

Sermon: Let Your Light Shine

Middle school is a challenging time. I know, many of you have lived it, but some of you are very, very far removed from it and may need a reminder.

Middle school is a time of change: your interests change, your friends change, and your body changes. Sometimes it can be hard to remember that underneath all those changes lives the same YOU that was there before. The spark of God's reflection that lives inside each of us. The one thing that doesn't change is that your light is shining. Yes, everyone here has a light in them. No, you might not be able to see it, but trust me, it exists.

And the most important thing about your light is that it is what makes you *you*.

As Sage read in Matthew 5:14, “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. 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.”

What this excerpt says to me is that when a person lights a lamp, they don't hide it. Otherwise, what would be the point of lighting it in the first place? In the same way, God gave every one of us a light, and we should let it shine as brightly as the midday sun. We each need to shine our light, because there

is no other in the world like it, we are all made uniquely in God's reflection.

What, you may ask, does shining your light entail? Well, it can change from person to person. For me, it means being myself. Ever since Kindergarten, my favorite color has been pink. The brighter it is, the better. I was proud of it and wore pink all over: shoes, t-shirts, and even painting my nails. While doing this and being myself, I could almost feel my light burning brighter. But, of course, what is a childhood flashback without a sad part to it? There were others at school who thought that my choices were "weird" and "uncool". Of course, they were just parroting what they had been taught about patriarchal gender norms, but they

made their opinions quite clear about how different I was. They were trying to act as a bushel and hide my light. Some people may have thought, “Gee, what did I do wrong?” and wavered a little, but I knew that I was right, and that pink was awesome, and I still believe that now, as you can see from my shoes and nails that I am wearing.

But those people trying to make pink uncool - Who could even think that was possible - are not just found in school. Almost everyone in here has had something like this happen to them, right? These people are all over the world, sadly. *But we don't have to be that way.* As much as you see stories of people trying to hide other peoples' lights, you also see some stories of people who

acted as a spotlight and took their light and shone it onto others. That is what I want every one of you here today to do. Instead of focusing on all of the negative things in life- and diminishing the differences, why don't we go outside and appreciate this beautiful Autumn weather, this season of change. We can see the leaves showcase their differences to the world, and appreciate their beauty in diversity of color. And with that, I challenge you, that if you run into someone, do just one thing, it could be anything from a "good morning" to a smile! I want you all, every single one of you to strive to make someone else's light burn brighter. Because, you know what? It causes a chain reaction. They will shine their light onto the

next person they see, and so on. Just one act can make a difference! Like here at Old South, there are people who make *my* light shine brighter. Like Mr. David Story, who is the reason that I sing in the pickup choir every week. He has supported me throughout my theater career, and even sent a photo of his painted nails to me, telling me how I inspired him.

We're each made so uniquely - with such different strengths and passions. Surely that isn't by accident - and all of our brightly burning lights are supposed to shine both as individuals and together - perhaps with different colors glowing - making up a whole glowing rainbow of God's light. So before I finish, I want to remind you of something

one of my favorite Disney characters - Tamatoa the giant crab from the movie Moana - sang, "I'd rather be shiny, watch me dazzle like a diamond in the rough." Amen.

Benediction:

As you go from this space, I want you to kindle your light. Turn the brightness all the way up and shine.

Because your light is needed, necessary, and so perfect. Let it shine! Amen.