

I Am the Light of the World

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Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 0 0] now if you have your bible turn back with me to john chapter 8 where jesus declares i am the light of the world whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life so a couple of weeks ago i was back in sky and i was as i was preparing for this i was thinking of one of the iconic buildings the new tourist destinations on the isle of sky nice point lighthouse familiar to some folks in our congregation it's really iconic for its setting people will travel across the world for the wonderful sunsets you get there of course that wasn't why it was designed and built it's been in operation since 1909 its light shines for 16 nautical miles its purpose isn't so that folks can have pretty pictures though that's a side benefit its purpose of course like every lighthouse is to shine in the darkness it's to reveal hidden danger and it's to guide ships to safety and so i was thinking about what jesus said is the light of the world i was thinking about that lighthouse and see there's so much connection there and we'll think about that but of course the setting for john chapter 8 isn't jesus standing in front of a lighthouse we have jesus in the temple courtyard with so many thousands of gathered worshipers for the feast of tabernacles this autumn festival where the people remembered and gave thanks for the fact that god provided the crops for them and it was also a time when they would go and they would live in these tents or booths to remember that god had set them free from being slaves and taking them from the wilderness to the promised land and so it was a time of great worship and part of how they worship was that they would sit up for giant lamps in the corners of the temple courtyards and they would celebrate and they would praise god under the lamplight this glow would fill the city of jerusalem and here is jesus and he's illuminated by these four great lamps and he declares to the people i am the light of the world again as we said last week this is a huge claim from jesus i am the old testament name of god jesus saying i am god i am light i'm light for the world some of us know science i don't know science but even at my basic level i know light is vital for life if you want there to be growth you need light when we need direction and guidance we need to have lights anyone who's been lost in the woods anyone who's been stuck in a blackout situation you know light is good for direction and for safety so our plan for this morning is to think about this great saying of jesus and to look at three aspects to think about light and darkness one of those many contrasts you get in john's gospel to think about light and revelation and to think about light and salvation and we're going to use jesus words and we're going to do two things with those words we're going to connect them with the theme of light in the old testament there's loads of light teaching in the old testament and we're going to connect them with other teaching from john's gospel so that we'll have this this vision hope and pray of jesus the light of the world that we might follow him together that we might be walking in the light so let's begin with light light and darkness and darkness um i guess culturally whether we have a bible background or not light and dark is a familiar contrast um we think often about good and evil in those terms uh we think of

western movies and white hats and black hats or perhaps for those of a particular generation we think of luke skywalker and darth vader the iconic man in black well the bible picks up that kind of light and dark theme from the very beginning so we'll see on our screen some bible texts i think so genesis 1 it reminds us that when god created the world he created it in the beginning god created the heavens and the earth now the earth was formless and empty darkness it was over the surface of the deep and then god spoke the first words recorded in the bible from god let there be light and that light was good and that life was a source of life and that light brought separation from darkness second book of the bible book of exodus it finds at the beginning of that book israel living as slaves in egypt and god has announced that he's going to let his people go he's going to save them and he's going to show his power with these 10 plagues these acts of judgment on pharaoh and egypt and the ninth of those plagues was a thick darkness for three days a darkness that could be felt by egypt but for israel they lived in the light they were enjoying god's light there was separation between light and darkness jesus said i am the light of the world in jesus coming and we are to appreciate jesus is this gift of life and light from god he is the one who is truly good he is the one who is pushing back the darkness and through faith in him his people then live in god's light as i said john's gospel has a light and dark contrast theme from the beginning john chapter 1 we find in verse 4 and verse 5 and again the words i think are up there in him was life and that life was the light of all mankind the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it so here is jesus god's word the one who gives life life giving light to a world in darkness a world in rebellion there is this promise that the light will not be overcome by the darkness the darkness is not able to comprehend to fully understand god's light when it comes but john announces jesus is god's true light there is no darkness in jesus then jesus we see the full glory of god being displayed for us that sounds like good news but many people didn't receive it that way many people today still don't receive it that way john chapter 3 after that famous verse i have verse 16 for god so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life we find there in verse 19 this is the verdict light has come into the world jesus has come into the world but people loved 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 so one of the pictures in john's gospel is of the world as this human system in rebellion against god our creator and so jesus comes as light but what do people instinctively choose they choose to hate the light and they choose darkness because they want to be exposed you can be the idea of being exposed by light and maybe you've seen this um in your workplace perhaps perhaps you or a colleague does the right

thing you work and act with integrity but rather than than facing applause you find that people become really uh harsh towards you or speak badly about you because their own failings have been exposed and that's an uncomfortable thing jesus in his perfection and with the glory of god it reveals our imperfection and and that's something instinctively we don't want to deal with and so many find themselves walking away turning away jesus perfect life is god's light for us john says the world often chooses sin and darkness well back to john chapter 8 jesus announces when he says i'm the light of the world that light has dawned but what happens in john's gospel shows that there is this conflict between light and dark and it continues through the gospel we see it in these chapters we hear it in the doubts and the questions and the criticism and the opposition of religious leaders and the crowds we pull beyond the time of jesus to look at the whole sweep of church history and we find that this conflict between light and dark continues and jesus followers who who live in the way of love what happens so often there is persecution hatred opposition god's church marginalized there are many countries where god's people are being persecuted today many followers of jesus find themselves in prison today for nothing other than wanting to be faithful to god's word to jesus as savior but it's not just out there where we see this battle between light and dark we go to our own hearts and don't we don't we discover that that battle between light and dark continues there too don't we as christians find that we struggle with sin and though we live in the light we find ourselves at times drawn to the dark side paul the great apostle would say that in romans 7 as he found himself so often doing the things he didn't want to do and unable to do the things that he wanted to do because of this sin battle that still goes on in our hearts perhaps if you're here today you're not a christian you recognize that battle because you find yourself at times being drawn to jesus but then but wanting to resist his claims not wanting to submit to him as lord and to live for him jesus said i am the light of the world and john's gospel it speaks about the the conflict between light and dark in those different kingdoms and and it's a reminder that we must choose jesus says follow me whoever follows me so we're being called to choose our kingdom to live in the light or to to walk in the way of darkness are we going to run to jesus the light or run from his light because we don't want to be exposed jesus said i'm the light of the world it speaks to us of light and darkness but it also speaks of light secondly light and revelation jesus has come to reveal certain things to us well verses 13 to 20 and as this controversy in a sense continues between jesus and the pharisees and some in the crowd there's a sense that jesus has made the claim and people are resisting immediately verse 13 the pharisees challenged him here you are appearing as your own witness your testimony is not valid they understand jesus has just made a huge claim about himself but their instinct is to say you can't just speak for yourself

you can't just make a claim like that that they put jesus in a sense in a trial situation who are your witnesses to back up this huge claim you've just made and so jesus in chapter 8 is going to take the opportunity to again reveal his identity to again show his unique relationship with his father to show his unique ability to reveal the glory of god look at what he says in verse 14 even if i testify on my own behalf my testimony is valid for two reasons jesus says my word is enough one i know where i came from and two i know where i am going jesus appeals to his unique origin he has come from the father he has come from the glory of heaven and he talks about his unique destiny he knows that he's returning to his father he's returning to his father's presence he's returning to glory and so he is able to speak for himself jesus knows that the crowd misunderstand verse 15 you judge by human standards they judge by worldly standards they ask him later where's your father where's joseph they're blind to god's light they're blind to the reality that jesus is bringing that he himself is the son of god so verse 19 when they ask where is your father in that sense they want to bring him out to trial well jesus if you're if you're talking about your father and saying he'll speak for you well we want to meet him to question him not understanding that the father is god himself some of us have a law background some of us just like watching crime dramas perhaps and we've probably recognized that in a criminal trial and when an expert witness can be found to give testimony often that proves to be the decisive point in a case so a lawyer might travel the length of the country to find the right expert witness to come and to give testimony in a particular case well jesus is on trial here and the question being asked is is jesus really the light of the world is he really showing us the life of god and the glory of god or not and so jesus says i am the one who testifies for myself my other witness is the father who sent me so let's think about that for a moment let's think about the father's testimony about jesus that we find in the bible just in the gospels where you go lots of places around the bible but let's just stick to the gospels and let's think about jesus baptism so jesus is just about to begin his public ministry and he comes to be baptized by john the baptist and what happens heaven is opened spirit comes down in the form of a dove and there's the voice from heaven the father speaks and he says this is my son i love him i'm well pleased with him here's the father's testimony direct from heaven and then we can go to the transfiguration that point where jesus and three of his closest disciples go up a mountain and there for a moment it's as if the curtains of heaven are pulled back and jesus shines with the full glory of god and again voice from heaven this is my son i love him listen to him that's the father's testimony about the son he's the son he loves him he's well pleased with him and we should listen to him jesus speaks in chapter 8 again about his unique relationship with his father

which means jesus uniquely reveals we're thinking about revelation jesus uniquely reveals god to us so some verses chapter 8 verse 29 the father who sent me is with me he has not left me alone for i always do what pleases him the actions of jesus reveal god chapter 8 verse 42 if god were your father you would love me for i have come here from god i have not come on my own god sent me to love god to know god is to know and to love jesus his son and jesus makes that really explicit in chapter 10 in verse 30 when he says simply i and the father are one i and the father are one so jesus is saying i am able and i uniquely reveal god to the world to look at jesus in the gospels is to see the glory of god and to listen to the words of jesus is to listen to the words of god to watch the actions of jesus is to see the will of god when jesus dies on the cross he's showing the father's will to save sinners like us it's no wonder he says i am the light of the world because he has that revealing quality and that's why jesus says follow me follow me because i alone can show you god god's glory god's plan of salvation with jesus all human speculation stops because now we're dealing with god's revelation and this is an idea that we can find throughout the old testament this idea of following god and following god's glory god's glory is light so exodus 13 so shortly after the ninth plague comes the tenth plague and then the people are set free and the reality for god's rescued people as they find themselves in the wilderness is that they are those who follow god they follow god's light the pillar of cloud by day pillar of fire by night this fire this light this revel was always ahead of them and directing them psalm 119 verse 105 god's word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path god's light is the light that we are to follow as the people of god if we want to be guided in faith and obedience we need to listen to god's word and who is jesus he is the word who became flesh and then there's wonderful wonderful promise in isaiah chapter 60 and verse 19 hope to an exiled people hope for us today wonderful picture isaiah 60 verse 19 the sun will no more be your light by day nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you for the lord will be your everlasting light and your god will be your glory it is jesus i am light the one who reveals a glory from god far greater than the sun that shines in the sky jesus says i am the one to follow i am the voice to listen to i am the glory to see and to believe the reality that we see in the crowds the reality that we need to recognize today is that it's entirely possible to see the light but not

[20 : 09] respond properly to that light let me share a story from a naval officer by the name of frank coch he was serving on a naval battleship one of those huge battleships on routine maneuvers in the ocean when the weather turned and the weather was truly awful for three days they had virtually no visibility the waves so big they were crashing over the boat and then one day day four a lookout report came to say captain light on starboard i have no idea which way starboard is let's imagine it's that light on the starboard and the reply from the captain then as soon as he heard about this light he wanted to send a message and the message he wanted to ask was is it stationary stationary or is it moving is it moving astern is it turning and the reply from the lookout was it's stationary so now the captain knows hold on a minute now this light is directly in our path we're heading for a collision so he knows action needs to be taken so he sends a signal over to this other light and he says in his signal i advise you to change course 20 degrees east and he waits a few moments and a response flashed back i advise you to change course 20 degrees west okay the captain is not best pleased at this the captain gets really mad he starts claiming his title i'm a captain the reply flashed back i'm a captain of a battleship change your course and the reply came back a few moments later i'm a lighthouse change your course so important to respond to the light so important today i wonder if there are some of us here we've seen the light we we've heard the teaching of jesus we've seen his glory in the gospels the glory of his truth and of his love but still we won't change course still we are living in the darkness there's another call to believe in him to see our need of him to follow and to believe i think it's a reminder too for us who are followers of jesus it is crucial for our day-to-day life that we are following jesus like we're living in the light we're trusting in him as the son of god as our savior that we be listening to obeying applying god's word to our hearts together as we gather for worship together as families and as individuals that we be hearing and responding and living in the light that we'd be worshiping so before we move on from this we need to remind ourselves too of our future hope as it connects with light so remember it's sam 60 where it said there'll be no more sun because the glory of god will be the everlasting light well you can go to to revelation 21 second last chapter in the bible verse 23 picks up that same image it to say to us in the new heavens and the new earth the glory of god and the glory of the lamb are the light of god's kingdom there is no need for the sun there's no need for the moon for this this greater light of glory as followers of jesus that's our great hope that we will live bathing in the light of that glory but until that day what are we called to we're called to walk

in the light we're called to follow jesus until we see his glory fully revealed now moving from there to the last thing i want us to notice to think about the connection between light and salvation so we'll move to verses 21 to 30 and to think about a couple of warnings that that also by faith become promises verse 21 jesus says i'm going away and you'll look for me and you will die in your sin where i go you cannot come and in verse 24 very similar i told you that you would die in your sins if you do not believe that i am he you will indeed die in your sin so there is a severe warning there to fail to believe and to respond is to die in our sins but there's also a promise that if we believe in jesus we will live we will have forgiveness we will live in his life we will know salvation from god and the bible makes a really strong connection between light and salvation we sung it's psalm 27 verse 1 the lord's my savior and my light who will make me afraid isaiah 9 verse 2 familiar words as we prepare for christmas often the people walking in darkness have seen great light again promised to an exiled people to a far away from god people that the light of god's salvation would shine on them again as god's savior would come and that savior isaiah 49 verse 6 he would be a light for the gentiles that salvation may reach to the ends of the earth jesus didn't come just to be the savior for a few small people in one particular country he came to bring the promise the invitation the hope of salvation to all peoples of the world jesus says i am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in the darkness but have the light of life that's that's salvation language to follow jesus is to be saved is to know god's life and god's joy and god's love to recognize he is that promised savior to recognize he is the only hope for the world it's that belief that that encourages us despite whatever challenges that we feel internally or opposition outside of ourselves that encourage us to continue with mission continues to encourage us to share our faith to support global mission because jesus is the light of the world and knowing him brings us to know the light of life how will this salvation come how will this salvation come look with me at verse 28 so jesus said when you have lifted up the son of man then you will know that i am he and that i do nothing on my own but speak just what the father has taught me salvation comes in the lifting up of jesus the son of man double meaning there lifted up jesus would be lifted up wouldn't he physically on the cross to die but jesus at the same time would also be exalted and raised up in glory the cross is the great lifting up of jesus as the son of god and as god's promised savior in that lifting up it reveals as jesus says i am he i am the one god promised from the very beginning of the bible genesis 3 all the way through the old testament the promised savior she said i am he i have come to accomplish that plan the waiting how will god save

people for himself the waiting is over jesus would come as the light of the world and as light he would win that victory of light over darkness on the cross defeating his enemies and hours satan death sin swallowed up by jesus it all connects to his hour john's gospel talks a lot about his hour verse 20 said jesus hour had not yet come this hour that dominates john's gospel is the hour of jesus suffering and death and resurrection and return to glory so the cross is part of that journey part of that hour that was planned by god the father for god the son and that hour reveals his glory to us the glory of his salvation so to go back to verse 21 and to go back to verse 24 the promise of jesus as savior is that if we believe we'll not die in sin because there is forgiveness in him and we will go where he goes and where is jesus going he's going back to his father's presence and jesus would say i'm going to my father's house to prepare a place for my people and if i go i'll come back and i'll take them to be with me we may live together forever in joy and in the light of god's glory jesus came the light of the world and he would die in the darkness good friday but the dawning of the first light of easter sunday he was risen in glory and victory and power so that all who believe in him might live in his light also so let's again close with an invitation to reflect to you do i do we want to live in the light darkness or in the darkness and we've begun reading lord of the rings with our eldest and if you've seen the movies or read the book perhaps one of the the standout characters that you'll remember is golem golem who finds the ring of power golem who chooses the dark places doesn't he golem who chose to make his home under the mountains golem who in time comes to hate the sunlight you see this in the crowds in jesus day jesus comes as the light of the world and many hated him they chose the dark places they turned their back on jesus they wouldn't believe in him exposed to the light of his glory they wanted nothing to do with him they wanted rid of him that they might continue to live their own lives there is a sense of tragedy when we read the gospels as we see some of the wrong responses to jesus here is the one who would give true life and light and joy and beauty and peace but men women turned away from him from the son of god from his revelation of truth and glory from the salvation that he offers let me say to each one of us here today let's not follow them on that path let's not miss the light of jesus let's be those who will admit our sin admit our need who will believe in jesus and come to him in repentance and faith let's follow jesus the light the light of the world the one who came and defeated darkness revealing the

light of god's glory and will the one who brings salvation let's live in his light today let's pray together father god we thank you for sending jesus to be the light of the world just as we need the light of the sun for life so we need life and light that comes from jesus your son we thank you for his willingness to suffer and die even as we'll shortly as your people share the lord's supper as we'll remember the cost of our salvation we thank you that father you are willing to send your son in your love we thank you for jesus willingness to come and to demonstrate your love and that while we were sinners christ died for us lord help us to respond to his light and to his truth to come to him for salvation and to live with faith and obedience in him please help us in that we ask in jesus name amen now let's sing together we'll actually sing a section that we began with our call to worship from psalm 36 and we're going to sing a section of that together we'll stand to sing and as we're standing our boys and girls will come back in to join us