

Sent Out to Shine the Light of Christ

Series: The Light on the Hill - Vision and Strategy 2026

Date: 7 September 2025, 12th Sunday after Trinity

Location: St George's Battery Point

Texts: Matthew 5.14-16; 1 Peter 1:1-12, 2.9-12, 3.13-17

Today is the final in our Vision sermon series. God has called us as St George's to be the Light on the Hill. We exist to see people

Drawn to the Light of Christ,

Transformed by the Light of Christ and

Sent out to shine the Light of Christ.

We're also celebrating today Barbara and Marcelo declaring their faith in Christ, confirming their baptismal promises and bringing Julian for baptism. I've been thinking about how to bring these 2 things together in a sermon, and I thought, this actually is what the apostle Peter's first letter is all about. Peter begins with a declaration of our identity as Christians. This is proclaimed in our baptism. Then from the middle of chapter 2 onwards Peter says, "ok, this is who you are in Christ. Now this is how you are to live." And the same is true for us. At the end of each service we are sent out in the power of the Holy Spirit to love and serve God and our neighbour. Or, to put it in the terms of our vision - we're sent out to Shine the Light of Christ. So this morning we're going to look at those 2 points: (1) Baptism and the new identity Jesus gives us, and (2) being sent into the world to shine the light of Christ. And if you're here and you're not a Christian, my hope is that this will be a terrific window through which you can see what it means to be a Christian.

Baptism - New birth into a living hope

Have a look with me at 1 Peter 1. After his initial address, Peter breaks into joyful praise, verse 3:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! Why does Peter praise God? Because, he continues,

In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade.

This new birth is a reference to baptism. In John 3 Jesus says no one can enter the Kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit.¹ And in 2 Corinthians 5 St Paul says that if anyone is in Christ they are a new creation, the old has gone and the new has come.² In our Baptism and Confirmation classes this last week we looked at what a sacrament is. A sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward spiritual reality. In baptism, the

¹ John 3.5

² 2 Corinthians 5.17

outward visible sign is the water poured over a person. The inward spiritual reality is the new birth given by the Holy Spirit. Baptism is what the church does, in obedience to Jesus' command. The Holy Spirit does that internal work to give us spiritual new birth, making us a new creation, applying to us personally the finished work of Christ's forgiveness on cross. We receive this gift by faith.

That is what Marcelo and Barbara have come to do today. To confirm for themselves the promises made on their behalf when they were infants, and to declare these promises for Julian, that they belong to Jesus, that they will follow him. And in baptism they claim his promises for themselves: that Christ died for them; that his forgiveness is for them and for their child.

The apostle Peter tells us in these verses the difference the new birth of baptism makes in a person's life. First it is a new birth into a living hope. In a world full of despair and death, we have a hope and future that is alive. Why? Because this hope is through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. Not only has Jesus died for our sins, he has also risen from the grave, conquering death itself. And he stands a living human being at the right hand of God in heaven. When we are baptised we are baptised into Christ, we become members of his body the Church, and he is the living one. Because he is alive and our lives are hidden in him we have hope.

Second, we are given new birth into an inheritance, verse 4, *that can never perish, spoil or fade*. This is the language of family and identity. To be born into a family is to inherit a name, a family story, and depending on our family fortune maybe even a future inheritance. So it is in baptism we are given a new name, our Christian name, the name by which we will be known by everyone. This is why baptisms of infants have traditionally been called christenings in English culture, and why we still sometimes call our first name our Christian name. It's a new name, because we are born again, we are made a new creation. And so the old has gone. And so Peter will go on to write how God has called us out of darkness into his wonderful light.³ How he has redeemed us from the empty way of life handed down from our ancestors through the blood of Christ.⁴ And therefore as people who have been brought from death to life, born into God's family, Peter says we are called to live as God's obedient children. And so in the promises we've heard Marcelo and Barbara make they declare that they turn to Christ, that they repent of their sins, that they reject selfish living and all that is false and unjust, and that they renounce Satan all evil. As God's holy people these can have

³ 1 Peter 2.9

⁴ 1 Peter 1.18-19

no part in our lives. They belong to the old life which has died in baptism. And we now live in Christ.

Our future is secure. We have an inheritance, kept in heaven for us, verse 4. When my grandad died he left me an inheritance of some \$50,000. As a young man this was an extraordinary amount of money. But really it's not that much. It's less than the average annual salary in Tasmania. The inheritance God has for us is the future he has prepared, the new heavens and new earth, a perfect kingdom of peace and justice, and the perfect bliss of seeing him face to face. That is our family fortune.

What's more, Peter says, verse 5, that we, *through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time*. Oh yes, we may suffer grief in all kinds of trials in this life. Without a doubt. And yet God will use these to refine us like gold, so that we may shine to his glory. And in this he himself shields us with his mighty power. We need not be afraid, no matter what this world throws at us; not sickness of body or mind, not financial worries, not job insecurity, not the slander or attacks of others, not even our own doubts, because God himself is our shield, our refuge, our strong tower. We need only trust him.

Our experience is one of faith and not sight. We trust in Christ and we look forward to the day of salvation when he returns and when we will see him. And so Peter writes, *Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, 9 for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls*.

It has been a delight to see this joy in Marcelo and Barbara this year. They have experienced many trials and difficulties here in Tasmania. And yet in finding Christ, I can see his joy, the joy of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They have made stepped out in faith with some very big decisions, but have done so, trusting they are shielded by God's power, that he has their future secure.

All of this is our inheritance, the new, unshakable identity given us by Christ signified in baptism, sealed by the Holy Spirit, new birth. That new identity changes how we see ourselves, our relationship with the world around us. And so Peter begins his letter, verse 1, by naming us God's elect, that is chosen by God. And also exiles scattered in this world. Later, in 2.11 he will call us foreigners and exiles. Marcelo and Barbara have known something of being a foreigner in this strange land of Tasmania, exiled for a time from their home in Chile. But actually, the apostle Peter says, this is true for all of us. Our true home is

heaven, the new Jerusalem, the city of God. We are journeying through this life to that home. And so we find ourselves as foreigners and exiles in the city of Men, scattered across the nations of this world. Many people talk about not fitting in, feeling out of place, even not at home in their own bodies. Well, according to the Bible this is absolutely right! We're made for the glory of the new creation! We should expect not to feel quite at home in this life, in our mortal and wounded bodies. We were made for glory. That sense of alienation is because we are exiled from the Garden, and we long to be back home in the presence of God.

But through baptism, we are given a new name and secure inheritance. We are born into a new family, the church. Here we have a foretaste of glory, with people from every tribe and language and nation, gathering together worshipping the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. We experience the Holy Spirit transforming us from one degree of glory to another, making us more like Christ. How then should we live as citizens of heaven, journeying through the city of Men, longing for the city of God? That brings us to point 2.

Sent - Live such good lives among the pagans

Have a read with me, 2 Peter 2.11-12.

11 Dear friends, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from sinful desires, which wage war against your soul. 12 Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

How are we to live as foreigners and exiles, loved and chosen by God? Say no to sin our lives and do good to our neighbours.

Notice, Peter again begins with our identity. In fact, this what he says immediately before these verses:

9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

What a magnificent description of the church! This is what we are baptised into. This is who we are. Our task is two fold. First, to declare the praises of him who called us out of darkness into light. We do that as we come together each week and sing his praise in worship. And we do that as we share Christ with our neighbours, our colleagues, our friends and family. And then second, our task is to live good lives amongst our neighbours. Notice that Peter expects we will be *among* our neighbours. Peter expects that our neighbours will know that we're Christians. He expects that they will see the difference Christ makes in our lives and that how we live will have an effect on them. Peter expects that we'll be *public disciples*. The

Christian faith is personal, but it's not private. It's a public faith. I'm sure Peter has in mind Jesus' words from Matthew 5.

14 'You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. [That would be absurd!] Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

This is the third movement of our mission as St George's. As we see God drawing people to the light of Christ, transforming each of us by the light of Christ, so we each are also sent out to Shine the Light of Christ. We've tried to summarise this as follows.

We bless others through our character and service and testify to God's love in Christ at work in us and in his world.

Being a Christian is about the whole of life. Christ's light needs to shine in every part of our lives, so that none of it is in darkness. But also so that he can shine through all areas of lives - how we relate to other people, our families, our colleagues, our enemies, how we think, how we use the gifts and resources he has given us, how we speak, how we act, how we do our work, how we use our leisure. All of these can be occasions for us to offer ourselves and what we do to God in worship, for his glory, and so we may shine the light of Christ.

God has good for us to do in this world. When we live and work to God's glory, loving and serving our neighbours, God uses us to shine his light and make this world a better place.

St George's is a sending church. We've sent Marc and Joey Durdin to work with Wyclif in Germany. We've sent Andy Maskell to work with students at UTas. In a month we're going to be sending Marcelo, Barbara and Julian back to Chile. But actually God sends each one of us out from here each week. We've been drawn to worship God through Christ. We are fed by Christ and transformed by the Spirit as we meet together around his word and at his table. We are anchored in the new birth and the living hope Christ has given us. And so we are sent out among our neighbours, to say no to sin, to do good, to shine the light of Christ. Will you give yourself again to this glorious calling, to the praise of our God and Saviour?

Father, we offer ourselves to you as a living sacrifice through Jesus Christ our Lord. Send us out in the power of your Spirit to live and work to your praise and glory.