

God's People: A Glowing People

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"You are the light of the world."

INTRODUCTION:

1. Are We Glowing?

"Within the congregations of our Synod there are numerous evidences of spiritual weakness, such as poor attendance at worship services, infrequent participation in holy communion, low enrollment in Bible classes and a lack of involvement in lay ministry.

"The 'backdoor' losses are so great that the membership of our Synod basically is not growing.

"Increasingly the impact of a pagan society is causing pain for God's people in the form of many personal, marital, and family problems, so that congregations are struggling to administer God's grace to those many members in need.

"Inadequate staffing, misunderstanding of mission and ministry, impacts of the unbelieving world and other pressures have contributed to many congregations conducting a 'maintenance ministry' rather than an aggressive growth-oriented ministry.

"In increasing measure, our Synod and other agencies are not receiving what is needed to carry on the work in ways that seem appropriate to God's will, that take advantage of the opportunities before us, and that properly meet the needs of the congregations they serve." (PROCEEDINGS of the Forty-Ninth Biennial Convention, p. 100)

a. Is this report Law or Gospel? What is the purpose of the Law? of the Gospel?

b. Comment on the statement: "This is not a glowing report."

2. We Are Glowing.

Luke 5:14,15 "You are the light of the world. A city 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."

a. Who is speaking these words? What is the occasion? To whom were these words addressed? cf. Matthew 5:1,2

b. "You are the light of the world." What does that say about you, your congregation, your Synod, the Holy Christian Church? Comment on the statement: "Even the weakest Christian is still a light." How does John 15:5 make a similar point using different imagery?

3. Glowing or No

Romans 7:18-24 "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do - this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it. So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

- a. What is Paul lamenting in this section. How does it make him feel? When will the struggle be over? What does this passage have to do with glowing?
- b. How does Jesus address this same situation in Matthew 5:16?
- c. Would Jesus call Paul "the light of the world"? Why or why not?

4. Glowing!

Romans 7:25a - 8:1 "Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord! ... Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

- a. What is the thrust of the statement: "Always remember that Romans 7 is followed by Romans 8"?
- b. Give examples from the life of Paul which demonstrate his glowing faith. Why is the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians referred to as a glowing epistle? Read Acts 4:13 for a glowing report about the disciples.
- c. Comment on the statement: "Capturing the dynamic of who we truly are is the basis of spiritual renewal. When we really grasp who we are, what we are, what God has given us, with what He has talented us, what we have to show and to share, we will glow as never before."

Additional Questions for Study and Discussion:

1. In what sense is the world lying in darkness? cf. Isaiah 60:1; Ephesians 5:11,12; Galatians 5:19-21. Almost 2000 years have passed since Isaiah's prophecy has come to pass and Christ's birth pierced the darkness of this world. In light of all mankind's advancements in the fields of medicine, science and industry, is it still correct to refer to this world as darkness? Why or why not? Give current examples to support your answer.
2. In what sense is Jesus the Light of the world? cf. John 8:12.
3. In what sense are Christians the light of the world? cf. Matthew 5:14; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 5:8.

4. What two motives does Matthew 5:16 give for letting our light shine? How do you reconcile Matthew 5:16 and 6:1?
5. Comment on the statement: "Church bodies don't get renewed. Neither do congregations. Neither, for that matter, do families. Renewal is personal."

1. GOD'S PEOPLE - GLOWING IN THE JOY OF SALVATION

A. Knowing the Joy of Salvation

1 John 5:11-13 "And this is the testimony: God will give us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son will have life; he who does not have the Son of God will not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may hope that you will have eternal life."

- a. There are five misquotations in the preceding passage; cross them out and write in the correct words. What difference do the changes make?
- b. Comment on the statement: "Without knowing there is no glowing." Discuss the importance of the following: "Our feelings are based on knowledge, never vice versa."
- c. Can you think of other passages which let us know the joy of salvation?

B. Glowing in the Joy of Salvation

1. Luke 7:36-38,48,50 "Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. When a woman who lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them Then Jesus said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.'...Jesus said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'"

- a. Why did the woman exhibit a glowing faith? Why did Simon the Pharisee not exhibit a glowing faith?
- b. In what way are we like that woman? In what way are we like Simon the Pharisee?
- c. Comment on the statement: "Most Christians have enough religion to feel guilty about their sin, but not enough to enjoy life in the Spirit." (Luther)

2. Luke 2:29-32 "Sovereign Lord, as you promised, now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

- a. Who is speaking these words? What is the occasion? In what is he rejoicing?

- b. Why are these words sung after our reception of The Lord's Supper? What are we acknowledging? For what are we praying?
- c. How do the following people exhibit a faith glowing in the joy of salvation? Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:26,27), Mary (Luke 1:46-56), Zechariah (Luke 1:67-80), Anna (Luke 2:36-38), Palm Sunday children (Matthew 21:15,16), Peter (Acts 2: 4-20), Paul (I Corinthians 15:54-5).

II. GOD'S PEOPLE - GLOWING IN THE LOVE OF CHRIST

A. Knowing the Love of Christ

Romans 8:31-39 "What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died - more than that, who was raised to life - is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: 'For your sake we face death all the day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.' No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

- a. Comment on the statement: "Romans 8 is really the quintessential chapter in Scripture on glowing."
- b. How does 2 Corinthians 11 furnish an added perspective to these words of Paul in Romans 8?
- c. How did Jesus in His ministry let others know His love? Give specific examples.

B. Glowing in the Love of Christ

1. Genesis 32: 10 "I am unworthy of all the kindness and faithfulness you have shown your servant. I had only my staff when I crossed this Jordan, but now I have become two groups."
 - a. Who is speaking? What is the context? What is the point he is making?
 - b. How does this statement apply to us? Why is this reminder necessary? To what will an appreciation of this fact lead us?
2. Genesis 50:20 "You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."
 - a. Who is speaking these words? What is the context? What is the point he is making? How does this incident support Paul's words in Romans 8:28?

- b. Read Psalm 42. With what is the psalmist struggling? How would you draw a linear graph of this struggle? Why is this psalm a good picture of your life? How is it possible to glow in the midst of such a struggle?
3. Psalm 23:6 "Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."
- a. Who is speaking these words? What is the context? What point is he making? Why is this verse most appropriate as the concluding verse to Psalm 23?
 - b. Imagine your life as a cup of water which is half-filled because there have been some good times and there have been some bad. What is the pessimist going to see when he looks at that cup of water? What is the optimist going to see? What is the Christian going to see? (It's the same thing David saw.)

III. GOD'S PEOPLE - GLOWING IN THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD

A. Knowing the Truth of God's Word

1. Luke 24:13-35 (25-27,32) "He said to them, 'How foolish you are, and how slow of heart that you do not believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?'" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself .. They asked each other, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?'"
 - a. Who is speaking? To whom is He speaking? Why are they so down and depressed? How does their depression show itself? How does Jesus deal with it? What is the result?
 - b. What are the similarities between this incident and the women (Luke 23:55 - 24: 10), Mary of Magdala (John 20:10-18), Thomas (John 20: 10-18)?
 - c. What is the point of this passage that we want to take home with us?

B. Glowing in the Truth of God's Word

1. Luke 7:1-10 (7b) "But say the word and my servant will be healed."
 - a. Who is speaking these words? What is the context? How does he demonstrate a faith glowing in the truth of God's Word?
 - b. Read John 4:46-54, the account of the healing of the nobleman's son. Does he, or does he not, glow in the truth of God's Word? Give reasons for your answer.
2. Luke 23:42,43 "Then he said, 'Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.' Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

- a. Who is speaking these words? What is the context? How does he demonstrate a faith glowing in the truth of God's Word?
 - b. Read 2 Timothy 4:7,8. What are the similarities between Paul and the dying thief? Give further examples from the pages of Scripture.
3. Acts 8:26-39 (39) "When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing."
- a. Who is speaking these words? What is the context? Why is he rejoicing?
 - b. What truths of Scripture do the following passages convey? Matthew 24:35 (when discouraged), Isaiah 44:22,23 (when troubled by sins), Matthew 28:20 (when witnessing), Titus 3:5-7 (when bringing a child to holy baptism), Luke 22:19,20 (when receiving the Lord's Supper), 2 John :25,26 (when death strikes). What is the result of knowing (believing) these truths of Scripture? How will it be seen?

CONCLUSION:

1. What is the difference between a glowing faith and a Pollyanna mentality?
2. What is the connection between growing, going, and glowing?