

Made to Illuminate

Caleb Hyers | April 22, 2026 | Matthew 5:14–16 & Matthew 6:1–18

WHEN THE LIGHT IS BRIGHT ENOUGH, NOBODY STARES AT THE SOURCE

The title of today's message is "Made to Illuminate."

When the light is bright enough, nobody stares at the source. They see the way. When I dimmed the lights and made it about one light, all you saw was that light. But when we provided enough light, you saw what you actually needed to see. We were made to illuminate. We were made to be that light that shows the way — not the light that gets attention, but the light that calls attention to the Lord and the things he is doing.

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

"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)

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." Then he turns around and says, "You are the light of the world." Think with me. That is a big assignment. Have you noticed the world lately? Has anyone been paying attention to how much darkness there is?

I was meditating on this scripture this week and asking the Lord, "What are you saying to The Resting Place, to our congregation?" And I really felt like he pointed out a tension in the Sermon on the Mount. Because he goes on from Matthew 5 to Matthew 6 and says this:

"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:1–4)

"And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:5–6)

"And when you fast, do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others. Truly I say to you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, that your fasting may not be seen by others, but by your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (Matthew 6:16–18)

THE QUESTION IS NEVER "DO PEOPLE SEE?" IT IS "WHO ARE WE PERFORMING FOR?"

There is a seeming tension between Matthew 5:14–16 and Matthew 6:1–4. Matthew 5 says let your light shine so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. But then Matthew 6 says beware of practicing your righteousness in front of others in order to be seen. There is a seeming contradiction here, but it is not contradictory at all.

The question should never be, "Do people see?" The question always should be, "Who are we performing for?" It is never whether they should see — it is who we are performing for. Because it is the same action with different orientation. The praying, the giving, the fasting — these are good things. But one actually produces glory to the Father and one produces glory to you. It is about orientation. It is about what you are actually trying to show. The key is always: who actually gets the glory in what you are doing?

People say things like, "Oh, it was all God." I am going to correct you when you say that. If it was God, it would have been better. It would have been perfect if it was all God. You did fine. I was trying to encourage you. But if it was all God, it would have been better. We need to break through that noise. We need to understand: you should be shining. And if the light is bright enough, no one looks at the source. The only reason you look at a dim light is because it was not bright enough to fill the room. It drew attention to itself because it was too dim.

THERE IS A PURE VERSION OF EVERY PERVERSION

He breaks down three practices, and I love it. There is a pure version of every perversion. If you see something being perverted, look for the pure version and go partner with that instead of just being mad.

Giving. The perversion is you sound the trumpet, you make sure everybody knows. They actually had trumpets — shaped like funnels — where you would drop your coins and they would clang loudly during the festival times: "Look at all I gave." The pure version is the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing. There is a secrecy to it, an anonymous reality. So the question when it comes to giving is this: Is anyone glorifying God because of your generosity? Or are they just impressed with you?

Prayer. The perversion is public prayers performed for the people. There are people who think the longer you pray, the more spiritual it is. And some of you will not land the plane, especially before we are going to eat. Let me help you: just say, "Thank you, Jesus, for this food. Amen." And eat it. That is all Jesus did. He broke the bread and ate. You are trying to out-pray Jesus before meal time. The pure version is private conversation with a Father who sees in secret. It is intimacy with God through prayer. It is about him being the one who hears. In your life, is your prayer life real? Or is it just a reputation? Do you actually have a prayer life, or are you just known for praying?

Fasting. The perversion is you look the part. You disfigure your face. You make sure they notice. You know how this works in church — you are fasting and you walk into church looking rough, just so somebody asks, "Are you okay?" And then you say, "Don't tell anyone, but I'm fasting." You are laughing because you have either done it or had it done to you. Wash your face. Anoint your head. Make it so nobody knows but God.

Now, fasting food is a legitimate spiritual practice. But in our day, the more potent fast for Americans in the wealthiest nation in the world is noise, entertainment, social media, and the internet. That is the fast we need.

THE FATHER IS GLORIFIED BY MORE LIGHT, NOT LESS

The perversion produces glory to self. The pure version produces glory to the Father. Jesus said in John 15:8:

"By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples."

Bearing fruit equals doing good works, which equals light. How is God glorified? Not by you dimming your light, but by increasing your light. You are the light of the world — not "this little light of mine." We need a lot of light. When it is a little light, everybody sees you. But if you crank it up high enough, nobody is going to see the source. They will see everything else.

We should do things not to be seen by others, but so that the Father is seen. And there is only one way to do that: walk in the works he has already prepared for us.

YOU ARE GOD'S WORKMANSHIP — CREATED FOR PRE-WRITTEN WORKS

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." (Ephesians 2:10)

That word "workmanship" is the Greek word *poiema* — it means masterpiece, or poem, or poetic performance. God is the poet. You are the poem. You should not be performing for people — you should be God's poetry in motion, glorifying him.

There were good works prepared in advance for you before you ever showed up. This is the key: you are not starting anything. You are fulfilling a script. You are not generating the works. You are walking in pre-written ones. That is the assignment. You are not performing for an audience. You are fulfilling a script written before you were born.

A poem does not draw attention to the pen. The poem speaks for itself and gives credit to the author. I have never read a poem and said, "Poem, you are so wonderful. Great job being a poem." I have never stood in front of a piece of artwork and said, "Wow, artwork, you are amazing." Who would do that? What happens when you see the art is you look for the artist.

When I was in Italy with Kala at a marriage retreat in Tuscany — you should all go, there is one coming up — we went to the Accademia, where the statue of David is. I did not go up and high-five the statue and say, "Good job being a statue." And in the music area, there was the very first prototype of a piano ever — the real one, under glass. I did not lean against the glass and say, "Oh, piano, I love your strings." What did I do? I went, "Who made this?" And I looked to the right, and there was a description of the creator. I spent most of my time reading that description. I took a picture and looked him up later and found out more about the creator.

God is the poet. You are the poem. Stop performing and start walking. Just walk in everything he has called you to be. It is already pre-written. The works are pre-written. You just need to shine, because you were made to illuminate.

THE CLOSING QUESTION

Here is the challenging question I want you to walk out with — not in condemnation, but in conviction. Condemnation is a death sentence. Conviction says, I need a change. Here is the question:

Is anyone glorifying God because of your life? Or are they just impressed with you?

That is what Jesus said: Let your light so shine that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. If the answer is no, it is not time to hide your light. It is time to increase it. It is time to turn up the brightness. You should shine bright enough that if they tried to look at you, they would see spots. Shine so bright they see the Father.

Here is the prayer I want you to ask the Lord: *What pre-written work are you waiting for me to walk in?* You might feel like you already know the answer. It is still a good thing to ask. Lord, is there something you have written in my life that I am not walking in? I want to know what it is.

Some of you, God has called you to serve here and you are not — and you know it, and it is time. Some of you, God has called you to give and you are not. Some of you, God is calling you to start that business and you are scared. You should not be, because he wrote it in already. It is in the book. Follow the script. But take action. Do not just hear something and do nothing.

Father, we ask you to make it clear, make it plain. Show us, Lord. And for all of us, we say, "Send us." Send me, Lord, into my family, my home, my workplace, the work you have written for me. Show me what you love and what you hate. Give me a heart that breaks when your heart breaks. Show me the broken and the lost around me. Help me to care for my family, my brothers and sisters, my spiritual family, and receive care from them. Lead me in the light of your word. Your word is truth. Lead us in the truth. In Jesus' name. Amen.