

2024 TALK 15.9.24 CREATION 2, (GEN. 1:1-5, 14-19/MATTHEW 5:14-16)

GOD'S GOOD CREATION: THE WONDER OF 'LIGHT & LIGHTS'

There are many things in our world, we take for granted don't we? Like water, for example. But this is true of the miracle of light also. It's there every morning (unless you happen to live in the Arctic circle). Living in the UK, it's part of our 'everyday' which we just expect. OK, so some days are grey, foggy & rainy. We don't get to see the sun - sometimes for days in the UK. But the sun is still shining. The moon is still reflecting. The stars are still twinkling. Something of a lesson for us too, about God of course. Our LORD is always with us, even on those days when God does seem asleep or hidden or absent.

God said, "Let there be light" – and there was light. God said, "Let there be lights" – and there were lights: sun, moon and stars. Praise God for his wonderful work of creation. And praise God for the new creation God has started in Jesus, light of the world. As Paul puts it, God wants to shine the light of God's love into each of our hearts. God wants us, like the moon with the sun to reflect the light of the love of Jesus, always streaming from the heart of God.

We've been giving time and attention in recent months to how we, as God's people here in Hemel, might reflect God's love to those around us. How we might turn up the brightness control for Carey BC...?

Let me show you just two of the new things which have come out of these times of meeting to talk about our Vision for Mission. Much more to think about than this. But we need to start, firstly, with our new overall mission statement: (SEE SLIDE). You may have noticed, this has already replaced our old mission statement on our church newsletter. These few words are meant to summarise the beating heart of our church. This is what we are aiming to do, in all that we do... You will be pleased to know, I'm not expecting you to memorise this now. But I hope you will come to memorise it - hopefully before next Sunday! Please take copies of the newsletter home, so you can memorise it before next Sunday... No public shaming, I promise. But there will be a chocolate prize for those who can quote it word for word next Sunday!

Secondly, here are the four love-actions we are setting ourselves to do, as a church, in our Jesus mission to our town. (SEE SLIDE). I'm not expecting these to be memorised by next Sunday. But what should help us remember is that these four mission-actions spell out the word 'L.O.V.E'... (READ). There is much

more to unfold out of each of these headings, but we will be doing that in the coming weeks, as I preach on the church as the body of Christ. With everything we do, both personally, and as a church, we are 'lights of the world'.

In terms of what Jesus says in his Sermon on the Mount, how we might be a 'light on a stand' in the place we find ourselves?. How will God use us, to shine the light of God's love ... to West Herts College, just opposite for example...? To the Marlowes clinic, our nearest neighbour ? To those who work in the convenience stores, take-aways & estate agents along Marlowes here ...? You don't have to be a genius to see that there is a huge mission field, with multiple challenges attached, right here on our doorstep. You can walk just 100 steps from Carey's front door in any direction & you are talking about a mission field of thousands of people. Many different types of people, with all sorts of needs. That's before you even begin to think about the rest of our immediate community, and the rest of our town... But let's not get overwhelmed. This is our shared mission. What's more we share this mission with other churches.

Here's one very important point from Jesus' teaching about being 'a light on a hill' – Jesus reduces his challenge to home-sized proportions. Each light on a stand does an amazing job. But it only has light enough for a single room in a house. And that's true of Carey & any church. We need to focus our mission. Be open to God leading us to a particular group (or groups) of people.

Those who are immediately closest to Carey, fall into two groups of people:

- Those on our hearts whenever we come to worship: our family & friends.
- The groups which already use our premises during the week.

One of the ideas to come out of our Vision for Mission thinking was whether we could run Alpha for these people closest to us. The aim of Alpha is to introduce people to the Christian faith - to shine the light of God's love, in small groups, in a more homely way. One positive spin-off about Alpha is that it will grow us in our faith too, both those leading these small groups & those supporting others to come to faith. There is a 'but' here, inevitably... Alpha is no 'silver bullet'. We might, in the end, decide to shape Carey's mission around Alpha, but this will take faith & commitment. It will require prayer & joined up thinking & a collective effort. Let's ask God for the faith & courage, to help us be a light – to those we meet this week. As Jesus put it: 'a light on a stand gives

light to everyone, in the house'. Let us each be a light on a stand, first in our own homes & in the homes of our friends. Then Carey can be a light to this vicinity of Marlowes - & beyond.