



This Sunday we welcomed Phil Sutherland from 'New Life Dorking' to come and preach at St Paul's. Phil began by expressing his pleasure at the growing partnership developing between Dorking Churches as they rediscover a common vision for our town and a common sense of purpose for serving its people. There was also a reminder to treasure our wonderful vicar and her family and pray for them all.

'Intentional' is a great word. It makes one think of being purposeful and deliberate - about evangelism; and that might seem scary. God does gift some people for communicating the gospel to strangers but most of us even agonise about inviting someone to an Alpha supper. Actually, God has a much less threatening way for us to be intentional about spreading the Good News of God's kindness and grace which Jesus explains in our reading: **Matthew 5: 14-16.**

1. "YOU are the Light of the World" Matthew 5: 14a

- **Cf. John 8:12.** All who are born again through faith in Christ carry the light of the world within them, however fragile, ordinary or vulnerable they may feel – **2 Corinthians 4: 6-7**
- We need to be sure of who we are in Christ: sons and daughters of the living God; forgiven, free from guilt, citizens of heaven: His chosen ambassadors. We need to realise our significance in God's plans for Dorking.
- We must teach, encourage and remind one another of our status in Christ and because of Christ.

2. WHERE is the Light of the World? Matthew 5: 14b - 15

- Like the lights at home, the Light of God within us is meant to be seen.
- God has 'switched us on' so that our light can be seen in a particular area, or by particular people.

3. WHO gets to see our Light? Matthew 5: 15b – 16a

- God wants everyone in Dorking to be able to see the light of Christ within us: young, old, married, single, in a relationship, not in a relationship, with or without children, wealthy, poor, healthy, unhealthy, working, not working, heterosexual, lgbt, likeable, unlikeable, remain or leave
- This will require the active involvement of His whole church in Dorking: one mega bulb in the centre of town wouldn't provide enough light for every Dorking household. Thousands of bulbs all over the town would be much more effective. So it is with we who carry the Light of Christ within us: together we make Him visible.

4. HOW do we share our Light? Matthew 5: 16b

- Actions speak louder than words. Jesus expects our light to be observed:
 - a) Through the kind of lives we lead rather than the evangelistic words we use.
 - b) Through demonstrating the love of God rather than being rigid about what we abstain from or avoid.
- Paul also directly links our attitudes and actions with keeping our light shining: **Philippians 2: 14 – 16a.**

5. WHY do we have to keep shining? Matthew 5: 16c.

- Evangelism, or light-shining, is not solely about individuals recognising Jesus is Lord and committing to Him.
- It's about infinitely more than that, because it's about everyone in this town discovering how wonderful, how beautiful, how magnificent, how awe-inspiring and praiseworthy is our God.
- The transformation of our friends, neighbours, colleagues and others into God-loving and God-worshipping people happens through our love for them and our delight in our Lord.

Questions for discussion

1. *Do we have a successful track record in evangelism? Do we know someone who is/was a gifted evangelist?*
2. *Have we thought of ourselves as significant players in God's plans for Dorking?*
3. *How can we start to remind ourselves and encourage our Christian friends of 'who they are' in Christ.*
4. *Can you think of a person or persons for whom you are uniquely placed to model the light of Christ?*
5. *Are we loving our neighbours rather than joining in with some communal complaint?*
6. *Are we worrying along with the rest of the world about what the future holds, or are we demonstrating a security and trust in Christ that underpins our lives and gives us hope for the future?*

Further thought: In Matthew's gospel, these three important verses come immediately after 'The Beatitudes' in verses 1 – 12. Some people have called them the 'Beautiful Attitudes' and they should lead to Beautiful Actions. It might be nice to finish this study by reading out loud the whole of **Matthew 5: 1-16.**