

Sermon title: “The Light That Shines”
The Rev. Jawanza Karriem Colvin
October 15, 2023

Scripture: Matthew 5:14-16

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but upon the lampstand, 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 in heaven.

Sermon Summary:

This Little Light of Mine (“This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine.”) is a popular traditional gospel song of unknown origin probably from the 1920’s that is simple and yet profound because it speaks to the light in all of us. It became an anthem of the Civil Rights Movement. The song gave courage and comfort to activists in the darkest times of the civil rights struggle in the mid-Twentieth Century. More recently, when white supremacist groups rallied in Charlottesville in August, 2017, chanting, “You will not replace us” clergy sang the song as a counter-protest that had a disarming effect.

“Your light isn’t that little,” Rev. Colvin proclaimed.

Citing 1 Thessalonians 5:5, “You are all children of light and children of the day, we are not of the night or of darkness,” Rev. Colvin stated, “We are made in the image of God, in the pattern and design of God’s own consciousness.” He pointed out that currently auto workers are on strike. Automaker CEOs make 360 times more than workers on the assembly line, as if their light shines brighter than the rank and file. Our status conscious society wants us to believe that some lights are greater than others in business, education, law, politics, entertainment. We see it everywhere, in credit ratings, in voting laws, in university legacy admissions, to name a few.

“Your light shines just as brightly as anyone else’s,” Rev. Colvin asserted. There is something beautiful about natural light. You don’t need the world to validate you when you are a child of God. You have God’s natural light.

The light is not ours. It's God's light. "It is your light as much as the flame belongs to the lamp." You don't have to blow out anyone else's light to let your light shine. "It's in everyone the same."

Sermon Points

1. *Embrace your light.* Believe in Jesus' words, "You are the light of the world." Pastor Colvin said, "Second to believing in God is the power of believing in yourself." You are not the darkness, not your failures or the worst thing you have ever done. We must deal with our dark side. But we can pull out "the sword of the spirit" and let our light shine. Give yourself permission to heal and be the best version of yourself. "In Genesis 1, even God had to give himself permission for God's light to shine."
2. *Don't dim your light.* We dim our light to be socially acceptable because we are afraid or ashamed. Our imposter syndrome might be exposed, our insecurities and inadequacies. But God can use our weaknesses and challenges. Persisting despite your challenges is witness to God's glory. We are all wounded healers as we embrace life's challenges.
3. *Find where your light shines brightest.* It's a different place for everyone. You must shine as brightly as possible in your place. There is no need to worry about what might happen when you let your light shine brightly. It's copacetic.

Questions for Discussion

1. Where does your light shine brightest? How does it make you feel?
2. When do you dim your light? Why?
3. How do you give yourself permission to heal and to shine?
4. Can you identify a time in your life when you allowed your weakness to show and God used it for good? Explain
5. How do you recognize the light in others? How can you help bring out another's light?
6. What do you need to bring out your own light to shine as brightly as possible?