## Week 4 Radiate the Light – Exodus 34:29-35 / Luke 2:8-15,20

‘The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you;
the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.’

(Numbers 6:24-26)

## Introduction

This week we turn our attention to ‘radiating the light’. Perhaps one of the most well-known blessings in the Bible is ‘The Priestly Blessing’ in Numbers 6:24-26. This blessing was given to Moses with the instruction that this was how to bless the people of Israel. We are given the visual image of God shining his face – radiating his glory – on his people. Whilst we largely take this metaphorically, Moses, after spending time in God’s presence, physically glowed so much that he had to hide his face (Exodus 34:29-35). Now our faces might not physically radiate God’s light, but our lives certainly should.

Whether our physical appearance radiates God’s light, or it’s demonstrated through our words and actions, God’s light should be leaving a mark on us and on others. His light and love in our lives should be evident for all to see.

## Main Body: Radiate the Light

Christmas is a key time of year where there are many opportunities to bask in the glory of God’s light. We can find that warming, inner glow from spending time with family, singing carols, playing music, pausing in the stillness by the manger. Even as we exchange gifts with friends and family in the coming days, or give out toys as part of our toy appeal, our actions can be clear examples of radiating God’s light.

But our challenge is, how can we continue to radiate the Light of the World in our lives long after the Christmas candles have been snuffed out? Come January, the Christmas lights, the carol services, even those intimate moments around the manger, can all fade and get boxed up with the tree and put in the loft or garage until next year.

A familiar teaching of Jesus is the short passage in the Sermon on the Mount on ‘salt and light’. This passage has been the subject of hundreds of sermons, and Jesus tells his listeners, ‘You are the light of the world’, and, as such, ‘Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven’ (Matthew 5:13-16).

Radiating Christ’s light isn’t a one-off experience but a direct instruction from Jesus himself and a key function of our discipleship.

Our light, our love, our good deeds, our joy and hope, should shine from us and point others to the source: Jesus.

Take the shepherds – when they saw the glory of God and the light that ‘shone around them’, they couldn’t stop themselves breaking out in praise to God.

But what happens next is really interesting. The shepherds weren’t satisfied with the splendour of the angels and the fanfare and dazzle of light, but they wanted to *see* the reason and source of the light. ‘Let’s go … and see …’ (Luke 2:15).

When others see the ‘light’ radiating from our lives, are they desperate to get to the source of the light themselves? Are they so convinced by what they see in us that they want to know more about Jesus? Do they want to run to the manger to see the Lord, or is what they see in us unconvincing?

## Application

We’re deep into the dark nights now; days are short, nights are long and dark and cold. But when we aren’t surrounded by street lights, have you ever stared up at a night’s sky and marvelled at the twinkling stars and the frosty moon? God gave us the moon to light up the dark sky – but, as we know, its light doesn’t come from itself. It reflects and radiates the sun’s light.

In a similar way, Jesus’ desire for us as his disciples is to be a light that reflects and radiates his light. But the only way we can do that is if we stay near the source of the light. The far side of the moon is in darkness to us – it doesn’t generate any light by itself. It can only reflect the light that shines on it.

Similarly we must dwell in the presence of God in order to reflect his light. We must stare long enough into the face of Jesus that his impression is etched into our hearts.

One of the most well-known Psalms (Psalm 23) ends with the words, ‘I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever’, and this is perhaps the answer. To dwell, to live, in God’s presence is the secret to radiating his light.

Throughout the Christmas story, whether that’s the shepherds, the magi, Simeon (Luke 2) etc – indeed anywhere in the Bible where people are seeking to be in God’s presence – they always manage to find it! And they are always welcomed. God isn’t hiding from us; he wants to be found and he wants us to live all our life in his glory, to dwell with him.

As we dwell in God’s presence and soak up his light, we can echo the words of the apostle Paul who writes: ‘For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ’ (2 Corinthians 4:6).

## Response

* As we approach Christmas Day, think back over this period of Advent and consider these questions:
* What practices or which events or situations have warmed your heart with the reality of Jesus’ presence with you?
* What was it about these events or practices that meant that you felt able to draw closer to Jesus?
* How can you take these experiences and learn from them?
* Is there a discipline that you need to adopt to see you into the new year and beyond, and that will help you regularly and intentionally dwell in the presence of God?
* Do you, like the shepherds, need to seek out the source of the light, to know the reality of his presence so that you can share it with others?
* When people look at you – the way you speak, your relationships with others, what you do – would it prompt them to seek Jesus for themselves?