

# Lighting The Way

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Preacher: Tony Augsburger

[ 0:00 ] Well, hey, thank you so much for tuning in today. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana.! And as always, if you'd like to learn a little more about us,! you can go to FCCgreensburg.com or you can check out the FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But hey, today is going to look just a little different. Each year here at FCC, we will have Tony Augsburger. He's the director of Mahoning Valley Christian Service Camp right outside of Rushville, Indiana.

And that is where we send all of our kids and our youth to church camp. And it is a wonderful ministry that is making this awesome impact for the kingdom of God.

So Tony is actually going to share with us about what God is doing at Mahoning Valley, but he's also going to preach God's word to us today. So enjoy. And Tony, thank you so much for being with us.

Good morning and welcome to worship. My name is Tony Augsburger. I'm the executive director at Mahoning Valley Christian Service Camp. It's both a privilege and it's an honor to serve as an extension of First Christian Church in the ministry to your youth, faithfully partnering in the work of the Lord as called to us in Colossians 3, verse 23.

[ 1:19 ] Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart and working for the Lord, not for human masters. This past summer, an eight-week period, 1,725 campers attended a week of camp.

62 of those campers made a decision and were baptized beginning a walk with our Lord Jesus Christ. Two of those campers also made a decision to pursue full-time ministry after graduating from high school.

I want to thank you for your prayers, your financial support, and this morning I'm asking you to take a step further and light the way for the future.

You're asking, how do we light the way? How is man called to light and be a light according to the scripture? Well, Jesus makes a bold statement in the Sermon on the Mount.

You are the light of the world. Now, it's interesting here. He does not say this to religious leaders or to spiritual elites, but to ordinary followers like you and I, people just like us.

[ 2:36 ] In a world marked by confusion, fear, and moral darkness, God answers is this, light. And remarkably, He chooses to shine the light through His people, you and I.

Think of it this way. Imagine yourself arriving at camp after dark for the very first time. You see a tree line, the road is very narrow, the wood is very thick, and everything feels unfamiliar to you.

But once you see the camp, entrance light, it lights up, and you know you're going into the right direction, but you have immediate relief during that time.

You know you are in the right place. That light doesn't change the road by any means, but it confirms direction, and it brings peace.

In the same way, God's light reassures us. In a confused world, there is a safe place, and a right path to follow.

[ 3 : 46 ] This morning, we're going to take the opportunity to explore the Scripture, and what Scripture teaches us about the light, where it comes from, and how believers are called to be the light of the way for others, and in the future.

First of all, we need to think about it this way. Well, where does light come from? God is the source of light. In fact, we find that in 1 John 1, verse 5, it says, God is light.

In Him, there is no darkness at all. See, light is not merely something God gives. It is who He is, and His light represents truth without error.

It represents holiness without compromise and without end. The truth reminds us that we do not produce spiritual light, but in our own way, we see that we reflect God's light.

Think of a campfire during an evening service at camp. The fire gives off light and it warmth, but only as long as it is fed.

[ 5 : 07 ] When logs are added, the fire grows brighter. When neglected, though, it fades. Our spiritual light, it works the same way. Staying close to God keeps the fire strong and the flame burning.

We need to be fed by being close to God and utilizing the Scripture. We see that light was an important part of foundation in the beginning.

And we find in Genesis, the first chapter, verse 3, it says, Let there be light. Now, before the sun, before the moon, before the stars, there was light created by God and it appeared on God's command.

Let there be light. This tells us that light is the foundation. It's foundational in all that we do. It brings order where chaos once existed in the darkness and clarity when there was confusion.

You see, darkness brings confusion not knowing where we are and where we are to go. Many of camp cabins when I grew up, they had no outside lighting.

[ 6 : 25 ] Once someone flips that light on, though, it gives direction. That room instantly becomes bright. It lights up.

And for some reason, with that light, it becomes safe and that room becomes usable. God's light does the same way in our lives. Nothing around us changes, but everything becomes clear once we see God's light.

See, man is called out of darkness. Now, let's take an example and think about this. The Bible describes a natural condition as darkness.

Sin binds and blinds us and sin confuses us, separates us from God. Now, in 1 Peter, the 2nd chapter, verse 9, this is a good example here.

See, God does not leave us there in darkness, but he comes to bring light and to shed light upon all of mankind. In 1 Peter, the 2nd chapter, verse 9, it says, he has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

[ 7 : 40 ] Now, salvation is rescue, and purpose from the bondage of sin. Think of it the first time that a camper is going to camp.

And I can shed a little light on this because when I was my very first time at camp, I became homesick and I was afraid that very first night. A counselor turning on a flashlight, walking beside them, makes all the difference as my counselor did with me.

See, God does that for us. He walks with us. He calls us to be that steady light for others so others can see. See, man is called to be a steady light.

Now, Jesus, later on, is identified in the New Testament as the true light. Now, Jesus declares, I am the light of the world in John 8, verse 12.

He does not merely point toward the light, but he embodies it. He reveals truth, God's character, a reflection of.

[ 8 : 51 ] See, at camp, the woods can feel intimidating at night. You hear all kinds of foreign sounds that you're not used to. You're not used to the direction of going into those woods.

Where do I go? What path do I go down? But by morning light, those same woods become peaceful, beautiful, and you hear the birds sing.

See, Jesus brings that kind of transformation in our lives. Once called fear becomes a place of growth in our lives.

It's good to understand, we need to understand this this morning, darkness cannot overcome his light. Darkness cannot overcome his light. Following Jesus means walking in the light.

So, believers are then described as we've already looked at it as light bearers in this world. After identifying himself as the light, Jesus turns to his followers and says, you are the light of the world as we began our message here this morning.

[ 10 : 03 ] You are the light of the world. Now, a single lantern outside a cabin helps campers find their way back safely at night. One small light can prevent confusion or injury.

God often uses small, faithful acts as a guide for the people to turn toward him. Now, understand this.

He uses small, faithful acts to guide the people toward him. Folks, you are the light of the world. You have an opportunity to lead children out of darkness.

Camp plays an important role in a child's life. For six nights, seven days, a child is introduced to the lifestyle of Jesus Christ with no distractions from the world.

And the outside world is left behind. See, light is meant to be seen and not hidden. A child at camp sees for the very first time that ordinary believers in Jesus carries God's light with them.

[ 11 : 15 ] So, you ask the question, how can you light the way? How can you light the way? Believers light the way first by walking according to God's word.

Now, campers watch counselors really closely. How counselors handles a frustration situation, speaks kindly, serves quietly, teaches, and more than words can ever be.

You know, it's like a word we can say, but actions speak louder than words. That visible example is a light in action.

You know, children read scripture, they see God's word guide their steps, love and service are shown in Christ, truth is spoken with grace at camp, integrity in daily life is the foundation, and the light is being Christ-like.

Being Christ-like, that's the importance here that we need to understand on how we light the way. Now, Psalms 119 verse 105.

[ 12 : 31 ] We're familiar with this verse. We see it on plaques and posters. It says here, your word is a lamp of my feet, a light on my path.

And what does that signify? Well, it signifies that God's word, scripture, provides guidance, clarity, and a direction for navigation and navigating life's challenges in this world today and making righteous decisions, righteous choices, illuminating the next step rather than revealing the entire journey at once.

One step at a time. Now, John 13 really builds upon that foundation here this morning. In verses 34, through 35, it says, love identifies.

Love identifies. Well, what does that love identify? Well, let me read the verse here. It says, a new command I give you, love one another as I have loved you so you must love one another with everyone will show that you are my disciples if you love one another.

The standard of love. The standard of love. While the Old Testament commands loving your neighbor as yourself in Leviticus 19th chapter verse 18.

[13:55] The command is new here because it sets higher standard. Loving as Christ loved us. Loving as Christ loved us.

Lighting the way happens through consistence, obedience, loving actions, truthful speech, and godly character. Now, there is an impact when you walk in the light.

When you share that light in this challenge here this morning, light always produces change. Always produces change. After winter, we have a camp called Pioneer Camp.

We have a camp also called a hammock camp. but it's not used during the cold season. But we open it in the springtime so that light can come to it and fresh air can go through those cabins before any camper arrives in May.

Spiritually, if we think about that, God's light brings renewal where there was darkness, where darkness and neglect once existed in your life and in my life.

[15:08] See, light exposes darkness. It brings hope. It brings clarity. It also brings salvation to each and every one of us. Children walking in the light encourages and draws their peers and others to God.

The experience that they get at camp and understanding the importance of walking with Jesus and some for the very first time being introduced to Christ and the light.

See, darkness cannot overcome light. Darkness cannot overcome light. In Ephesians the fifth chapter verses eight to eleven, walk as children in the light.

For you were once in darkness, verse eight begins with, but now you are a light into the Lord. Live as children in light.

For the fruit of light consists in all goodness, righteousness, and truth. We hear those words once more. And then in verse ten it says, and find out what pleases the Lord.

[16:17] Have nothing to do with fruitless deeds of darkness. Nothing with darkness, but rather expose them. John the first chapter verse five.

Darkness cannot overcome the light. If we remember anything here this morning, darkness cannot overcome the light. The light shines in darkness, and darkness has not overcome it.

So, as we summarize this, when believers walk in the light, lives are changed. And that is what we are here to learn here this morning.

We can change lives. We have that opportunity in reflecting God's light. The truth is revealed. God's power is displayed in the light.

But there is a cost of being in the light. Jesus reminds us that light is not always welcome. Light always has some effect.

[17:18] It reveals what's hidden. It brings hope. It shows the way forward. light in Ephesians it reminds us that light exposes darkness.

Light exposes darkness. And not only does it expose darkness but not to shame us but to heal.

Not to shame but to heal. When believers walk in the light others are encouraged they're convicted and drawn toward God.

They're drawn toward the light. Darkness may seem strong but scripture promises it cannot overcome the light. Camp rules feel pretty restrictive at first but they exist for safety they exist for growth during a week of camp.

In the same way God's truth may feel uncomfortable but it protects it shapes you and I for the good. Now light may be resisted it may be rejected we need to understand that.

[ 18 : 33 ] Truth can make people very uncomfortable faithfulness requires courage believers are empowered by God's spirit obedience matters even when it's difficult to obey.

John the third chapter boy this is a great one here in verses 19 through 21 so that we understand because we can fall into this trap of you know praying and praying for someone but they really don't see the importance of the light it says here in verse 19 I begin reading here this is the verdict light has come into the world but people love darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for the fear of their deeds will be exposed but whoever lives by truth comes into the light and so that may be seen plainly that what they have done has been done in the sight of God again in Matthew it describes here in verses 11 and 12 the Matthew the fifth chapter a blessed when persecuted a blessed are you when people insult you persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me rejoice and be glad because great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were there before you shining

God's light comes at a cost but God remains faithful and strong and gives us strength and helps us sustain the walk that we have before us if we obey him he will be by our sides so what is our call well lighting the way is not a one time act I just don't make that commitment today on this Lord's day but it's a lifelong calling see Mahoney Valley has a central chapel and it's visible from multiple paths from all the camps and all the buildings and campers orient themselves to the chapel believers are called to live steady faithful lives and help others find the way to Christ now lighting the way is not a one time event in our lives it is a daily calling each and every day it is a calling we shine brightest when we stay close to Christ with prayer scripture and utilizing the scripture through obedience

God places each of us in a specific place in a specific home in a specific workplace schools he may place you at Mahoney Valley and communities where you live to be light there in a dark world Matthew 28 19 through 20 go and make disciples disciples and this is such an important two verses here therefore go and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you and surely I'm with you always till the very end of the age the question I leave with you here this morning is simple where is God asking you to shine right now I am challenging you to be that light the light that lights the path for the future here at First

Christian Church our youth they are the future if you've not made that commitment this morning then we encourage you to make that commitment to get out of darkness and let the light shine within your life that light is God and Jesus Christ let's pray dear Lord we thank you for the opportunity to be here this morning we thank you for the challenge that you've given us that we can be the light we are here on this earth for a specific purpose we're created by you we're giving a task and Lord we just pray that we're open to that and Lord that we can share the light with someone that we come in contact with either today this week or in months to come for it's in your name we pray amen Mahoning Valley Camp was founded to help develop

[ 23 : 34 ] Christian servants servants for the church ministers missionaries over the years it has grown in just helping people to get to know Jesus better understand his word better and live that out and then they can serve in whatever area they go into camp is unique because they're unplugged from their normal activities and their normal surroundings and it's just fascinating to watch God work here because the boundaries come down the kids get to know each other they make friends that last lifetimes it's changing lives there's no place like camp to see how God changes kids lives young people come to know Jesus they commit their lives to Jesus they get baptized when you donate to camp you're doing a lot more than just putting up walls building and building you're changing lives and

I've been a part of the board at this camp now for nearly 20 years and it's an amazing growth pattern when I look back at the history of it even going back to times long before I was here God has continued to bless us and I believe he will in the future the blessings of what we see happening over the years here at Mahoney Valley go through generations of people grandfathers talk about the times they had here and how it prepared them for a life work for the church for the camp for their environment that they live in camp is growing more than we can handle we've had to turn away campers we don't like that and so we need to develop the facilities the opportunities so that camp can expand right now our sleeping quarters don't house all the numbers we're seeing this year we turned away 67 kids because we didn't have a place for them to sleep and as much as this is a good thing to have as we see this growth over the years this is a good problem it's still a problem we don't want to turn away any kid we want every kid who wants to come to camp to come and hear the life changing message of Jesus we need to be looking to the future in the legacy of Mahoney Valley concerning our grounds we don't have much room left to expand our camp attendance has grown by 30% each year we barely have room now to house the kids that are coming we need to expand in several areas and those facilities that are required for those expansions are going to need new ground as times change so do the needs of the camp and the retreats that we have as those change we need to adapt to that and right now some of our facilities constraints the pool has several limitations and problems the first being the temperature it's about 10 degrees cooler than it should be because it's fed by a spring it's the only way we can keep it full because it leaks constantly also the state has warned us that the rules are being rewritten and it must be replaced because they're not going to approve it within the next couple of years when you look at our current playground situation you see kids who use the swings who use the platform up top to hang out and talk but it's such a limited number because it's not that big the new playground will allow for kids of all ages from kindergarten through high school to use it at the same time the dining hall and the capacity we have right now we can really fit about 100 people inside and then on the outside probably another 80 so with the new dining hall facility that we're proposing we're looking to be able to fit everybody in the dining hall as one big group around 325 is what we're expecting to be able to provide that opportunity for them what we've been doing in the past in the past weeks of the camp past summers is that we feed the kids in shifts this way we can feed everyone at one time it will help our staff and it will help move the schedule in camp for all the camps that are participating in this campaign is needed now because the need is now we're experiencing phenomenal growth we don't know what God has in store for us but we know when he presents us with an opportunity we need to take it and run with it we're not only investing in Mahoney Valley but what Mahoney Valley does your donation is not just buying a building but it is providing the foundation for the future

of young people to be able to come and experience Christ in a Christ centered environment for a week of camp our purpose is to plant the seed of Jesus Christ into the young people's lives and they experience that in a week of camp it's a time of spiritual growth your dollars make a difference no matter how small or large this is about more than buildings it's about seeing lives changed it's about the next generation focusing on community and their spiritual lives and the changes that will be made it's for Jesus Tony thank you so much for sharing God's word with us today we're so excited for what he is doing through this ministry that we love and we partner with at Mahoney Valley Christian Service Camp keep up the good work and hey just want to share with you today if you've heard this message and you have questions about maybe your faith or about our church or even what it means to be a follower of Jesus we would love to come alongside you and help you on your journey just like others have done for us so here's how you can reach out to us a couple simple ways we can start this conversation you can call the church office once again

First Christian Church Greensburg, Indiana call the church office at 812-663-8488 or you can email me at ray at FCCGreensburg.com hey thank you so much for tuning in today and we pray that you have a great week