

The Lighthouse

Isaiah 9:2 "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."

- Now we all know that Jesus is the True Light. In the first chapter of the Gospel of John, we read where John the Baptist was called to preach the coming of the True Light that lights the heart of every man. But Jesus gave us some insight as to who would be used to broadcast, or reflect His pure light to all the world.

Matthew 5:14-16, "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

- Tonight I want us to look at the church and see whether or not we are really being the light that He expects us to be. Is the light that we are giving to the world really the light of Jesus? Is our light growing dim, or is it shining brightly? It is my hope that by the end of this message, God will reveal to each of us just how brightly we are shining for him!

Illustration:

Some time ago I read an article, I think it came from the National Geographic, concerning a lighthouse that I want to use in this message.

- Offshore of the state of North Carolina, near the outer banks of the continental shelf lies one of the most dangerous stretches of ocean in the world. Over the past 400 years, there have been more than 300 ships that have sunk in this small area. It has become known as "The Graveyard of the Atlantic". What makes this area so dangerous? The problem is a 14 mile stretch of sandbar, that is constantly shifting, called "Diamond Shoals".
- Recognizing the danger in this area, and the need to warn ships at sea of the sandbar, the U.S. government constructed a lighthouse on Cape

Hatteras in 1870. By Day the navigators could tell where they were on the coast by the unique paint pattern & design of the lighthouse and by night, they could tell which lighthouse it was by the frequency of the flash

- The Cape Hatteras Lighthouse is the biggest Lighthouse in the United States. It is 208 feet tall (roughly 12 stories high) with 48" thick walls. 1.25 million bricks were used in it's construction and the internal cast iron staircase to reach the top has 248 steps.
- If you have ever looked at pictures of lighthouses, I am sure that you have seen photos of this lighthouse. It is the only one in the world that is painted candy stripe in black and white.
- What is the main purpose of that lighthouse? It was built to save lives and property.

The Church is the Lighthouse

- When you think about it, the church's mission is the same as that lighthouse. The world out there is a dark and dangerous place. People are sailing through life in very dangerous waters and the devil is constantly throwing new obstacles in their paths.
- Have you ever been cruising through life feeling as though you were on top of the world then suddenly you hit a snag (sickness, disease, loss of job, troubles in the home, even a division in the church) and it felt like your life was in shambles? Those are some of the shifting "sandbars" of life. The devil's purpose is to steal your victory, destroy your life, and sink your ship into the pits of hell.
- But thank God, there is a lighthouse for this dark and dangerous world. God has put a lighthouse in the darkness that projects a light onto the seas of life. This church, even though we may be small, has the same bright light to shine forth that the biggest churches in the country have. Our purpose is the same – Our purpose is to project the light of the gospel and to save souls from being destroyed on the rocks of sin.

- I am worried that the church, in general, has forgotten its real purpose for existence. We have become to believe that our purpose is to supply the emotional, physical and material needs of mankind, but that's not our purpose at all.

Illustration

- There is an old, old story of a lighthouse keeper who worked on a rocky stretch of coastline and who received his new supply of oil once a month to keep the light burning. Not being far from shore, he had frequent guests. One night a woman from the village begged some oil to keep her family warm. Another time a father asked for some to use in his lamp. Another needed some to lubricate a wheel. Since all the requests seemed legitimate, the lighthouse keeper tried to please everyone and granted them all.
- Toward the end of the month he noticed that the supply of oil was very low. Soon, it was gone, and the beacon light went out. That night several ships were wrecked and lives were lost.
- When the authorities investigated, the man was very repentant. To his excuses and pleading their reply was: "You were given the oil for one purpose – to keep that light burning."
- We as a church body are a lighthouse. All around us are lost people. Their lives are in crisis, because they are lost. We must be a light to bring them to Jesus.

Illustration:

- Our purpose is not giving shelter to the homeless, or food to the starving, or improving the conditions of 3rd world nations, or counseling dysfunctional families, or working to correct abuse, comforting and aiding the sick, saving the whales, or saving the rainforest. Our purpose is not just to have fellowship with one another or to come together for times of praise and worship.

Jesus taught that the soul is more important than the body.

1 Timothy 4:8, "For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come." He also taught that eternity was vastly more important than time so that our focus should be on things eternal and not on the things of this world.

Matthew 6:19-23, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"

If there is any doubt, then ask yourself this question: Who is Better off, Lazarus, a poor man in Heaven or the Rich man in Hell? **Matthew 16:26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul; or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?**

- The church's purpose is to Send out the Light and to Rescue the Perishing!! We send out the light through missions, and preaching of the gospel. We rescue the perishing by throwing them the only real life preserver that matters, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- We are fishers of men but we don't fish like a natural fisherman. We are never satisfied with the quantity we catch, no matter how much the church grows. We are always expecting greater things and praying for a greater move of the Holy Ghost. We are constantly throwing out the net, baiting the hook, and we try to catch every kind of fish in the seas, and then we do all we can to see that none escape and go back into the world of sin again.

We Have A Great Light

The Light in the Cape Hatteras lighthouse is made extremely powerful and bright through the use of prisms that focus the light as it reflects from

mirrors to a central point or beam that is then projected through the darkness.

Originally it was whale oil that burned and produced the light, then there was a gas vapor that was used for a while, then came the invention of electricity and there were several 1000 watt bulbs installed that produced the light of 800,000 candles. Suddenly the light was much brighter and could be seen for 20 miles on a dark night. It flashed every 7.5 seconds.

But the church has the brightest light of them all. We have Jesus to shine forth in us and through us! **Revelation 22:16, "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star."**

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is called "the light", **2 Corinthians 4:4 "In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them."**

2 Corinthians 4:6, "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

1 Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

Keepers of the Flame

- If the light is to continue to shine and do its job there has to be a Lighthouse Keeper. What is the Keeper to do? His whole purpose is to Keep the Light burning at all costs. He had to constantly clean, maintain and repair the light. If the flame burned low, or the lenses and mirrors were dirty, or the wick of the old oil burner needed trimming, he had to go to work because lives depended upon him performing his duties.
- The first keeper of the lighthouse at Cape Hatteras was Adam Gaskins. He was on duty 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for 365 days a year and earned

\$333 per year and a place to live. Due to his hard work and those who followed him, the lighthouse burned for 129 years, 47,000 nights, without fail. These men and women who kept the light burning were called "Keepers of the Flame".

1 Sam 3:2 And it came to pass at that time, when Eli was laid down in his place, and his eyes began to wax dim, that he could not see;

3 And ere the lamp of God went out in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was, and Samuel was laid down to sleep;

Church, we are the "Keepers of the Flame!" As this world grows darker and gets ever closer to the shores of eternal judgment, there is a greater need for the light of the gospel to shine. There are souls in the balance who will surely sink into the depths of hell if we fail to let our light shine.

Most of the church world will complain and moan about the sinful condition of this world, but where is the light that they are supposed to shine? It is more productive to light One Candle than to Curse the Darkness.

The Cost of Keeping the Flame

Probably the oldest lighthouse keeper was Henry Hall, a keeper on the famous Eddystone lighthouse who was 94. He met a remarkable death on duty. The lighthouse caught fire and, while he tried to put out the fire, he swallowed nearly half a pound of molten lead. He died from lead poisoning about two weeks later.

Off the West Coast of England, there are several lighthouses which are more than 45 meters (150 feet) tall. In violent storms, the sea sometimes washes right over the tower, breaking panes of glass in the lantern which were 12.5 mm (half an inch) thick. So much seawater was entering the lantern that the keepers had to tie themselves onto the stair rails to prevent themselves from being washed down the stairs.

"And thou shalt command the children of Israel, that they bring thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause the lamp to burn always." Exodus 27:20

- It seemed curious to me that there was a specific designation for the oil that was "beaten" for the light. In study, I found that this was not the oil in which was pressed out of the olive, but it was the oil that appeared at the bruising of the outer skin. The oil that first appeared at the simple transfer from the tree into the vat where the oil was made, before the pressure came, there was this most pure oil that was produced in the transfer from the tree to the next place.
- The oil that was produced by bruising the outer skin. This is the oil that was used for light. Is it not interesting to consider that this is still the oil that produces light in our world? To consider that many times the hard press of life takes place in the dark pressure filled moments of the soul, however it is the minor bruises of our transfer from one place to the other that the Lord uses to power the flame of His spirit in our life so others can see.
- Let your light shine before others. Let me remind you that when you are bruised, there is an anointing just below the surface that is a liquid commodity that God will use to bring light to those who sit in darkness. If your feeling bruised, be confident, it is producing oil for light in the darkness around you. This is the cost of keeping the flame...

Lighthouses to Museums

- There came a time when the Cape Hatteras Lighthouse was in danger. The constant wave action of the sea had eroded the shore to the point that many feared the lighthouse would collapse into the waters. Originally it was 1500 ft from the shore, but now the water was within 150 ft.
- The decision was made to save the lighthouse by moving it 2900 feet Southwest and 1600 feet inland. In 1999, it was in all the papers. The International Chimney corporation of Brooklyn, New York did the moving. Their slogan is: "If you can build it, we can move it, IF YOU HAVE ENOUGH

MONEY."

- The U.S. government spent 12.5 million. They jacked it up and built railroad tracks to the new location. People from miles around came around and camped out to watch them move the lighthouse. After a few days most of those who watched were gone because at a rate of only 2-3 feet a day, they all got bored and went home because they couldn't tell that it was even moving.
- When they moved the lighthouse something happened. They changed its purpose. Now it is a Park and a Museum where people go to admire it, enjoy it and learn but it doesn't save anyone anymore.
- Churches used to be Life Saving Stations but all too many of them have become little more Museums. People aren't being saved in them anymore. The congregation only comes to ease their conscience or to hear the teachers or to be entertained. We don't need to move the lighthouse... The lighthouse will save us..

The following is the transcript of the actual radio conversation of a US naval ship with Canadian authorities off the coast of Newfoundland:

Canadians: Please divert your course 15 degrees the South to avoid a collision.

Americans: Recommend you divert your course 15 degrees the North to avoid a collision.

Canadians: Negative. You will have to divert your course 15 degrees to the South to avoid a collision.

Americans: This is the Captain of a US Navy ship. I say again, divert YOUR course.

Canadians: No. I say again, you divert YOUR course.

Americans: THIS IS THE AIRCRAFT CARRIER USS LINCOLN, THE SECOND LARGEST SHIP IN THE UNITED STATES' ATLANTIC FLEET. WE ARE ACCOMPANIED BY THREE DESTROYERS, THREE CRUISERS AND NUMEROUS SUPPORT VESSELS. I DEMAND THAT YOU CHANGE YOUR COURSE 15 DEGREES NORTH, I SAY AGAIN, THAT'S ONE FIVE DEGREES NORTH, OR COUNTER-MEASURES WILL BE UNDERTAKEN TO ENSURE THE SAFETY OF THIS SHIP.

Canadians: This is a lighthouse, over...

Illustration:

- All up and down the east coast are Yacht Clubs in every city. They started out as Rescue stations but through the years they found out it was more fun to socialize than to rescue. They forgot their purpose. The church has done the same thing. It no longer provides the guiding light of the gospel. It has forgotten its main purpose.
- Even though they have moved the lighthouse at Cape Hatteras, the original problem still exists. Diamond Shoals is still a 14 mile shifting sandbar off the coast and that area is still called the "Graveyard of the Atlantic."
- Church, we can't afford to let the light of the gospel die. Jesus is the only hope that this world has. There is no other light and there is no other "Keeper of the Flame". Jesus called you and I to be that "Keeper". We are to be the witnesses of his love, mercy and grace. We have to tell the world about the Savior. We are their only hope! Let's never lose sight of our purpose! Let's ever keep our eyes on our real mission! We can modernize, and bring in new technologies and innovations in ministry, but we must stay true to our purpose. We must ever search for ways to bring the message of the gospel to a lost and dying world.

"AN INSPIRATIONAL LIGHTHOUSE STORY"

Many years ago there was a little village on a rocky seacoast, where storms often battered and seas were ever treacherous. Many ships were driven onto the rocks by the storms, and the lives of many sailors were lost because of the raging seas.

One day the people decided among themselves that they should establish a lighthouse and life saving station on a little peninsula on the coast, to warn ships away from the rocks and to save the lives of those who were cast into the icy waters. They approached the government and began to secure the necessary funds for their project. Soon they set forth and built a tower, and set a beacon in it; they organized a lookout system; and they bought boats and learned how to man them; and soon they were in business. The business of saving lives!

Soon the effects of what they were doing became known far and wide. Fewer ships went on the rocks; and when such a tragedy did occur, and the alarm was sounded, the people risked their own lives to rescue

those who had been cast into the raging, icy waters. Within a few short years, people came from great distance to study their lighthouse, and to use it as a model.

One day someone suggested that, since they all spent so much time at the lighthouse that they should gather there occasionally and enjoy good fellowship. And soon they began to get together (at first infrequently, and then more often) at the lighthouse. In fact, many people began to build their homes near the lighthouse. Then when the lookout sounded the alarm, they were there, ready to go out.

Next, it was decided that if they were going to spend so much time there, they must make the place more comfortable. So arrangements were made to heat the lighthouse. The gray walls were painted a brilliant white. Some of the walls were paneled; rugs were put on the floors to disguise the bare concrete; a fine kitchen was installed with a handsome stove; and generally speaking the lighthouse became a nice place to spend your time waiting for the alarm to be sounded. Everything about the lighthouse was made comfortable and nice. The lighthouse soon became the center of life in the little town that grew up around it.

One night a fierce storm blew in, as storms had blown in for years. Many ships were tossed on the jagged rocks, and the men at the lighthouse spent long hours picking sailors from the bitter cold icy waters and taking them to the lighthouse, where they were fed and provided with dry clothing. This had happened many times over the years, but this time, after the storm subsided and the sailors had all left the lighthouse, there were some men who were angry. It seems the storm had made them leave the comfort of the lighthouse, and go out into the wet, dangerous seas; and they got cold; very cold. The sailors, when they were delivered to the lighthouse, soiled the carpets. The kitchen was a mess, not to mention the stove. After a brief meeting it was first decided that sailors, when they were brought to the lighthouse, should be taken to the basement, not to the nice upper areas.

Some time later, another storm blew in; and about one half of the men went out in the boats, and again picked sailors from the frigid waters. This time the ship, which had broken apart on the rocks, was from another nation; and the men who manned her spoke another language, and even worse were of a different color. After this storm, a few more men joined those who refused to enter the sea. They decided that men like these did

not belong in the lighthouse at all; some said they felt that the lighthouses' job was not supposed to be saving sailors from other lands, because they were so much different. There were those, too, who objected to leaving the comfort of the lighthouse to go out into the storm. These men petitioned the government and they also agreed. So, finally, it was decided that the beacon would be kept lit, but the rescue work would be discontinued.

A small group disagreed, however, and went down the coast, a short distance, and started a new lighthouse. This small group decided that they should establish the biggest life saving station on the little peninsula, and so they did. Every day they warned ships and sometimes attempted to save lives from the icy water. Fame of the new lighthouse grew and the lighthouse back up the bay eventually turned out its beacon. Some people say the beacon can still be seen today in you and I. Oh yes, they also say the small group running the new lighthouse were those once rescued from the raging seas.

We as people all have a choice to make with regards to our rescue work. We can choose to allow our lives to become comfortable and we can find ourselves very content. And often times we may find that we have turned out our beacon of hope for one another. Or perhaps, I hope and pray that we find ourselves lighting and saving the path of others both in our words and deeds.

Illustration

- There have been many strange disappearances of lighthouse keepers. Perhaps the strangest was at the Flannan Isle lighthouse in 1900 where the three lighthouse keepers disappeared without trace.
- One day the church is going to be gone... The light of the gospel will not shine on earth anymore. The apostolic lighthouses across the world will be dimmed. But the church will be rewarded for her labors at the lighthouse.

Rev 22:5 And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever.