

"We Are Meant To Shine"

ANCIENT WISDOM ~ Matthew 5:14-16

¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. ¹⁵ No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

[New Revised Standard Version](#) (NRSV)

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CONTEMPORARY WISDOM ~ *Marianne Williamson*

"Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness that most frightens us. We ask ourselves, Who am I to be brilliant, gorgeous, talented, fabulous? Actually, who are you not to be? You are a child of God. Your playing small does not serve the world. There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won't feel insecure around you. We are all meant to shine, as children do. We were born to make manifest the glory of God that is within us. It's not just in some of us; it's in everyone. And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others."

Sermon

Were you among the millions of people looking up into the sky on Monday afternoon? Did you don the special eclipse glasses to protect your eyes? Maybe, like me, you went about your daily chores and at the appointed time, you stopped, to look and listen, to give yourself a chance to experience this amazing couple of minutes. I was in Ellsworth and I stopped running around and sat quietly on a bench at the public boat launch on Water Street. The sky was overcast and the sun couldn't be seen, the light got a bit odd for a little while – not dark and not regular daylight, but somehow different. And then, it was over.

Later I saw the photos and listened to the first-person accounts of people who spent the three hours of eclipse time in a place of totality. Many of them were speechless – words simply fail to convey a spiritual experience. Try as they might to describe what they saw and felt, the words they kept coming back to were amazing, awesome, and beautiful.

And darkness spread over the face of the earth and there was no light anywhere. Except that there was light – the sun had just as much light as any other August afternoon. The difference was that we could not see the light of our sun. It shone as brightly as ever behind the moon as it passed between the earth and the sun. We say that the moon blotted out the sun. It didn't. But it surely must seem that way when one is right in the path of a total solar eclipse.

Even when it seems very dark, there is, still, a great deal of light.
Even when our eyes cannot perceive it, the light is there – just in a different way.

Lately, I have felt that the darkness might overtake the light. There is so much going on that brings darkness to our world and troubles me. You will, undoubtedly, be making your own mental list or version.

I am troubled by military threats and counter threats.

I am troubled by the destruction of our environment.

I am troubled by the refugees fleeing death and destruction in their own lands who have nowhere to go because all other borders are closed to them.

I am troubled by the number of young men of color who end up trapped in a criminal justice system that seems perfectly willing to toss them in prison for decades.

I am troubled by the number of teenagers who contemplate suicide and even more troubled by those who ultimately die by suicide.

I am troubled by an economic system that continues to favor the wealthy and disadvantage all others.

I am troubled by those who reject science and call it faith.

I am troubled by those who harm their neighbors and call it patriotism.

I am troubled by those who shout hate and call it freedom.

I am troubled by my own reaction to what I do not understand and what I cannot accept.

We have been through a lot of darkness lately. It can seem as though we are living in a near-total eclipse of the light. The light is not gone, it's just that I can't always see it.

Sometimes, I need a strong reminder that even when it seems that darkness has blotted out the light, light still shines brightly, just in ways that we cannot always see or feel. Do you know what I mean?

The two readings for this morning – one from the Gospel according to Matthew quoting Jesus and one from Marianne Williamson – remind us that the light we seek, the light we crave, the light we cannot live without, is not somewhere else. It is right here. We are the light. We were not made in darkness for darkness. We were made to shine, and to shine brightly. It is our responsibility, to shine – even when the darkness surrounding us threatens to blot out all our light.

This is what I want to invite you to consider and remember when it seems that your own light is struggling to be seen or has perhaps become no more than a dim flicker.

We are unique expressions of the one light. Not just any light, but the light of the universe. The stars in the sky are remnants of the Great Radiance or the Big Bang or the breath of God or dependent co-arising, or whatever name you give the moment of beginning. Chaos compressed itself into something so tiny that it could not withstand its own pressure and it exploded. It threw out all its matter and all its energy and all its light, and Bam! things started happening in a big way. We who are sitting here today are the result of that Great Beginning. We are made of the dust and debris, the light and the energy, of that explosion. We are the light of the universe. You might not think so on any given day, especially a day when the darkness all around us, or perhaps within ourselves, threatens to blot out our very special flame and glow. But, dear ones, the good news is that the light shines even in the darkness. Your light shines. Your light shines through the darkness.

Jesus tells us that we are misguided if we put our light under a barrel. No, we are commanded to let our light shine. Let our light shine because that is who and what we are. Let our light shine because the world needs all the light shining that it can get. Let it shine because when we shine and when we are the light of the world, we are a testament to the power of the One Light that we all – ALL – share.

Marianne Williamson reminds us that what we may fear is just exactly how true and how important it is that any one of us, and everyone one of us, can change the world. You can change the world with your light when you don't hide it under a bushel basket and when you don't play small or shrink away from what you can accomplish. She says that we are brilliant, talented, gorgeous -and, we are. And we are still so much more than that.

How? How can I change the world with whatever inner light I am able to let shine? Our light is like love. A little bit makes more. You don't lose it by giving it away, you increase the light in others when they see you shine.

Shining makes us smile. Happy people shine. Shining people are happy. Think about His Holiness the 14th Dalia Lama. He shines, my friends, he shines. And he is happy. He says that happiness is his religion. And he gives it all away and there is always a whole lot more. A whole lot more. We are not in danger of running out of light. We are only in danger of forgetting to shine. When one of us is struggling with the darkness because of what blocks out her vision, let the rest of us shine ever more brightly so that our friend might come through the time of her eclipse and be restored to the light that was, for a time, invisible to her.

We can light up the world when we shine together. Too much to ask? NO. Marianne Williamson says that we were born to shine, to make manifest the glory of the divine within each of us. When we fail to let our light shine, we suffer from the inside out and the world is the poorer and maybe a bit darker.

My Dear Spiritual Companions, may we remember to shine; to shine with the love that lives within us. For this we know and can rely upon: There is One Life. One Love. One Light. It lives in us. It flows through us. We are made whole and powerful when we are in touch with it. May each of us be a light to ourselves and to the world, and may we overtake the darkness that threatens us every day so that the world may know us and themselves through the light and the love and the life we share. May we let that light shine as a river flowing through us.

Blessed Be. I Love You. Amen.