

SCRIPTURE COMMENTARY AND SERMON STARTER

SHARE THE LIGHT

An old adage declares, “If you know better, you do better.” In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus teaches his disciples and the gathered crowd what it means to be children of God.

By starting his discourse with the Beatitudes, Jesus declares that humanity was not living out God’s intention for them. Jesus is struck by their conditions and circumstances of fear, anxiety, isolation, apathy, division, despair, oppression, injustice, and chaos. Jesus recognizes that throughout the land, there is a need for grace, mercy, justice, and compassion. They need light, direction, and guidance.

Jesus makes a startling admission—God is transforming the land, right now, right here. Through Jesus, God lights a path forward toward shalom—total well-being. God’s grace is moving across the land, creating a ginormous household of diverse people who are children of God and siblings to one another.

Jesus also sets the bar for discipleship—they are to live out their faith and commitment to God through concrete acts of service for others. They have been transformed from individuals into family—living for others.

Jesus says the disciples are light and as such, they are to shine, to **share the light** with others. Not to brag on themselves or bolster their egos—they engage in active service as a response to the gracious God who has gifted them with so much. Their acts reflect back to the Source of all there is—God!

Jesus’ message was for the Twelve, for the crowds gathered around them, and also for us! We are invited to join God’s grand movement of transformation.

The world is as broken now as it was in Jesus’ day. People are suffering, systems are failing the most vulnerable among us, safety nets are diminishing in number and effectiveness, needs are increasing. It can be so easy to get caught up in our own lives that we forget that our simple acts of illuminating the world around us with our love, compassion, and acts of service—however small it may seem to us—can make a difference. We know better and we do better.

As you prepare to preach and teach for the OGHS offering, consider these questions:

What does sharing light look like in and for your congregation, your community, in the world?

How is God using you to share light?

How has someone shared the light with you?

As a congregational challenge, ask members to start a **Share the Light** journal—write down instances where they see someone sharing light or when they have shared light. These can be posted on the church’s social media platforms or in the newsletter. Light is shining everywhere if we take the time to notice.

Remind your congregation that we share our light whenever we offer an encouraging word, bake a casserole for a friend who is ill, tutor a child in an after-school program, staff a soup kitchen, volunteer to teach Sunday School, or advocate and support efforts to right an injustice.

We share our light when we contribute to the OGHS offering. Your gifts help families find safety in shelters instead of on the streets. Your gifts allow women to sell locally sourced produce and other food items. Your gifts allow other women to create cooperatives so that they can do more together than they could do separately. Your gifts support places of hospitality to strangers who soon become friends. Your gifts support those who are differently-abled and much more.

We cannot be in all of the places that need help and we may never personally witness the results of our help, but through our generous tithes, offerings, and special gifts, we can illumine places with abundant God-colors and know that we have made a difference.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us that we are the light of the world. We share that light when we do good for others. Discipleship from the inside out begins with generosity.

When the opportunity comes, let us shine and share.

When another is in need, let us respond.

Let’s go public, for we are Light-bearers.

Generosity is our standard and Love is our ethic.

Let us not hide our light under a bucket—let our light shine for all to see. Let us **share the light**.

CHILDREN'S SERMON

Constructed to be used in your own words, or to be followed as a script, this children's moment illustrates some of the ways that children can **share the light** by seeing that it looks different to every person. The script and design may be adjusted to fit your virtual or hybrid worship context.

Theme

One Great Hour of Sharing reminds us that we are all to "**share the light**" with others. There are many ways for us to know God's generosity in our lives and to share that with others. Sometimes, we just need to think about them in new ways.

Materials Needed

- An affirming listening ear, eager to engage children's ideas!
- A kaleidoscope that can be passed around or individual ones for each child. Kaleidoscopes can be purchased at party stores or from businesses like Oriental Trading Company online.

Script Suggestion

I want to ask you a very serious question: Do you know how to **share light** with others?

Give time for responses.

It's kind of a hard question, isn't it?

How do we actually **share light**? Well, it may not seem natural to us, but Jesus asks us to do it. Let me share with you a scripture reading from Matthew's gospel:

¹⁴ You are the light of the world. A city on top of a hill can't be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a basket. Instead, they put it on top of a lampstand, and it shines on all who are in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before people, so they can see the good things you do and praise your Father who is in heaven. (CEB)

Jesus says, YOU are the light of the world. And that you are to let your light shine before people. Does that make any more sense than my last question?

Give time for responses.

We share our light when we help others, share an encouraging word, or give to the One Great Hour of Sharing offering.

I would like to introduce you to a kaleidoscope. Do you know what one of these is? Have you ever looked through one?

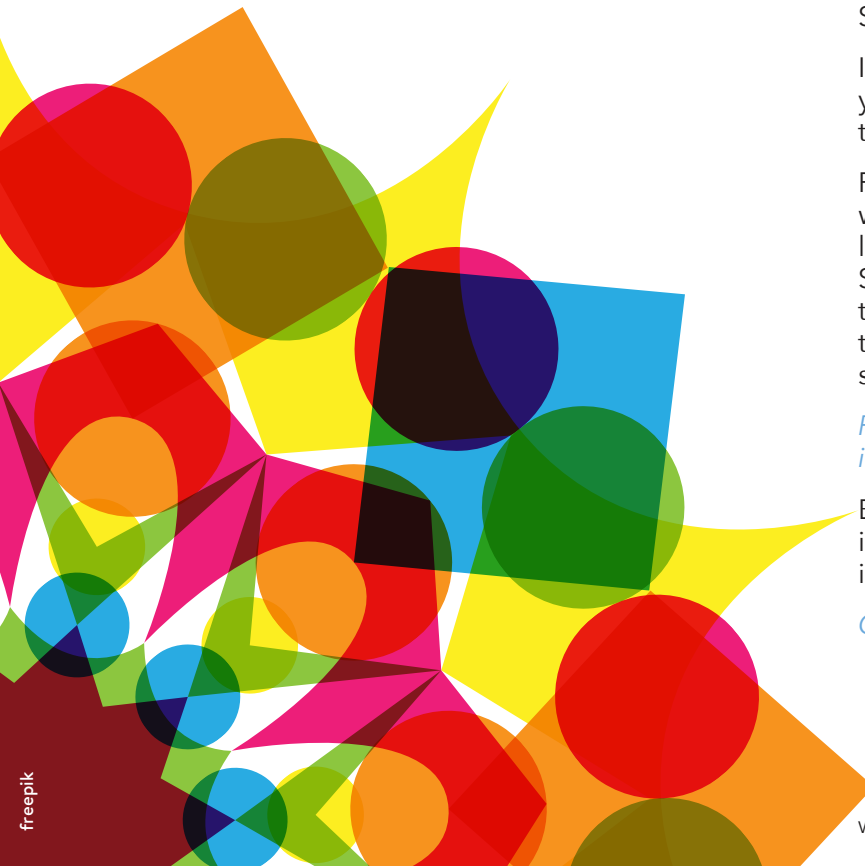
First, let me show you the funny thing about how it works. If you look at it from the outside lens, it looks like you just have a bunch of pieces everywhere. Sometimes those pieces look broken! But here's the trick! If you look at it through the proper eye lens and twist it, all of those shattered pieces turn into beautiful shapes and a new picture.

Pass around the kaleidoscope, or pass out the individual ones to each child.

Before you looked into the kaleidoscope, could you imagine what the picture could look like? Could you imagine how beautiful it would be?

Give time for responses.

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As you twisted it, did you notice how the picture changed to a new shape? Did you have any idea beforehand what that shape would look like?

Give time for responses.

You see, each of you saw something just a little bit different when you looked inside that kaleidoscope. You saw a unique image. All of those shattered pieces turn into beautiful shapes and a new picture—just as our acts of service do.

Well, that is very much like each of you. Your uniqueness is your beauty, and you can each **share the light** in your own unique way. But the important thing is this – share your light. Don't hide it, as the old song says, under a bushel. NO! Shine it for the world to see and do it in the way that only you can do!

You have a chance to share with others through an offering we will collect in the next week (or two).

At home, I'd like you to think about all the times each day someone shares light with you. Maybe it's at school or when you are playing with your siblings. And with your family, maybe each night at dinner, or when you have breakfast, think and pray together about how you want to make a difference.

Share any details about when your community will be receiving the offering.

Can we pray a blessing together for the offering we will receive? What do we hope God will do?

Allow for all their prayer requests. All prayers are welcome!

Very good! Let's pray:

If you are comfortable doing so, incorporate the specific requests and wording offered by the children in your prayer with them. And/or you may wish to use this prayer:

Dear Lord, thank you for loving us so much and showing us how we can love others. The offerings we know will change someone's life. We can love those we will never even meet by sharing light with them through our gifts. With thankful hearts, we pray Amen.

OFFERING REMINDER

Would you like to **share the light** of Christ with others in your own community and around the world? Would you like to help a skilled tailor in Indonesia find new life through sewing? Would you like to help a mother in Romania find safe shelter for her children when homelessness is an ever-present reality? Help women farmers in Indonesia and much more? You will have the opportunity to do just that as next week [two weeks, three weeks, on Sunday ____], we will receive a special offering for One Great Hour of Sharing.

Your generous gifts make a difference in lives and communities around the world. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reminds us that we are the light of the world. We share that light when we do good for others. Discipleship from the inside out begins with generosity and that can begin with you.

ORDER OF WORSHIP

Call to Worship

One: **Share the light**

All: **like a city on a hill.**

Shine the light

for the world to see.

Be the light

so that our neighbors can find their way.

You are the light

and it will not be extinguished.

Do not hide your light.

We will share the light.

Prayer of Invocation

Your first word of creation, O God, was "Let there be light" and there was. Jesus came as the light of the world and then called us to become light-bearers in our lives. As we come to worship today, may we shine our light here in this place as well as in the world to which you have called us to live. It can be so easy to get caught up in our own lives that we forget the simple act of illuminating the world around us with our love, compassion, acts of service, and kind words to others. Show us the paths where we might follow in the footsteps of your Son, Jesus, in whose name we pray. Amen.

Litany of Responsive Reading

One: "This little light of mine,

All: **I'm gonna let it shine."**

"Hide it under a bushel?"

"No! I'm gonna let it shine."

"You are the light of the world."

"A city set on a hill cannot be hidden."

When the opportunity comes,

I will shine.

When another is in need,

I will share.

Let's go public.

Light-bearers we are.

Generosity is our standard.

Love is our ethic.

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Invitation to the Offering

“Rain-diamonds, this winter morning, embellish the tangle of unpruned pear-tree twigs; each solitaire, placed, it appears, with considered judgement, bears the light beneath the rifted clouds – the indivisible shared out in endless abundance.”

English poet Denise Levertov reminds us that light is shared in endless abundance. Today, through our special offering to One Great Hour of Sharing, we have the opportunity to **share light** in endless abundance in places near and far.

Our gifts help families find safety in shelters instead of on the streets. Our gifts allow women to sell locally sourced produce and other food items. Our gifts allow other women to create cooperatives so that they can do more together than they could do separately. Our gifts support those who are differently-abled and much more.

We cannot be in all these places ourselves or even see them with our own eyes, but through our generous tithes, offerings, and special gifts, we can share abundant light. In that spirit, let us share now!

Prayer of Dedication

Generous God, we offer these gifts in the spirit of light and with a heart full of gratitude for what we've been given. These offerings are one way of showing our commitment to sharing with those who are in need, neighbors near and far, whom we are unlikely to meet. Let us not hide our light under a bucket but shine it for all to see. Bless the gifts, just as you have us, with an extra measure of your grace. In Christ's name, Amen.

Charge & Benediction

(Encourage those in your congregations to shine the lights on their cell phones during the benediction.)

One: You are the people called into God's own household.

All: **We are children of light, living together,**

Grounded in loving connection to each other and all creation.

We are co-creators with God,

Bringing peace, harmony, unity, compassion, care, love—shalom—right now.

We leave to **share the light and love of Christ everywhere we go.**

WORSHIP RESOURCES

FOR ANY SEASON AND FOR ANY REASON

Whether you are looking for a call to worship, a pastoral prayer, or an offering invitation, we want to help make One Great Hour of Sharing a meaningful part of your church's worship service. Maybe you are lifting up a special concern for those affected by a recent disaster, or maybe you just want to celebrate this ministry of the church that reaches so many parts of the globe. Here are some of the ways that pastors and worship leaders might incorporate One Great Hour of Sharing into the liturgy, in any season and for any reason.

Call to Worship

Leader: Let us give thanks to God for every good gift; let us give thanks to God for people of courage who help to give hope wherever there is need.

People: Today we especially pray for the people in the path of *[Hurricane Michael]* – those who have lost their lives or their loved ones, those whose livelihoods and homes have been battered by the fury of wind and sea and storm.

Leader: Be with them all, O God, with your tender mercies and abiding hope.

People: We pray for those first responders who indeed offer hope in tangible form – firefighters and paramedics, police officers and soldiers, doctors and nurses, pastors and so many others who brave danger and are a source of comfort and strength.

Leader: Our prayers will not cease when the storm passes, nor will our gifts. We are grateful for One Great Hour of Sharing and its partners who are assisting so many who will be there when the cameras are gone.

People: Thanks be to God for people who are generous with their time, their talents, their prayers, and their gifts, for they are surely a sign of God's good reign. Amen.

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Pastoral Prayer

After the storm:

Loving Creator,

We know that you are with us in every time and place. In all things, you are faithful. But when winds are raging, we may find it hard to hear your voice. When skies are dark, we may struggle to see your face. When all around is chaos, fear and destruction, the peace you promise seems worlds away.

And yet we continue to seek you in the storm. And we seek you in the morning after. Surround us with the certainty of your loving presence.

To those in raging winds, speak words of calm and comfort. For those in great darkness, send light. For those surrounded by the remains of what was, answer the silence with promises of all that might be.

Hear our prayer, O Lord. Renew our strength for the days ahead. May we hear again your call to be the Church, to speak comfort to those who weep, and to be present with those who suffer. We trust that you have given us every gift we need to meet the needs of this time. Teach us to walk in the way of Christ – sharing all that we have and believing in your goodness in all things. Send us in your peace, Holy One. And may there be joy in the morning. Amen.

Offering Invitation

Hurricanes and natural disasters bring out some of the best in people. Folks of every race, of every religion or no religion, of every class, step forth to help those who are hurting; whose lives are in shambles; who may wonder if anyone cares about them in the midst of so much suffering. They need not wonder, for folks with trucks and boats have helped carry people to safety, have helped get desperately sick people to hospitals, have tried to make sure that families stay together and have a safe place to recover. Know this: we too are those people. We may not drive a truck or pilot a boat, but we too can help our neighbors in dire need. While we may want to join our hands to those *[in the affected area]* now is not yet the time. We are ready to help when our presence is needed. But in the meantime, we can pray. And we can give. Every dollar given for disaster relief to One Great Hour of Sharing—our wider church family's disaster relief ministry— will go to work through our partners to assist those impacted by this terrible *[description of the situation]*. Long after the headlines have faded and the cameras have been turned off, One Great Hour of Sharing and its partners will still be there helping with long-term recovery. Please give generously, knowing that your gifts will help both now and in the months and years to come.

