



Sermon starter: Share the light



A sermon starter and scripture commentary for the 2024 One Great Hour of Sharing

An old adage declares, “if you know better, you do better.” In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his disciples and the gathered crowd what it means to be children of God.

By starting his discourse with the Beatitudes, Jesus declares that humanity was not living out God’s intention for them. Jesus is struck by their conditions and circumstances of fear, anxiety, isolation, apathy, division, despair, oppression, injustice, and chaos. Jesus recognizes that throughout the land, there is a need for grace, mercy, justice, and compassion. They need light, direction, and guidance.

Jesus makes a startling admission—God is transforming the land, right now, right here. Through Jesus, God lights a path forward toward *shalom*—total well-being. God’s grace is moving across the land, creating a ginormous household of diverse people who are children of God and siblings to one another.

Jesus also sets the bar for discipleship—they are to live out their faith and commitment to God through concrete acts of service for others. They have been transformed from individuals into family—living for others.

Jesus says the disciples are light and as such, they are to shine, to share the light with others. Not to brag on themselves or bolster their egos—they engage in active service as a response to the gracious God who has gifted them with so much. Their acts reflect back to the Source of all there is—God!

Jesus’ message was for the Twelve, for the crowds gathered around them, and also for us! We are invited to join God’s grand movement of transformation.

The world is as broken now as it was in Jesus’ day. People are suffering, systems are failing the most vulnerable among us, safety nets are diminishing in number and effectiveness, needs are increasing. It can be so easy to get caught up in our own lives that we forget that our simple acts of illuminating the world around us with our love, compassion, and acts of service—however small it may seem to us—can make a difference. We know better and we do better.

As you prepare to preach and teach for the OGHS offering, consider these questions: what does sharing light look like in and for your congregation, your community, in the world? How is God using you to share light? How has someone shared light for you?

As a congregational challenge, ask members to start a Share the Light journal—write down instances where they see someone sharing light or when they have shared light. These can be posted on the church’s social media platforms or in the newsletter. Light is shining everywhere if we take the time to notice.

Remind your congregation that we share our light whenever we offer an encouraging word, bake a casserole for a friend who is ill, tutor a child in an after-school program, staff a soup kitchen, volunteer to teach Sunday School, or advocate and support efforts to right an injustice.

We share our light when we contribute to the OGHS offering. Your gifts help families live more efficiently and other families find safety in shelters instead of on the streets. Your gifts allow women to sell locally sourced produce and other food items. Your gifts allow other women to create cooperatives so that they can do more together than they could do separately. Your gifts support places of hospitality to strangers who soon become friends. Your gifts support those who are differently-abled and much more.

We cannot be in all of the places that need help and we may never personally witness the results of our help, but through our generous tithes, offerings, and special gifts, we can illumine places with abundant God-colors and know that we have made a difference. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us that we are the light of the world.

We share that light when we do good for others. Discipleship from the inside out begins with generosity.

When the opportunity comes, let us shine and share.

When another is in need, let us respond.

Let’s go public, for we are Light-bearers.

Generosity is our standard and Love is our ethic.

Let us not hide our light under a bucket—let our light shine for all to see.

Let us share the light.