

Twenty-First Sunday after Pentecost

October 14, 2018

Aaron Kent and Olivia Blake

**Matthew 5: 13-16**

**Matthew 28: 16-20**

**We Are the Light of the World**

**Aaron Kent**

Every year at Woodwork the youth play the advisors in a super competitive ultimate frisbee match. The advisors almost always win, but this year I was a part of the youth team that put the advisors in their place. We made jerseys, bought eye-black, and constantly berated them. We really took it way too far, but we did win.

Now that may not be a perfect example of how we are doing God's work on Woodwork, but we are answering his call that he makes on all of his people to shine Jesus' light in this world and become his disciples. There are many ways to answer God's call, but every summer we lead by example as these houses are constructed from the ground up in unfamiliar communities. As a leader of Woodwork I also feel a call to be a light for the 120 youth who go on this journey.

We are taught as Christians to follow God and be his light in the world, so that others may know and love him as well. Every other Monday from October to June the Woodwork committee plans a trip that will allow any young person who wants to be a light in this world to serve and witness the incredible experience of mission. And because of that, I feel God's light shine through me, knowing that what the committee and I are doing, not only serving the Lord, but bringing others closer to the Lord as well. After all the stress of the meetings are over and the trip is underway, I always consider myself blessed to be able to see the impact of what we do while we're working. In 2017 we went to Kittanning, Pennsylvania and one of the families we were building a house for spent so much time with us; they would have dinner with us, go to our evening program, and even help us on the worksite. They have 3 little kids, and they constantly commented on how cool it was that we were building a home for them. And that's one of my favorite parts about it; 160 people go out to build the skeleton of a house, and then we go home and live our lives...but for that family, a group of selfless young people build a home where the children can have their Christmas', their Easters, and all the amazing little things that happen in between.

Woodwork is more than just a place in which the youth learn how to construct a wall after 5-6 missed attempts, but as the committee, we want to build on our faith, or if you're new, create a foundation for a future of faith building. Every night we worship the lord through our program that the committee makes throughout the year. It's created with the goal of bringing the youth closer to God, and letting them see how he is such a powerful teacher. One of my favorite



moments is when we have vesper night, an individual reflection time with God. The youth and advisors are given time to have a one on one with God, which for many of the kids is their first time doing that, and for them it is sometimes the first moment when they can feel God's presence and his love. On Woodwork we want to teach how what we are doing makes us disciples of God, we are doing what he wishes of us and spreading his word.

Jesus taught us to lead by example, which is what Woodwork is all about. We answer God's call for one week of the summer, which is amazing; but although we make a large impact on the communities where we travel, the world around us is still a very troubled place and in need of God's love, and it needs it through us. The movie "Bruce Almighty" follows the story of a man who is given God's abilities and his struggle with doing what is right in an incredibly funny story. In the end the message comes down to a simple phrase: "Be the Miracle," and there are no supernatural abilities required to do that. We are made in God's image, and what we do in our lives should be a reflection of Jesus Christ. So how will you be the miracle? It doesn't take much; a kind gesture to a stranger, helping Scott Wiley with winter relief, or inviting a friend to church so they may feel God's love. Mission can happen anywhere you choose it to in any way you wish it to be, and no matter what it is you do, it will always shine God's light in the world.

"So remember I am with you always, to the end of the ages." I love that! I love knowing that when I am doing something to be a light in this world Jesus is with me, and he will never leave. You may be writing a kind letter at home, building a house in Pennsylvania, or journeying to a far off country to provide aid to the poor; but no matter what you're doing, and no matter how hard you think it is to continue, Jesus is with you, guiding you and loving you. And that is the Good News.

## **How to Spread God's Light in The World**

### **Olivia Blake**

I had the pleasure of going on the Middle School Mission Trip to Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia this past summer. One of my favorite memories there was when we went to Broad Street's sister church, Beacon. They have a program that provides a safe, green space for kids in lower income neighborhoods to play. This green space is the only large block of grass in over a mile's radius of Phillie. While we were at Beacon, we helped with the daycare program. I enjoyed serving at the bracelet making program where I met this little boy named George (he was probably 5 or 6). Even though he didn't have a lot at home, he was always positive and shared his dreams with us all. He wanted to become Aquaman when he grew up. In today's readings from the Gospel of Matthew, God calls us all to be the light of the world and to make disciples of all of his people. When I was making bracelets with George, I began to see how we can be light to others even in the most basic ways, by spending time together, playing together, and helping each other when we are in need. I felt when I was being a light in this community at Beacon, I was also receiving God's light back in my heart.

I truly loved my experience with Broad Street Ministry. I feel blessed to have learned more about their programs and be a part of their services. BSM offers mail services, health care, free clothing, tailoring services, as well other services that help make life a little easier for people experiencing homelessness and for low income families in the Philadelphia area.

One way we were God's light in Phillie was through BSM's garden. In these lower income neighborhoods, a grocery store isn't common. We learned that's called "food scarcity." Fresh produce is expensive, and often all that is available is gas station food with a low nutritional value because it is cheap. The BSM garden is a non-profit that grows food, which the volunteers harvest and hand deliver to the surrounding neighborhood. This gives the residents fresh food for free, so that they can then serve healthy meals to their families.

Another service of BSM is the daily hot lunch. It is a unique service project because, when the guests come in for a meal, it resembles a restaurant where we personally serve the meals to anyone who comes in and sits down. In these moments we felt like disciples of God. The opportunity to directly serve allowed us to socialize, get to know and create relationships with all those who walked in the door no matter their background or level of need. One of the youth, Jack was on the trip with me. While Jack was serving meals, he was invited to sit down with a gentleman named Charles. Jack talked to Charles about his life, and before Charles left, he told Jack that he had been a light in his day, and he said that Jack was doing God's work. Those words from a man who had been a stranger just moments before had a great impact on Jack, and on all of us.

God calls us, as the congregation, to spread his word to everyone and be the light. Everyone may not be able to go to Philadelphia and have the wonderful opportunity to work with the great programs of Broad Street Ministries, but there are so many ways we can help right here in our communities. We can volunteer our time with local charities or shelters. We can give to those in need of clothing, food, basic household items and toys. We can find ways to work with individuals who have special needs, the elderly and children from lower income neighborhoods.

The good news of today's readings is that we don't need to have special skills, or have lots of money, or do something huge. We can make a difference to others in many small and meaningful ways, spreading God's light and being disciples of God's love. God is always with us until the end, no matter what. When we are helping others we are spreading God's light and living God's will.

Thank you to all of you who donated, organized, and supported our opportunity to travel to Broad Street Ministries and be a part of this opportunity to serve others. I am certain this trip has transformed me and my friends who served with me. We are so fortunate to be able to go on a mission trip where we grow into stronger disciples of God and strengthen our will to continue doing God's work right here in our Woods community.