

"Ye are the Light of the World"

This challenging and arresting statement of the Master's was addressed to the disciples of his day and certainly must be true of the disciples of today.

Let us take note of the statement. Observe that it declares, "Ye are the light of the world". It might be somewhat more comforting and involve less responsibility if it simply declared, "Ye carry the light of the world". But the charge is not to carry light but to be light.

Jesus is here describing the character of His followers. They are to be light itself. That light is inward and pervasive of their lives. His followers are light not because of what they say and do but because of what they are. It is character and not works that constitutes light.

Why does light shine? Because it cannot help it; it is its nature. Without effort or consciousness it quietly but effectively does its work. So the life of the Christian, transformed, illumined and set aglow by the presence of the One who said "I am the light of the world", becomes light and shines, giving light to the world; it shines with a brightness clear and penetrating, that will put to shame the works of darkness and transform the darkness itself. This it will do simply and naturally, without ostentation or show, because it is the nature of light to shine.

The church today suffers from the presence in it of so many whose lives have little or nothing distinctively Christ-like about them and who consequently exert, at the most, but a feeble influence for Christ. They are weak lights indeed, for it is the Christ-likeness of the lives of the followers

of Christ that renders them "the light of the world". We cannot be light except we be Christ-like.

To many people it appears that the church and Christian people are today too greatly concerned with doing something and that being something first has failed to receive proper emphasis. The watchwords of Christian people seem to be "do", and "produce". In the language of Dr. E. Stanley Jones, "the church is suffering from an outwardism that is more interested in statistics than in states of heart and mind". Goaded by the slogans of "do" and "produce" we have worked feverishly. We have established and maintained hospitals, furnished educational and recreational facilities, built social centers, established orphanages and homes for children and old people, and raised our financial quotas. Yet in spite of these multitudinous good works the church seems to have lost her appeal to and her influence with mankind. Is this because we have dared to believe that our humanitarian, philanthropic and social activities constituted real Christainity? If so let us remember that there are various organizations which make no particular claim to being Christian which are doing these same tasks in a far more effective and acceptable manner than the church. It is not the performance of such works that persuades men that we are the light of the world, nor does the doing of these commendable and helpful things prove that we are. We have substituted doing for being. We have been more interested in the effects of light than in being light *itself*.

Before we can lay claim to being the light of the world we must be able to produce fruits of spiritual power which the world cannot duplicate. We must cease to point to these

humanitarian ministries as evidences of our spiritual life and power and regard them as mere by-products of the spiritual life. The evidences of spiritual life and power are to be found in the actual salvation of men from their sins, the transformation of life and character by the dynamic of the Christ of the cross, the establishment of right relations of men with his God and fellow man. We must be able to hold out to men a hope and a dynamic that will help them solve the problems of their inner lives, and when the problems of the inner life have been solved the solution of the outer problems will follow as a natural sequence. We often complain that men today are deserting the church. We say they do so because they are irreligious, is it not rather because there is no light there, no life, no savor, but darkness, death and insipidity, and utter futility? Certainly as long as professed Christian people chafe at the restraints of holy living, as long as professed Christians persist in costly and sensual indulgences, as long as they leave the offense of the cross out of their religion and seek the ways of selfish pleasure, the world will not believe that they are the light of the world.

When we shall become willing to be light, shall put first things first, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, live sacrificially, and let the light from Christ stream into and through our lives, and thus raise our lives above the life about us, then our lives will be light, the light of the world.