

# Light of the World

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[ 0 : 00 ] Brothers and girls, I want you to ignore everything I say for the next few minutes, is that alright?! And just concentrate on what you're doing.! And I want to talk to the adults. Tell me, are you scared of the dark?

For about 70 years, I still prefer to have lots and lots of light. Darkness puts me off. What about you?

Are you scared of the dark? When Jesus said, I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life, I wonder what he meant by it.

I am the light of the world, he said. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. What did he mean by that? You see, it's not just a light we're following.

It's the light we're following. It's not just light for one day that we're following. It's not just light for us as people, or even for Jewish people.

[ 1 : 08 ] But it's light for the world. As we've already thought, light illuminates everything. You go into a dark room, and you turn on the light.

Now you can see things. Light has illuminated everything. But it doesn't work the other way around. You can't go into a bright room, and flick a switch, and make everything dark.

What you do is turn off the light, or draw the curtains. You have to block out the light. So when Jesus comes into the world, he illuminates the world.

Now those in cultures that have been influenced by Jesus are changed for the better. People no longer live by brute force, and by power.

People serve others. There is a sense that we should all love one another. We should treat people kindly. We should help and educate others. Why? Because Jesus is the light of the world.

[ 2 : 15 ] In dark cultures, that is not true. Jesus is the light giver. Indeed, he's the light source. He's not merely a reflector of light.

He is the very source of life itself. I wonder if you've ever been struck when you've read that story, which we call the transfiguration. Jesus goes up to a mountain, and he meets up with Moses and Elijah.

And Mark says to us, in Mark 9, his clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them.

His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. Is he just like the sun? The sun is the source of physical light.

So is Jesus. He shines like the sun, not reflecting like the moon and the stars. So when Matthew introduces Jesus to the world, this is what he quotes from Isaiah 9.

[ 3 : 20 ] He says, That's how he describes Jesus coming into the world.

Now it seems to me that if Jesus is the light of the world, it puts him into a unique category of one. Who else is the great light, the light of the world, as our Jesus is?

Oh yes, people might claim to impart light, but who is the source of all truth and all illumination? And that claim is only fulfilled, I suggest, by the man from Nazareth.

Who else said they were the way, the truth, and the life? The way to God, the truth from God, and the very life of God.

Of course, those claims need checking out, don't they? If Jesus claimed to be who he was, did he speak the truth? Others endorsed him.

[ 4 : 24 ] Why did they endorse him? God endorsed him. Why did God endorse him? That's what we have our Bibles for. That's what reading good history helps us with. So when I personally first started looking at Jesus, the fact that he rose from the dead was the key to convincing me that he was no ordinary man.

He was one sent from God. I couldn't find any other explanation for him coming back from death except the miraculous, an act done by God himself.

And this was so staggering that it separated Jesus for me from everyone else. Of course, being the light of the world means that Jesus can dispel darkness.

That's exactly what light is meant to do. John, in his Gospel, has a conclusion about Jesus. He says, this is the verdict.

Light has come into the world, but people love darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that their deeds will be exposed.

[ 5 : 35 ] But Jesus shines into the darkness. Jesus is the light. We are in the dark. Jesus is pure and perfect and we are grubby and twisted.

Jesus could look into our heart and see the impurities that are within us. We could look into his heart and see the very opposite.

We would see purity, absolute purity, when we looked into the heart of Jesus. In fact, we rather like the darkness, you know, because as the Bible tells us, our deeds are evil.

Not so with Jesus. He's the light of the world. In what sense then do we walk in the darkness? I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but have the light of light.

In what sense do we walk in the darkness? You see, the contrast between Jesus' pure light and our corrupted darkness is huge.

[ 6 : 42 ] Often people think you can just turn over a new leaf. You can start again. You can make yourself good. Sure, we can do many good things, but change our very nature. So John makes it clear in his story of Jesus that Jesus is the light of all mankind.

He says, the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. Light always shines. Light always wins. Darkness can never conquer light, but light can conquer darkness.

Now, isn't that true in our natural world? We do terrible, terrible things at night. We hide in the shadows from others. We would hate the light to expose our corruption.

Look at a trailer for any film, and if you want to see evil, it's always in the dark, isn't it? Sure, we're not all murderers and robbers, but we have a tendency to want one over another, to deceive and twist things, don't we?

All in contrast to the pure Jesus, who doesn't think like that. Why do you think we have a police force in this country? Why do we need courts and solicitors and judges?

[ 7 : 57 ] Why do we imprison people? If we were all like Jesus, then we could police ourselves, couldn't we? You see, there are ways of thinking that blame all the ills of this world onto poverty, or maybe onto the way the world is structured in its political systems.

We're constantly told that we must educate people so that they'll be better in their way of living. But where do you ever hear people saying that at root we are rebellious human beings who love the dark?

It's our basic nature. When I was younger, I thought that wrongdoing was just natural. Everybody did it. That's just the way it is.

It's fixed into all of us. But the more I looked at Jesus, the more I looked at Jesus' interaction with other people, the more I realised that Jesus could see right through people.

He knew what was in our hearts, mine included. And what he saw was not very pleasant, but he could do something about it. You see, I was walking in the darkness and I didn't know that.

[ 9 : 07 ] I thought it was natural. But gradually I came to see it wasn't natural. Jesus was the pure human, man as he was meant to be, and I and everyone else I knew, however noble we might have been, we suffered with selfishness and pride.

He didn't. We lived in darkness, telling ourselves, oh, it's just natural. Jesus says it's not natural.

This is the natural way, the way you're meant to be, the way I am.

So how can we escape, get off the treadmill of what we call sin? Is it possible to live in the light and not to walk on the hamster wheel of darkness?

How then can we have the light of life? According to Jesus, he says, whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So we are called, indeed all people are called, to follow Jesus.

[10:16] Jesus says we are to come to him, whoever we are and wherever we are. To follow him means to know that he is the light, the light of the world. And then to trust him, knowing that he knows what he's doing.

He's all beauty, he's all truth, we're the opposite. We're full of twistedness and falsity. He has no evil within him. He's pure light and we are the ones in darkness.

He came to make it possible for us, even with our dark hearts, to be changed and to have hearts that love him, that love beauty, love truth, that want to do what is right and need to be regularly forgiven.

In fact, to be what we were originally meant to be in Genesis 1 and Genesis 2. We are called to walk in the light and to follow Jesus all our days.

And when we put Jesus as number one, something dramatic happens to us. what he says becomes what matters most to me.

[11:25] Pleasing him becomes my priority. Bringing all my woes and failures to him is exactly what he wants. So I discovered early on that Jesus rose from the dead, having been executed for crimes he did not commit.

but that death was the secret of turning people around. I learned that if I carried my own selfish way, it would choke me and overtake me.

I would die. I'd never be welcomed by my creator. That was a shocking discovery to learn that I was a sinner in the dark. The only way I could be accepted by God was to have Jesus, the light of life, take my place.

His death was the death I deserved. And his new life could be my new life. It absolutely changed me. To think that I, with all my uncleanness, could possess life to the full was absolutely staggering for me as a youngster.

But if Jesus is true, if he is the light of the world, and if I was walking in the darkness with no escape, then by taking hold of Jesus, asking him to forgive me and change me, it was a no-brainer, was it?

[12:51] So can you see why this statement from Jesus is just so profound? I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

I guess the question for all of us this morning, boys and girls included, do you have the light of life? Are you following Jesus? And if not, why not start right away?

Pray with me. Gracious Lord Jesus, light of the world, thank you for coming to this world of darkness and decay.

Thank you for shining your light of love and truth into our hearts this morning. We feel ashamed at our lack of purity and we long to be made clean and new. Change us right now, we pray, and help us to see your beauty and your glory and exchange it for our own unworthiness.

May we start to walk in the light, we pray, in your perfect name, Lord Jesus. Amen. Amen.