



## Theme Interpretation and Scriptural Exegesis: Be the Light (Continued)

Be the light! For the sake of sisters and brothers who have renewed hope because you care enough to shine.

Be the light! So that women and men around the world can find their way and know that there is a path forward.

Be the light! Sharing God-colors with all you encounter!

Give generously to One Great Hour of Sharing! Follow in the footsteps of The Light of the World! Shine brightly!

## Scriptural Commentary and Sermon Starter

What would you do if you knew you could not fail? It's a question we should ask ourselves regularly. It is a question that Jesus implies when he tells his disciples—and us—to be light, bringing God-colors in the world.

Jesus stands in the tradition of Moses by interpreting God's vision for creation. The Beatitudes and Ten Commandments let us know that communities of justice, love, compassion, and generosity are desired by God and are possible—here and now.

God calls us to live with integrity—with head and heart connected, with intention and action aligned.

In Matthew 5, Jesus teaches that God is already transforming and loving the world, already empowering God's people to be all they can be—lights bringing God-colors to every corner of creation.

Jesus challenges his disciples—and us—to live as if believing in and trusting God makes a difference. To be light because that, simply, is who we are.

Jesus sets a high bar for discipleship: preaching and teaching despite resistance from some and outright hostility from others; healing on the spot instead of keeping office hours; meaningfully engaging those cast out and on the margins of society; breaking bread with the ne'er-do-wells at tables denied to them.

Jesus challenges us to do likewise and from a place of blessedness—we already have everything we need to be light-bearers. We need only to shine.



## Scriptural Commentary and Sermon Starter (Continued)

As you prepare to preach and teach for One Great Hour of Sharing, make clear that Jesus is not promoting transactional faith. We don't bargain with God for favors or blessings. We expect nothing in return for being fully who God has created us to be. We do good works in gratitude for all that God has done for us, as a response of thankfulness.

If your church has stained glass windows, invite the congregation to think about what the windows portray and why. Share any history you have about the windows. Ask how the scenes look as the intensity of sunlight changes throughout the day. How are the windows light-bearers of God's love and presence?

If your church does not have stained glass, use an example found on the Internet. One example is the website for St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco (<https://www.saintgregorys.org>). While not stained glass, the "Dancing Saints" is an iconic installation of ninety persons that wraps around the church rotunda—with a 12-foot-tall dancing Christ.

The saints are a wide array of persons from a multitude of time periods, faith traditions, and backgrounds—King David, Frances of Assisi, Anne Frank, and Malcolm X, among others. As the congregation dances around the altar during the liturgy, the saints dance above, proclaiming a sweeping, universal vision of God's light shining through human life.

Who would you include in a modern stained glass window? Who would you see in a window that represents One Great Hour of Sharing? This is an opportunity to identify and honor those who have been or are living into the light to which God has called them. Invite your members to think about how they can be light-bearers for others.

Jesus' call for us to be light is ongoing. Communities are in crisis. Storms devastate the countryside. Far too many persons are vulnerable—lacking power, resources, and social support—and are brutally mistreated. The earth is abused and creation is disrespected. Justice is denied.



## Scriptural Commentary and Sermon Starter (Continued)

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you are light for people in need.

You offer light when disasters hit.

You offer light when conditions threaten families and communities.

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you are light for communities here and across the globe.

You offer light that restores structures and transforms lives.

You offer light that blesses others to shine.

When you give to One Great Hour of Sharing, you are light that shines today, tomorrow, and well into the future.

You—we—are light-bearers.

Let us be the light.

Let us shine.

Let us go public.

Find a hilltop.

Let us keep open house and be generous with our lives and in our giving.

Let us make a difference—give to One Great Hour of Sharing!

Rev. Barbara Essex