**More – Week 4 - More Hope**

**Message Big Idea**: Jesus offers us more hope so that we bring light to the darkness.

**Scripture:** John 8:12, Matthew 5:14-16

**NOTE**: In the Host Moment pre-message, mention that it is Baptism Sunday.

**PROPS**: An “Improved” option is to use a powerful spotlight as a prop. Here is the [suggested spotlight](https://www.amazon.com/STANLEY-SL10LEDS-Rechargeable-Lithium-Spotlight/dp/B00OU67Z80/ref%3Dsr_1_3?ie=UTF8&qid=1534438734&sr=8-3&keywords=1000000+candlepower+spotlight&dpID=41LT6zcC-VL&preST=_SY300_QL70_&dpSrc=srch). “Genius” option is to plan to go dark in the room during the intro. Another prop option is to use the spotlight and a chair during the lighthouse story.

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**Introduction: Darkness**

How many of you were afraid of the dark as a kid? *(Hands)* Is anyone still afraid? *(Raise your own hand)* It’s okay to admit – this is a safe space. Good, I’m glad I’m not alone.

*(Tell a personal story from childhood or adulthood about being scared in the dark)*

I (Tammy) have to admit, not too long ago I found myself totally freaked out in the dark. Some of you know I lived in the city for six years working with our Lincoln Square location. Well, my bedroom in the city was on the back of the house, the alley side of the house. So for six years I had a bright alley street light shining through the mini blinds into my bedroom. I’ll never forget the first night after I moved back here to the Plainfield area… It was a moonless night and when I turned the lights off to go to bed, I was so startled and got really nervous because I found myself in pitch-black darkness.

*(Genius idea: “Darkness, kind of like this…” House lights go off, creating total darkness in the room. Tell the next story in the dark.)*

I may or may not have slept with a nightlight that night!

Even if you wouldn’t necessarily say that you’re *afraid* of the dark, being in total darkness can be a little creepy, right? Like, when the power in a house goes out – it surprises us, catches us off guard. Being in darkness feels a little off, doesn’t it?

Now, being afraid of the dark as a kid is fairly normal, but my guess is that a lot of us adults still struggle with that same fear. And, let’s face it – there’s a lot of darkens in the world, isn’t there? Crime, heartache, abuse, corruption – you don’t have to look all that far to recognize darkness all around us.

*(Improved/Genius idea: Teaching pastor turns on a handheld spotlight. House lights gradually come up to full as well.)*

Yet, into this darkness there shines a light. A light so powerful it dispels the darkness. When this light shines, darkness doesn’t stand a chance.

**Series Recap**

*(Series Graphic)* We’re in week four of our series, “More.” Whether you consider yourself a church person or not, we’ve all felt a longing for more. And this “more” is different than what the American Dream can offer. This “more” isn’t found in titles, accomplishments, bank accounts, or vacation homes. Whether we recognize it or not, the “more” we crave deep down is Jesus.

One of Jesus’ closest friends was a guy names John, and he recorded Jesus saying these incredible words:

**“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.” – John 10:10**

This “life to the full” that Jesus is talking about is a life with more joy, more love, and more hope than we could ever imagine.

* We experience this joy as we celebrate the relationship we can have with God and the ways he is at work in our lives.
* We experience this love as we connect with other Christ-followers who are walking this journey with us.
* And we experience this hope as Jesus brings light to even the darkest corners of our world.

**Word: John 8:12**

In John 8:12, Jesus says:

**“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” –John 8:12**

That's a bold statement! And there’s a lot going on in that statement that might not seem obvious at first.

Understand, Jesus makes this statement in the middle of a festival the Jewish people call “The Feast of Tabernacles.” During this festival, candles lit up the courtyards of Jerusalem. So, just imagine walking the streets of Jerusalem at night, with candles illuminating the whole city, and hearing Jesus make this audacious claim that *he* himself is the light of the world.

Not only that, every Jewish person listening to his words would hear echoes of the Old Testament prophets, *(Isaiah 60:19)* people like Isaiah who spoke of the coming Messiah as one who would be an everlasting light, the one who would bring hope into the world. They understood that Jesus wasn’t simply using a clever metaphor; he’s claiming to be the long awaited Messiah!

**Word: Matthew 5:14-15**

But here’s something even more amazing! Jesus says that *he* is the light of the world, and we all probably think, *“Yes! I know that Jesus is the light of the world, and I love that* ***he*** *is!”* But then, in one of the greatest sermons ever preached, Jesus turns around and says these mind-blowing words:

What’s that first word? That’s right!

**“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.” -Matthew 5:14-16**

Did you catch that course-altering statement? He’s no longer saying simply that **HE** is the light of the world; Jesus is saying that **WE** are also the light of the world! We are now the ones to carry hope into the world! The way he stood out as a light in the darkness is now the way we are to stand out! You and I are responsible for reflecting the light of Jesus to the dark world around us!

But can I be vulnerable for a moment? I am totally good with Jesus standing out, dispelling the darkness, being the light of the world. But sometimes I’m far less confident in being that same light myself. Do I really want that responsibility?

I think, for a lot of us, our natural inclination is to want to blend into the world. Sure, we all want to stand out as important, significant, impressive… but only in all the socially acceptable ways. Personally, I panic a little bit at the thought of standing out and being different, of being a light in dark places. My guess is I’m not alone. In fact, this thought reminded me of a classic Camera Candid video I saw a few weeks ago.

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**Video: Elevator Social Experiement**

*(Duck pictures)* Apparently this phenomenon also occurs in nature… Poor confused duck. *(Pause so that people can see the picture)*

(Matthew 5:14-16)It’s so easy to simply go with the flow, even if we don’t necessarily understand why. It’s easy to live our lives inside a comfort zone never standing out from everyone and everything around us. And, let me just say that I feel this too. Pastors are not exempt in this. The other day I found myself in a conversation with some friends and the narrative quickly turned to talking badly about someone we knew. I remember having a moment where I thought, *“Do I stop this conversation, or just go along with it?”* I didn’t want to stand out or rock the boat with my friends, so I chose to just blend in and be a part of the hurtful conversation.

Why do we do this? Why do we tend to blend in and conform?

* Maybe there is a fear of what others are going to think.
* Maybe we just don't know what to do or say in the moment.
* Maybe we are afraid others will think we’re judgmental and “holier than now.”

But by calling *us* the light, Jesus isn’t calling us to be the same, he’s calling us to be different. He’s calling us to be uncomfortable at times. He’s calling us to be willing to risk and sacrifice. All to bring the light of hope into our dark world.

**Challenge: Shine (S.S. Banner Lighthouse)**

I recently heard a story that really challenged me in how I think about this idea of being a light in a dark world. The story went like this…

On the coast of Norway there is a lighthouse where a keeper lived with his two kids. One day he went to the shore for food. While he was there, a storm came up and he was unable to return. The time for lighting the lamp in the tower came, and Mary, the oldest child, said to her little brother, *"Willie, we have to light the lamp." "But how can we? We aren’t big enough."* Willie asked. But the two children climbed the narrow stairs to the tower where the lamp was kept.

*(Stand on chair and reach up)* Mary pulled up a chair and tried to reach the lamp in the great reflector; but it was too high. *(Step down from chair and pick up spotlight)* So she left and returned with a small oil lamp in her hand. *"I can hold this up to the reflector,"* she said to her little brother. *(Stand on chair holding lamp up)* She climbed on the chair again, but still the reflector was just beyond her reach.

*“Get down,"* said Willie; *"I know what we can do."* *(Step down)* She jumped down, and Willie stretched his little body across the chair. *"Stand on me,"* he said. *(Stand on chair)* And Mary stood on the little guy as he lay across the chair. *(Raise spotlight and turn it on)* She raised the lamp high, and its light shone far out across the water. Holding it first with one hand, then with the other, to rest her little arms, she called down to her brother*, "Does it hurt you, Willie?"* *"Of course it hurts,"* he called back, *"but keep the light burning."*

*(Step down)* I love that story. I think the question that we need to ask ourselves this morning is this: **Are we keeping the light of God's love burning in the world?** Even though it may hurt at times? Even when it’s uncomfortable? Are we holding up the light so that all the world can see?

**Contribute**

See, the challenge from Jesus is to “shine.” But in order to shine, we actually have to *do* something. And that something might be uncomfortable at times. It probably won’t always be enjoyable. But Jesus asks us to “keep the light burning.” He says: (Matthew 5:14-16 with v. 16 highlighted) “…**let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Good deeds. Good deeds are an action, something we actually have to do in order to bring light to the world. Around here, these “good deeds” are what the third C in our 3Cs is all about. These “good deeds” are about *(graphic)* **Contribute**.

* Contribute is all about our relationship with the world.
* Contribute is all about how we help restore God’s dream for this world.
* Contribute is all about shining the light of hope into every dark corner.

And so today, I want to challenge us in two specific ways.

**Challenge #1 – Pray.**

The first is to pray. The perfect place to start when it comes to being the light of Jesus to those around us is to begin to pray for those who don’t yet have a personal relationship with God. Who are the people in your life that need the light of Jesus today?

* A co-worker?
* A neighbor?
* A family member?
* A teammate?
* An old friend?

Have you prayed for them? I hadn’t. I was convicted several years ago to begin praying for the people in my life that I know who are not yet aware of God’s desire to be close to them, and would you believe that as soon as I started to pray, I saw God begin to move in lives like never before. So let’s start being the light by praying.

**#2 – Step Out.**

The second challenge is to step out. There are a bunch of ways to do this…a bunch of ways to contribute to the mission!

* Join a ministry team here at COMMUNITY that is helping to further God’s dream.
* Start being generous with your finances.
* Sign up to serve in the community in some way like mentoring a student.

I’m confident that God is tapping some of you on the shoulder saying, *“It’s time to start shining your light! It’s time to get involved! It’s time to contribute!”* But some of you might be thinking, *“Ok, but how do I go about that?”* Great question!

*(Give location specific details about how to respond.)* Immediately following this service we are going to have a Contribute Party right in our lobby! Everybody loves a good party, right? We will only take about 7 minutes of your time, but we will lay out many of the ways where you can start contributing today.

Don’t leave here today without taking a step to begin shining your light to dispel the darkness in our world!

**Conclusion: Aligning Ourselves with Jesus**

Jesus says:

**“You are the light of the world.” –Matthew 5:14**

Understand, left to myself, I would likely be overcome by the darkness. Left to yourself, you would too. Christ-followers are not the light of the world because there is something in our own abilities that can overcome the darkness, but because we are aligned with Jesus. When our lives are aligned with Jesus, we *reflect* his light into the world.

Maybe today, the decision you need to make is to align yourself with Jesus. Perhaps you’re a Christ-follower, but you’ve been living out of alignment and your light’s been dimmed. It’s time to come back to God and shine again!

Or maybe you’ve never made the decision to align yourself with Jesus, to become a Christ-follower, to begin to live as the light of the world. Today, we want to challenge you to make that decision to “shine,” and go public with that decision through baptism!

**Baptism Sunday**

As we said earlier, today is a day we call Baptism Sunday. This is one of my favorite days of the year! Baptism is a symbolic act in which we declare our commitment to follow Jesus, the light of the world, and to live a life that will reflect his light to everyone around us.

We already have \_\_\_\_\_\_ people who have made the decision to publicly shine the light of Jesus by being baptized. And we can’t wait to celebrate with them! But maybe today, we can celebrate with you too? Perhaps today, Jesus is speaking to you to be the light that he called you to be through the waters of baptism.

Now, some of you, even as I’m talking are thinking, *“I want to take this step to following Jesus…I should be baptized.”* But then come all the questions that hold you back…

**Question #1:**

You might be thinking: **“I was baptized as a baby, should I be baptized again?”**

Some people were sprinkled as babies in the church. I believe that that is a credit to your parents that they were committed to your spiritual growth. But it was a choice your parents made. At the same time, we know that in every single instance of baptism in the New Testament two things were true of a Christ-follower…

#1 - The person who was being baptized was always old enough to make that decision for his or herself. It was always their choice.

#2 – We see each baptism as something that was done by immersion, or by completely going under the water.

If you’ve never made that choice for yourself, I want to challenge you to take this step today. The way I look at it is this - you are actually completing the commitment that your parents made for you all those years ago. And if this is the question that you are thinking today, don’t wait, you should be baptized TODAY!

**Question #2:**

You may also be thinking, **“Don’t I need to have my life all together before I get baptized?”**

Here is some amazing news! Baptism is NOT for those who have it all figured it, but for those of us who don’t! No one has it all figured out. And baptism is actually a commitment by those who are ready to acknowledge, *“I don’t have it all together, I recognize I can’t save myself, I can’t reflect the light of Jesus without Jesus. I know I need him.”*

Think about it like this, you don’t clean yourself up in order to take a shower. You take a shower to clean yourself up. Baptism is a lot like that! Just come as you are and let Jesus begin to clean you up! And if this is the question that you are thinking today, don’t wait, you should be baptized TODAY!

**Question #3:**

Or you might be wondering: **“What if I have family or friends who are not here today that I want to see this?”**

If that is what you are thinking, you should still be baptized. Here is why - we have several photographers around this room who have been asked to capture this amazing moment for you. Also, we have about 900 additional photographers in this room right now! *(Hold up phone)* I’d even ask everyone here to take a picture, post it online later today and use the hash tag *(add)* **#NYBBaptism** *(Use specific location).*

We also have video recording the entire experience. So you can easily share it with your family and friends later so that they don't miss out. Listen, if you sense God is prompting you, don’t put it off. You should be baptized TODAY!

**Question #4:**

Or maybe you’re still holding out asking: **“What if I don’t have clothes to change into or a towel to dry off with?”**

* We’ve got an amazing baptism T-shirt to give you as a gift …in your size!
* We have shorts.
* We have towels.
* We have blow dryers and brushes to make your hair look perfect again!
* We have an entire team of people right outside those doors ready to serve you in any way in order to make this the best experience possible.

Your baptism today is a perfect way to reflect the light of Jesus to those around you. I want you to hear me say this again; you should be baptized TODAY! The decision to align yourself with Jesus is before you, I can’t encourage you enough to take that step.

**Communion Idea**

Ian will add in the BEST.