light shine, so that others will see the good that you do and will praise your Father in heaven.*

Thanks be to God for those words.

When Aleck and I lived in Irlam before moving to Ashton-under-Lyne in 2005 and then returning the Salford Circuit in 2013, we were only a few minutes away from Irlam and Cadishead Moss. The Moss is huge and you can walk around it for hours upon hours and we often did. It is, as you may imagine, a beautiful wide-open space. It has a huge sky that during the day time gives enormous light to the whole area, especially on one day when we are blessed with cloudless skies. Even in the eeriness of the darkness, how can it not be beautiful when the sky is filled with the stars? There are lots of vegetables growing up the Moss during the different seasons and I remember our Andrew and Mark during their school holidays cycling to one of the farms on the Moss to pack lettuces on one of the farms. When I was a childminder I used to go for walks with our George and my friend's daughter Naomi, there is six months age gap between them so a double buggy came in very handy to wheel them everywhere. Naomi is still very much a part of our family to this day, we love her dearly and she is like a daughter to me.

It was brilliant to get out of the house when I was childminding and into the fresh air even as the strong winds blew across the fields, we loved it. We are talking about probably 1997 to 1999. I never felt threatened with the isolation of the Moss and walking on my own. We used to guess what vegetables were growing in what field and we would stop to have a look at them as well as the horses in the fields and stables.

Some of you may remember that the Moss years ago was the place to be when the Barton Air Show was on. All the locals would make their way to the Moss with their families and their picnics when the air show was on and we would sit on the paths between the fields and watch all sorts of aircraft going over us and somehow it was always sunny when the show was on. The light, of course, shone on the righteous!

The Moss was also one of the places that had the Healthy Walks Project for Irlam and Cadishead; that's where some of the walks would take place, not sure if they still go up on the Moss. With a deep breath in, your lungs can be filled with lovely fresh air. That is until the air is filled with some other rather awful smells like horse manure. But even worse than the horse manure was when they had literally just sprayed the fields with pigs muck. Have you ever smelt pigs muck?

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It is the waste that is left over from what they have been fed, eaten, digested and well you know the rest.

I remember a local preacher in the Ashton under Lyne Circuit who is now a Presbyterian in Caernarfon District, Reverend Flis Randel. She gave out some materials for use in an Evangelism service and there was a quote from Dr Paul Brand who was speaking to a medical college in India on the topic 'Letting your light shine'. He said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may behold your good works and glorify your Father." In front of the lectern was an oil lamp, with its cotton wick burning from the shallow dish of oil. And as he preached, the lamp ran out of oil, the wick burned dry, and the smoke made him cough. He immediately used the opportunity by telling his students, "Some of us here are like this wick," he said. "We're trying to shine for the glory of God, but we stink. That's what happens when we use ourselves as the fuel, as the fuel of our witness rather than the Holy Spirit for our witness. Wicks can last indefinitely, burning brightly and without irritating smoke, if the fuel, the Holy Spirit, is in constant supply." Philip Yancey did this quote but the source is unknown. I maybe wouldn't be as bold as Dr Brand saying we can 'stink' but it does help us to think about what we do with the fuel, the food that we are given by God to share with others. When I gave the title of this sermon to Matt, he did ask me "is the last word 'sinking' instead of stinking? It could very well have been, and just to check that I hadn't misread or misheard the quote as I no longer physically have the material that Flis had given to me. It was, of course, correct otherwise the theme may have been very different – or would it? In this day and age we need to make sure that we are getting every single word and piece of information that we share with each other correct. That the information and resources that we use has been tried and tested and that we aren't misinforming people. We need to ensure that we can honestly take ownership of what we are saying, ensuring that it is the truth and not a load of... well let's say rubbish. Speaking the truth is essential for us to be able to continue to shine the light for Christ. We need to keep seeking the truth of the Bible, we need to continue to seek the truth from our Lord. Just like the lamp if we let the oil burn and get down to nothing without keeping on top of it, it is in danger of petering out and when the light of the candle goes out it can cause an offensive smell. If we see a light shining in the darkness on the coastline it is a light that is shining from perhaps a lighthouse, keeping those at sea safe and keeping them on the right track. When driving in very thick fog we rely on the fog lights to help us see the way ahead. Would you give someone a torch with minimum energy left in the battery - to set out on a dark and very long journey? No, of course you wouldn't. You would ensure that the light, the battery of that light, would be able to be seen for the length of the journey.

During the past 4 months you may have begun the 'lockdown' with the light of Christ shining brightly from within you, raring to go and wanting to share it with others. Maybe over time now your light has been petering out? I know of some people of you who cannot wait for their darkened light to be given a new wick and for their renewed passion for Christ to shine in the midst of others once more when we return. There are some who had only just begun their spiritual

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journey with new church families and who are waiting patiently to meet up again, I give you that encouragement, just keep your light shining, keep it going! There are some people who have not attended church services for a long, long time in a church building but who are finding the online worship something that they can connect with far easier than physically being in a building full of people, they are happy to listen to and hear 'The Message' in a way that they can connect with. Perhaps their light is shining brighter than ever through these days!

Think about this week that has gone past, have there been times when you have been glowing and shining the light for Jesus? Have there? What has the topic of conversations that you have been having with others? Are they worthy for God to hear face to face? Are they a reflection of Christ shining in your life. The imperative, the absolutely necessity of our shining is based on us representing what we are lit up by Jesus, not by a candle wick, not by a torch, not by the light shining from a lighthouse, but our light comes from Jesus.

At the beginning of our service Psalm 27 verse 1 was read. Why don't we say these words together. Say them with me:

*You, Lord, are the light  
that keeps me safe.  
I am not afraid of anyone.  
You protect me,  
and I have no fears.*

We are given the protection of Jesus when we are shining His light. The words that we say need to reflect the second Psalm that we read today. Please say them with me also

*Let my words and my thoughts  
be pleasing to you, Lord,  
because you are my mighty rock  
and my protector.*

We need to think about the words that we say to one another. Are our words shining His light or are they leaving a nasty taste in our mouths and leaving a stink in the air? Take our inner thoughts to God and leave them there telling him the truth and being honest with yourself, you can't shine if the light that Christ has given to you if you choose to hide it in a dark place. You have many gifts to offer. Just let your light shine.

Let's say these words together:

*"If you are about to place your gift on the altar and remember that someone is angry with you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. Make peace with that person, then come back and offer your gift to God."  
Amen, thanks be to God for these words.*

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Let's just join together now in a song once more. "Arise, shine, your light has come," which is the chorus part of hymn number 170, Darkness Like A Shroud.

## Hymn: Darkness Like A Shroud

*Darkness like a shroud covers the earth.  
Evil like a cloud covers the people.  
But the Lord will rise upon you  
and his glory will appear on you,  
nations will come to your light.*

*Arise, shine, your light has come,  
the glory of the Lord has risen on you!  
Arise, shine, your light has come,  
Jesus the Light of the world has come.*

*Children of the light, be clean and pure.  
Rise, you sleepers, Christ will shine on you.  
Take the Spirit's flashing two-edged sword  
and with faith declare God's mighty word;  
stand up and in his strength be strong.*

*Arise, shine...*

*Here among us now, Christ the Light  
kindles brighter flames in our trembling hearts.  
Living Word, our lamp, come guide our feet  
as we walk as one in light and peace  
till justice and truth shine like the sun.*

*Arise, shine...*

*Like a city bright so let us blaze;  
lights in every street turning night to day.  
And the darkness shall not overcome  
till the fullness of Christ's kingdom comes,  
dawning to God's eternal day.*

*Arise, shine...*

We come to our Prayers of Intercession now. We will have a moment of silence to bring and speak to God of our own concerns for the Church, the world, our leaders, our communities and those whom we personally know that need our prayers today . So let us pray, you may want to say these words out loud in the privacy of your home or whoever you are sharing this service with.

[Silence]

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We bring all our prayers to you Lord, as we sing our next, which is hymn number 693 Beauty for Brokenness.

Hymn: Beauty For Brokenness

*Beauty for brokenness,  
hope for despair,  
Lord, in your suffering world  
this is our prayer.  
Bread for the children,  
justice, joy, peace,  
sunrise to sunset,  
your kingdom increase!*

*Shelter for fragile lives,  
cures for their ills,  
work for all people,  
trade for their skills;  
land for the dispossessed,  
rights for the weak,  
voices to plead the cause  
of those who can't speak.*

*God of the poor,  
friend of the weak,  
give us compassion we pray:  
melt our cold hearts,  
let tears fall like rain;  
come, change our love  
from a spark to a flame.*

*Refuge from cruel wars,  
havens from fear,  
cities for sanctuary,  
freedoms to share.  
Peace to the killing-fields,  
scorched earth to green,  
Christ for the bitterness,  
his cross for the pain.*

*Rest for the ravaged earth,  
oceans and streams  
plundered and poisoned -  
our future, our dreams.  
Lord, end our madness,  
carelessness, greed;  
make us content with  
the things that we need.*





*God of the poor...*

*Lighten our darkness,  
breathe on this flame  
until your justice burns  
brightly again;  
until the nations  
learn of your ways,  
seek your salvation  
and bring you their praise.*

*God of the poor...*

And finally, I want to say to you:

Lord Jesus, you are the Light of our world, come change the light that we shine for others from a spark to a flame and never let it get to the point that our light is hidden, your light is hidden from us.

And I say the Psalm, 27 verse 14  
Trust the Lord!  
Be brave and strong  
and trust the Lord.  
Amen.

May God's blessing be with you today and always. God bless you, Amen.

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