

# This Little Light of Mine

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[ 0 : 00 ] Well, if we could, this evening, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read in the book of the prophet Zechariah, chapter 4.

Zechariah, chapter 4, and if we read again, just from the beginning. Well, we read there, And the angel who talked with me came again and woke me, like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, What do you see? I said, I see and behold a lampstand, all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl, and the other on its left. I'm sure that we're all familiar with the gospel song, This Little Light of Mine.

This Little Light of Mine. In fact, I'm sure that when we hear those words, we remember the lyrics and we want to start singing it. Well, I do anyway, because, you know, it's a great gospel song.

[ 1 : 07 ] This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. Let it shine. And of course, Jesus is the light.

That's why we need to let our light shine. We need to imitate and emulate the light of Jesus. And we do that by our Christian character, conduct, and conversation.

We're to shine as lights in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation. But, you know, this gospel song, it's not only remembered for its lyrics, it's also remembered for its leadership.

Because during the American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 60s, this little light of mine, it became their anthem. And a woman called Fannie Lou Hammer.

She was a leading figure who stood up for equal rights and for the freedoms of black people. And, as you'd expect, in those days, she suffered for it.

[ 2 : 11 ] Because she was threatened, she was harassed, she was beaten, she was shot at, she was assaulted, and she was imprisoned. But Fannie Lou Hammer, she's famously remembered for singing this song, this little light of mine.

And she started singing that song while she was being arrested for trying to vote. And needless to say, the catchy gospel song, it caught on.

It caught on to the point that the civil rights movement would often sing that song, this little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine. They would sing that as they marched in peaceful protests.

Now, as we continue studying the book of Zechariah, we see that the call to be a shining light in the world, it's a call that is not only for the church in our day, but it's also a call to the church in Zechariah's day.

They're called to let their light so shine before men. And so I'd like us to consider what is Zechariah's fifth vision. I want us to consider it under three headings.

[ 3 : 20 ] The lampstand, the light, and the Lord. The lampstand, the light, and the Lord. So first of all, the lampstand.

The lampstand. Look again at that verse 1. The angel who talked with me came again and woke me like a man who was awakened out of his sleep. And he said to me, what do you see? I said, I see and behold a lampstand all of gold, with a bowl on the top of it, and seven lamps on it, with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it.

And there are two olive trees by it, one on the right of the bowl, and the other on its left. And I said to the angel who talked with me, what are these, my Lord?

As you know, Zechariah and Haggai were colleagues in the ministry. They had the same call and the same commission to comfort and challenge God's people with God's word as they began living and looking beyond lockdown.

As you know, the Israelites, they had spent 70 years living in lockdown in Babylon due to their rebellion and rejection of the Lord. But now by God's grace, this remnant has returned to the

promised land and they have returned to rebuild and restore and renew and rededicate their lives to the Lord.

[ 4 : 42 ] And yet, as we've discovered, that wasn't without its problems. Because when they returned, this remnant, they left the temple lying in ruins for 15 years.

The temple was derelict and desolate for 15 years until Zechariah and Haggai both began preaching and prophesying God's word in 520 BC.

Haggai began with a call to rebuild and Zechariah followed with a call to repent. Then only three months into his ministry and about five months into the restoration project of the temple, we're told that the Lord spoke to this returned remnant through Zechariah using eight night visions.

And the purpose of these night visions was to remind and reassure this returned remnant that even though they were still unsettled and uncertain and unsure about their future, the Lord was with them.

The Lord was with them. And we've looked at the first four of these night visions. In the first vision, Zechariah saw King Jesus.

[ 5 : 55 ] He was on a red horse standing among the myrtle trees. And there the people were being exhorted and encouraged not to give up.

Then in the second vision, Zechariah saw four horns, which were the four empires that the Lord used in history as part of his perfect plan and purpose for the people of God and also the proclamation of the gospel.

Then Zechariah's third vision was a man with a measuring line who assured the church that even though she may look small and weak and fragile, the Lord will be a wall of fire around her and his glory will be in the midst of her.

Then last Lord's Day in Zechariah's fourth vision, we saw Joshua the high priest and he was standing before the Lord with Satan accusing him.

But, you know, as the representative of the Lord's people, Joshua, we saw that he had his rags removed and a robe of righteousness replaced.

[ 7 : 00 ] He had a robe of righteousness put onto him, which guaranteed the full and free forgiveness of the Lord. And now we come to Zechariah's fifth vision.

And here the Lord encourages, he continues to encourage and enable his people who are living and looking beyond lockdown. And you'll notice from verse 1 of chapter 4 that Zechariah's visions are not dreams because he's awake.

The angel who talked with me came again and woke me like a man who is awakened out of his sleep. And as we said before, the difference between a dream and a vision is that in a dream, the prophet is a passive viewer of what's being revealed.

But in a vision, the prophet is an active viewer. He's able to interact with what he's witnessing. And we see that by the discussion that goes on between Zechariah and the angel.

So Zechariah at this point in verse 1, he was sound asleep, but then he was startled from his sleep by an angel so that he would receive his fifth night vision.

[ 8 : 12 ] And the angel asked Zechariah, what do you see? What do you see? And Zechariah answered and said, I see and behold a lampstand.

All of gold with a bowl on the top of it and seven lamps on it with seven lips on each of the lamps that are on the top of it. Now, the Jews were very familiar with the concept of a golden lampstand, especially because of the tabernacle and also the temple.

In fact, the lampstand in the holy place, it was referred to as the menorah, which is the Hebrew word for lampstand. It was the menorah.

And similar to Zechariah's lampstand here, the lampstand in the tabernacle and later in the temple, it was made of pure gold. It was made of pure gold and it had seven branches shaped like what you would say a candelabra.

And on the end of these seven branches were seven lamps. So there was seven branches with seven lamps and the lampstand, it was precious.

[ 9 : 22 ] And it was precious because it was made of pure gold. It was a golden lampstand. In fact, we're told in Exodus 25 that the golden lampstand was made from a talent of gold.

And a talent is 34 kilograms. Therefore, the lampstand was not only very heavy, it was also very expensive. If you worked it out in today's prices, one kilogram of gold, it costs over 43,000 pounds.

So 34 kilograms of gold, which was the weight of the lampstand, it would cost nearly 1.5 million pounds, which is slightly out of our price range as a congregation. But, you know, in Solomon's temple, which is fascinating, in Solomon's temple, which was the temple that was ransacked and robbed and then ruined during the Babylonian invasion in 586 BC, in Solomon's temple, there were 10 lampstands in the holy place. And 10 lampstands, if you work it out, they would now cost in the region of nearly 15 million pounds. And, you know, people might think, well, that's a lot of money to spend on a church to worship God. [10:41] But then, when you think about it, it's only a fraction in comparison to the millions of pounds that football clubs spend on players for their teams. But, you know, what we need to appreciate is that the menorah, the lampstand in the tabernacle and in the temple, it symbolised the tree of life in the Garden of Eden.

Because, in many ways, this menorah, it was a golden tree with seven branches. And, as you know, seven is the number of perfection.

Therefore, the golden lampstand with seven branches, it emphasised perfection and purity. And that's because the God we worship is a God of perfection and purity.

And it's the presence of the God of perfection and purity that Adam and Eve experienced and enjoyed before the fall in the Garden of Eden.

In fact, the Garden of Eden, it was the first tabernacle. It was the first temple. The Garden of Eden was a prototype of the temple. Because the Garden of Eden was the first place where mankind experienced favour and fellowship with their perfect and pure God.

[12:03] But, as you know, when mankind fell from that perfect and pure estate wherein they were created, it broke fellowship and it broke favour with God. And they were driven out of the garden.

They were driven out of the garden through the gate in the east. And that's why the outer gate of the tabernacle and the outer gate of the temple had always faced east.

And it was to remind sinners of what happened at the fall. It was to remind sinners that they have original sin. They are fallen sinners and that the only way to experience forgiveness and favour and fellowship with their perfect and pure God again is through sacrifice.

The only way to come to God is through sacrifice. And, my friend, of course, the only sacrifice for sin is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God who came to take away the sin of the world.

But, you know, the lampstand, whether it was part of the tabernacle in the wilderness or the temple in Israel or the church in the world, the lampstand represented the worshipping people of God.

[13:18] The lampstand represented the worshipping community of God's people. And we see that in the book of Revelation where the church is referred to as the lampstand in the community.

And we're told that there were seven churches in Asia and they were revealed as the seven golden lampstands. But you remember one lampstand in particular.

It was the church in Ephesus. And the Lord warned the church in Ephesus that he would remove their lampstand unless they repent. The church in Ephesus was called to repent because they had lost their first love.

They had lost their first love and they had become selfish, self-centered, self-reliant, self-seeking, and self-interested. And, you know, it's a warning to us as Christians.

It's a warning to us as a lampstand in this community. It's a warning to us as a church that we need to return to our first love. We need to return to the lampstand, the true lampstand, Jesus Christ.

[14:29] And, you know, like those living in Zechariah's day, as we begin looking and living beyond lockdown, we need to return.

We need to renew. We need to rededicate ourselves as a worshipping community of God's people. We need to return to our first love.

We need to return to the lampstand. We need to return, renew, and rededicate ourselves as a worshipping community of God's people.

Because, as you know, the function of a lampstand, my friend, is to give light. That's what we see secondly. The light. So the lampstand and the light.

The light. Look at verse 4. And I said to the angel who talked with me, What are these, my Lord? Then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me, Do you not know what these are?

[15:28] I said, No, my Lord. Then he said to me, This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel. Not by might, not by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

You know, as for the golden lampstand at the tabernacle and at the temple, Zechariah's golden lampstand had both form and function. Its form was that it was a golden lampstand. It was a golden lampstand with seven branches symbolising not only that the church is being perfected by Christ and pure through Christ but also that the church is precious to Christ. The church is precious to Christ. And so the lampstand has form but it also has function because as you know the function of a lampstand is to give light. The lampstand is to be a light in the midst of darkness. And the thing about the lampstand in the tabernacle was that it was the only means of light in the tabernacle. [ 16 : 37 ] There was no other light under the covers of the tabernacle except the light that came from the golden lampstand. In fact, the lampstand in the tabernacle and in the temple it was to be attended to by the priests both morning and evening in order to ensure that the light was continually burning.

There was continual light being given in the midst of darkness. And in many ways my friend the function of the church both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament is to be a light to the nations.

A continual light in the midst of darkness. In fact, that's what the Israelites were called to be. The Israelites were called, commissioned and commanded to be a light to the nations so that the Lord's salvation would reach to the ends of the earth.

But you know instead of being a light to the nations instead of shining as a lampstand in the midst of darkness the Israelites they hid their light they veiled their light they concealed their light they hid their light under the bushel they were like the church in Ephesus they had lost their first love and they had become so selfish and self-centered and self-reliant and self-interested and self-seeking and they had forgot that they were a lampstand to the nation they forgot about the grace and mercy of God towards them and they became a proud nation and a proud people and what did they do they kept the light of the gospel to themselves they hid their light but my friend that was never God's plan and purpose and promise of redemption because the God who spoke into the darkness at creation and said let there be light and the God who is light and in him there is no darkness at all his plan and his purpose and his promise of redemption to Abraham was that through his seed the gospel will shine as a light to all the nations of the earth and my friend this is something we should never lose sight of this is something we should never forget this is something that should always be the driving force behind us as congregations and communities that this was always God's plan purpose and promise that the gospel of Jesus Christ would go to all the nations of the earth you know that's why the psalmist expressed that great missionary vision in Psalm 100 he had this vision that all people that on earth do dwell would sing to the Lord with cheerful voice but the Israelites they rejected that they rejected the Lord's plan purpose and promise they rebelled against it which is why they ended up living in lockdown in Babylon and you know it was for that very reason of what the

Israelites did it was for that very reason that Jesus reminded the Christian and the church about our responsibility because Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount you remember he said you you are the light of the world a city set on a hill cannot be hidden nor do they light a lamp like the Israelites did and put it under a basket but put it on a lampstand says Jesus and it will give light to the whole house to all the nations therefore says Jesus let your light so shine before men that they may see your good work and glorify your father in heaven my friend the church is to be a light in and among the world because Jesus is the light of the world the church is to be a light in and among the world because Jesus is the light of the world and you know

[ 21 : 00 ] I love that occasion in John's gospel where it was during the evening sacrifice at the feast of tabernacles it was then that there were four large lamps that were lit in the temple courtyard and these four large lamps they were said to be so big and so bright that they were able to light up the entire city of Jerusalem but on the last day of the feast at the close of all the commemorations and celebrations you remember that one of the large lamps was left unlit and it was left unlit to symbolise that the full salvation of the Lord had not yet come because the Messiah had not yet been revealed and as the Jews left one lamp unlit their ceremony was accompanied with the prayer of Psalm 43 oh send thy light forth and thy truth and you know that prayer was answered in the person of

Jesus Christ because you remember that it was at the feast of tabernacles at the close of all the celebrations that Jesus stood up into the darkness and he declared I am the light of the world

whosoever believes in me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life and you know my friend the church is to be a light in and among the world because Jesus our Jesus he is the light of the world and as the church we are to imitate and emulate the golden lampstand we are to imitate and emulate our Jesus through our Christian character conduct and conversation we are to shine as lights in the dark world we are to shine as lights in this crooked generation and you know that's why Zerubbabel is mentioned in this vision because you know Zerubbabel he was the governor of Israel he was the tetrarch of Israel he was the vassal king he was a subordinate king to to the Persian king king Darius had the kingdom of Judah not being part of the Persian empire Zerubbabel would have been the king because he was of royal descent he was a descendant of king David but you know as the king as the governor of the land it was Zerubbabel's responsibility to ensure that there were enough materials to rebuild the temple and he had to encourage the people to rebuild it but for Zerubbabel when he looked at what was available to him in materials and manpower he thought well it's impossible for this temple to be rebuilt and yet Zechariah's vision here was to encourage Zerubbabel that the temple would be rebuilt and it would be restored and it would be renewed and rededicated to the Lord and it would be done not by the might of men nor by the power of the people but by relying upon the spirit of the

Lord we read in verse five then the angel who talked with me answered and said to me do you not know what these are I said no my Lord then he said to me this is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel not by might nor by power but by my spirit says the Lord of hosts you know the Lord promised Zerubbabel that the temple will be restored and it will be rebuilt and it will be renewed and it will be rededicated and he says the mountainous obstacles he faces will be brought low and the capstone the chief cornerstone which sat above the door of the temple it will be raised up and exalted to its rightful place you know that's what we're told in verses seven and verse seven there where it says who are you o great mountain before Zerubbabel you shall become a plain and he shall bring forward the topstone the capstone amid shouts of grace grace to it and so the Lord promises Zerubbabel that the mountains will be brought low and the capstone the chief cornerstone it will be raised up and exalted into its rightful position and you know this is what we need to understand the chief cornerstone it wasn't the foundation stone of the temple structure it wasn't the first stone that was laid no the chief cornerstone was the last stone it was the chief stone it was the head stone of the structure it was the cap stone the crowning stone which was set in place to complete the rebuilding of the temple and you know what Zechariah sees in his vision is what will take place nearly four years from now that the temple will be rebuilt and restored and renewed and rededicated to the Lord because you know when Zerubbabel's men lift up their chief cornerstone and set it in its rightful place above the door the temple will be complete and the temple was complete in 516

[ 26 : 45 ] BC it was complete 20 years after returning to the land of Israel and you know it's interesting that in 516 BC that's when Psalm 118 was written Psalm 118 was written as a hymn of thanksgiving and it was written when the restoration of the temple was complete the Jews as we've studied in this book they had neglected and rejected the temple for 15 years it lay derelict and desolate lying there in ruins after they had returned but when Haggai issued the call to rebuild and Zechariah followed with a call to repent Psalm 118 was written when the temple was finally restored and Psalm 118 it says that stone is made head corner stone which builders did despise this is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes the stone the capstone the crowning stone which the builders had left for over 20 years it was finally put in place in 516

BC and the people as we read here in verse 7 they shouted grace grace they shouted this is the doing of the Lord and wondrous in our eyes and Psalm 118 it goes on to say this is the day God made and it will joy triumphantly save now I pray thee Lord I pray send now prosperity and you know the wonderful thing about God's word my friend is that that prayer in Psalm 118 it was fulfilled when Jesus quoted those words in the New Testament and when Jesus quoted those words from Psalm 118 he assured the crowds who followed him that he will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it because the church will be a light to the nations he will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it because he will be the church will be a light to the whole to all the nations and the church will be a light to the nations says Jesus from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria to the uttermost parts of the earth until as the vision of Psalm 100 is fulfilled all people that on earth do dwell will sing to the

Lord with cheerful voice and you know my friend it's a wonderful reminder to us that the Lord is fulfilling his promise the gospel is spreading the gospel is going out because the Lord will have his lamp stand and the Lord will build his church and he will do it not by the might of men nor by the power of people but he will do it by his Holy Spirit he will do it not by the might of men not nor by the power of people but by his Holy Spirit and therefore our responsibility is to shine as light in the world because nothing else will dispel and disperse the darkness of this world except the church of God proclaiming the word of God by the enabling of the Spirit of God my friend we need the lampstand the light and we need the Lord we need the lampstand the light and the Lord and that's what I want us to consider lastly and briefly the Lord the lampstand the light and the Lord the Lord look at verse 8 in this latter part of

Zechariah's vision the Lord confirms that even though the people despise the day of small things Zerubbabel will complete the temple and the people will rejoice in giving thanks to the Lord and you know my friend we may look at the church today we may look at the church today and think that she's not as strong as she used to be she doesn't have as much influence in the community and the country as she once did because well we all remember the days when the churches were full and everyone from almost every home in the community they went to church and they heard the gospel and they heard it preached with passion and with power but nowadays the churches are empty and not many people come to church of course like it was for the Israelites living in lockdown hasn't helped either and with only a returned remnant in church each week it has left the church looking small and weak and fragile but you know my friend never think that because the church is in the minority that her day is done never think that because the number of people who follow the follow the Lord is small that there's no hope for the church never think that because she looks weak and she looks fragile and that there are so many obstacles and so much opposition to the church never think that she's finished no because the Lord is with her and his promise is that the Lord is in the midst of her and nothing shall her remove but you know my friend far better for you far better for you to be on the side of Christ and to be part of his church though his followers be few and his name be despised and his cause trampled underfoot far better for you my unconverted friend to align yourself with this Jesus because this Jesus will win the day this Jesus will win the day and we see that because when Zechariah has a vision of the golden lampstand and the two olive trees standing on either side of it the olive trees they are told that they're supplying the lampstand with golden oil golden precious oil and the Lord says these are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth and the anointed ones they are the two men who feature in Zechariah's fourth and fifth visions

[ 34 : 32 ] Joshua the high priest as we saw in chapter 3 and also Zerubbabel the governor here in chapter 4 and what the Lord was asserting and affirming to his people was that he was going to use these men who have been anointed by the Holy Spirit he was going to use Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel the governor he was going to use them as channels as vessels as jars of clay for the furtherance of his kingdom and the glory of his name and you know my friend Paul said the same to the church in Corinth he said to them we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus as Lord and what we proclaim he said what we proclaim we proclaim as jars of clay because the power of the gospel it doesn't belong to us it belongs to God because the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has shined into our hearts by the Holy Spirit and he has given to us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ you know my friend the Lord is building his church and he's building it and this is the wonderful thing about it he is building it not by the might of men not by the power of people but by his Holy Spirit that doesn't mean we stand back and do nothing no it means we let our light so shine before men that they may see our good work and glorify our Father in heaven because the Lord is able to use us and he will use us for his own glory and you know

I love what Professor John L. Mackay wrote in his commentary and with this I'll close this evening he says the Holy Spirit is the only effective church builder he's able to overcome obstacles and claim hearts and lives for God's service often he begins his work in small ways so that it may be clearly seen that his success is not from human endeavour but by divine blessing he walked he walked through Abraham who was as good as dead through David who was only a boy and through twelve disciples who were unschooled ordinary men we must be careful he says not to judge potential by its small beginnings what matters is that it has the blessing of God's spirit for without him the church is ineffectual frustrated and will never grow my friend the Holy Spirit is the only

effective church builder for as Solomon said accept the Lord to build the house the builders lose their pain accept the Lord the city keep the watchmen watch in vain my friend by revealing the lampstand the light and the Lord you know what is what is Zechariah encouraging and enabling us to do with this fifth vision it's simply to live out that gospel song this little light of mine I am going to let it shine let it shine let it shine let it shine well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us and let us pray together O Lord our gracious God that thou wouldst use us as vessels for thine own glory that we would be lights in darkness that we would let our light so shine before men that they would see our good work and Lord that thou wouldst send thy light forth and thy truth that they would be guides to those who are in darkness that they too would come to the light and that they would have fellowship with the one who is the light of the world the one who is able to command light in the midst of darkness O Lord speak to us we pray bless us we ask and Lord we pray for those who may feel that they are in darkness that they would come into the light that they would walk in the light as thou art in the light and have fellowship with thee because the blood of Jesus Christ thy son cleanses us from all sin go before us and we pray take away our iniquity lead us into a new week and guide us we ask for we ask it in Jesus name and for his sake Amen well we're going to bring our service to a conclusion this evening by singing to God's praise in Psalm 43 Psalm 43 we're singing verses 3 and 4 in Gaelic Psalm 43 we're singing verses 3 and 4 I'll read them first of all in English O send thy light forth and thy truth let them be guides to me and bring me to thine holy hill in where thy dwellings be then will I to God's altar go to God my chiefest joy yea God my God thy name to praise my harp I will employ yea derin is the hollest glan like hukum eetemach so we'll sing Psalm 43 from verse 3 to 4 to God's praise heavenly  
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