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We the Church: *Shining the Spotlight*

Our theme today is “shining the Spotlight on Jesus.” Because he is the one who stands at centre of the stage of history. God has always been interested in highlighting Christ, but it has happened in different ways.

-The Church today has a job – to continue to shine the Spotlight on Christ.

Three perspectives – The Spotlight in

1. the Old Testament
2. the New Testament,
3. the church age.

in the Old Testament (OT), the light is like a glowing limelight at the back of the stage – lighting up the set but leaving the shape of the mysterious figure standing front and centre as only a silhouette.

- "the OT authors speaking better than they know" - though they haven't met Christ, God is inspiring them to write in a way that points to Christ that gets clarified later.

-In the New Testament (NT), the Spotlights turn on centre stage and illuminate the face of Christ. The silhouette is now a detailed face.

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Last there is the church age - this is the age of the mobile spotlight. Spotlights going out into the least likely places of the earth. From the streets of Calcutta, India to the red light district of Amsterdam, people are highlighting Christ in the most unexpected places.

Part 1:

The OT Spotlight (Psalm 118)

Structure:

Verses 1-4 are an introduction - a call to worship - everyone, let's get in Tune - What's it say there? What is the tune? "God Love" - that's the musical key of the psalm – and note well, that's the tone set before the mysterious figure of Christ steps into the Psalm.

Verses 5-13 are the story - I needed help, I called to God, and he answered me.

Verses 14-21 are the proclamation. God has delivered me, and now, standing above the battlefield as the dust settles, and in the gate of the city as I return victorious, this is my proclamation - "Shouts of Joy and Victory" because "God has become the Saviour of us." In other words - "Not to us, but to God be the glory."

Then we get to vs. 22-24 - this part of the proclamation. The victory did not go to the strong, to the obvious battle-leader, instead, to use a **building metaphor** - the new kingdom is being built

on a foundation that the Builders originally rejected. God's rescue came through by the hand of someone very unlikely.

-Psalm 118 was written about a particular battle, but through it and other Psalms a grand **picture** of **history** emerges in the pages of the Old Testament, a **picture** of the **rebellious** world that God was willing to save, and the **shape** of the **saviour** who would do it.

-Today there are popular Christian ideas like Andy Stanley's statement: "**we must unhitch from the Old Testament**". this isn't good.

-We need the full picture of Christ **and the world he came to save**

If the Old Testament is unhitched from the new - it's like cutting the introduction and rising action from a play. Jesus may walk out into the spotlight in the New Testament, but without the Old testament no one will know why he is there.

Part 2:

The NT Spotlight (Apostles - Acts 4) - a spotlight shone by the eyewitnesses.

In the New Testament the spotlight goes from backstage to front stage and Jesus comes into the limelight fully illuminated.

The New Testament unrolls a banner that says "Good News!! He's Here!" and shines the spotlight on Christ. Here is the one the Old Testament has been leading us toward.

Key Text: Acts 4:8-12

-Peter quotes Psalm 118(builder Metaphor), except he also explains it.

He tells the people standing around him the elders and the rulers that is, that they are the builders talked about in Psalm 118.

- Does this mean Psalm 118 wasn't true before Jesus? Of course not – the original psalm was true of people in its day, and its been true of people who are blind to God's way of working throughout all history – but the moment when this Psalm was fulfilled, when its meaning was richest and most alive, was when Jesus came to be the cornerstone of all cornerstones to foundation not just of Jerusalem's new walls, but the foundation of a new Creation that began in Jesus' own resurrection.

How do we know that's how it works? Because in Acts 4 Peter says Jesus is actually still the one who is healing the cripples and guiding the church. Jesus seems to have exited the stage, but actually he is there empowering every work the Church does in His name. Peter says "by **him**, this man is standing before you well."

Pt. 3

What about day, then?

-in our day, we are going to fall into one of two patterns shown here: Either we will be like the apostles, encounter Jesus, and shine the spotlight on him. Or we will be like the Pharisees who encountered Jesus and reject him.

-The whole Bible and the early church constantly shine the spotlight on the way Jesus ushers in this unexpected Kingdom. A kingdom "not of this world". If it was "of this world" Jesus says in John 18:36

In revelation 1:5-6 we read:

5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth.

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

Perhaps more than anything else in our day, we need to remember and proclaim the statement that **Jesus is the ruler of kings on earth.**

- remember, Revelation is a book of encouragement to the early Christians and to every generation of Christians since then - in the book of Revelation we find a beast, and one of the messages of the book is that there will always be in every age manifestations of the beast, there will always be in every age temptation for everybody including those in the church to follow in the ways of the beast and shine the spotlight on the beastly way of living in the world, but the little Lamb overcomes the beast. The church might seem like a lamb facing a beast in an impossible battle, but the message of revelation is clear in every age of church history, the lamb will overcome the beast.

This is just a tiny sample of pictures from the Book of Revelation and maybe we need to do a study on the Book of Revelation in more detail sometime. ((If you're interested in that please let me know!!))

But how do we as Christians shine the spotlight on Jesus when the beast is circling us?

Karl Truman:

"The task of the Christian is not to whine about the moment in which he or she lives but to understand its problems and respond appropriately to them."

Or in the words: "Don't Whine, Shine!"

Three practical steps from this statement:

1. Don't whine - or to put it another way, complaining shouldn't be our first response as Christians. Instead point toward the one who is our hope and peace.
2. We seek to understand - Seeking to understand means we aren't satisfied with oversimplified answers
-we find ways to point to Christ in the unique lives of the people that we live with and minister to.
3. Responding appropriately - there is not one simply answer to the way that we shine the spotlight on Christ. Sometimes it is speaking a message about Christ in the Streets like Peter does in Acts chapter 2, sometimes it is a word about Christ and an act of compassion, like Peter in Acts chapter 3, sometimes it is patient listening and a conversation, like Phillip and the Ethiopian man who was curious about God.

- a. All of these forms of response are directed toward real people and have the intent to point people toward Christ. These are not rants or individuals expressing their feelings, but responses to real people and their hurts and hang-ups.

Where will you take your spotlight?

Downtown Mitchell? The arena?

Guatemala? Amsterdam?

We have a task – church – to point to Christ with our actions, our words, and our attitudes.

Today, Monday, Tuesday... you guessed it – every day we are to put the focus on Christ.

Christ is willing to go anywhere, and whenever you turn the spotlight in his direction, you are doing the best work you can do as a member of the church.