***Matthew 5:14-16 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.***

Bible School starts tonight. With God’s blessing, we will have children and adults, excited and open to learning, gathered here each night. What an opportunity to be a light! What a time to be a city set upon a hill.

Many years ago, my best friend and I attended his brothers wedding in a little city called San Angelo, Texas. The route we mapped on a paper map took us from Dallas over to Abilene. As we’d arrived in Dallas around midnight, stopping was probably the right answer, but, as young people often do, we ignored the right answer and pressed on to Abilene, intending to be in San Angelo by morning. I probably should’ve mentioned that we’d started our day in Lynchburg, Va about 19 hours earlier. The road between Dallas and Abilene at that time was dark, pitch black, lonely, and desolate. After 3 hours, we started seeing a faint glow in the night sky. We topped a hill and there before us were the lights of the city. We still had miles to go, but we were so very glad to see the lights. They couldn’t be hidden! We were tired. We were weary. And there was light and there was hope.

Verse 14 of our scripture this morning says - *You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden****.*** In John 8:12 it says - *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.* Here Jesus says You are the light of the world. The You here is plural, not singular. Meaning the group of you are the light. This makes sense. A city is a group of people living in close proximity. Remember that Jesus has just given the Sermon on the Mount. Great crowds are following, His fame is growing, healing is taking place, and He goes up on the mountain and teaches. He teaches many – You are the light of the world. You are my followers. You no longer walk in darkness because you have Me. Brothers and sisters, the next five days, we have an opportunity to be a city set on a hill, shining for all that will see. A soul may be touched, a life changed, because of the Light of Jesus we shine.

Verse 15 - *Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.*From a city to a single light on a lampstand. From a group of lights to individual light. Light, not under a basket, but out in the open! Light not just for the believer, but for all in the presence of the believer. We shine and others see. How will we shine these next few days? Will we shine with enthusiasm and love, looking forward to each night because it’s another chance to encounter others for Jesus? The Spirit shines with *love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. Satan would love to put every light under a basket of harsh words or ill tempers. Let your light shine, knowing all of this is for the honor and glory of the Father.

Verse 16 starts *Let your light so shine before men,* Your, now singular, no longer plural as in verse 14. You see, that city on a hill that cannot be hidden, shining brightly for all to see, is simply a gathering of individual lights all shining together. When we saw Abilene stretched out across the land below, we didn’t see a single light, but thousands of single lights shining before two tired men in a little Toyota pickup. But, it wasn’t just us who saw, but everyone who topped that hill and looked across that valley. In Galatians 2:20, the Apostle Paul says - *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* When we accept Christ, He is the Light of the World, living in us. By the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, we have His Light, and we don’t hide that light, but let it shine. These next few days, shine with the Light of Jesus, singularly as bright as possible. If you see your brother or sister dimming, give some of what you have! Each of us, letting our light shine as bright as possible, will join as a city set upon a hill that cannot be hidden.

There was a group of lost hikers in the Alps during a blizzard. They were freezing, starving, dying, about to give up, when they saw one light shining through the tree branches. Going towards that one light, they saw a line of lanterns leading down the mountain. Following these lanterns, they found the town and survived. One man, though the town had long ago stopped paying him, continued to light the lanterns each night. One of the townspeople said, “Why do you do this? Night after night. What a waste! No one will see?” The lantern keeper simply replied, “Someone might.” That night, the son of that scoffer was in the group that followed the lanterns home.

Why are we doing this? Why will we be here excited each night and ready to shine our Savior for children and adults to see? Verse 16 finishes - *that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.* It’s all for the Glory of God. Every sandwich fixed, every hug given, every shhhhh because a child is excited and joy-filled is to glorify our Father in heaven. Never forget. When we smile at a child, hug an adult, show up early, stay late, make a last-minute run to Dollar General, God is glorified. When we pray, read scripture, and sing, God is glorified. What an incredible opportunity awaits us starting tonight!

This week, might we be the lighter of a lantern that someone follows eternally Home to Jesus.