

Light and Life

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 15 April 2018

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, sometimes your word speaks of things that are hard for us to maybe accept.

We want to turn our minds and our hearts away from them. In fact, Father, sometimes your word says things that we might be a little bit embarrassed to talk about.

Father, we thank you so much that you know us. You know our hearts. You know our weakness. And so we ask that you would gently but deeply and powerfully pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and bring these words of Jesus, his encounter with his opponents, bring these words of Jesus deeply into the very center of our lives, that we may have a greater and greater confidence, Father, in Jesus and in you and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. So you might have been wondering why I prayed like that. And it's a little bit. I guess this is probably the type of day when we don't have many guests.

But if we do have guests, and I can't quite recognize you right now, welcome. But there's a bit of a warning. Today we're going to talk about hell a little bit. And, you know, it's funny.

[1 : 14] I guess there are some churches that talk about hell constantly. But my limited experience in most Canadian churches is you could go a long season in a church and never once hear any reference to hell.

But the scripture text that we're going to look at, because I didn't read all of the texts that I'm going to preach from, the scripture text that we're going to look at today, Jesus talks about it in effect. So we're going to talk about it a little bit later on.

So it's a bit of a heads up warning that we're going to talk about hell. And so let's look at that text. If you'd like to follow along, it's chapter 8, John chapter 8, verse 12.

And part of the context of what's going on here, well, first of all, some of you who come here week in and week out, I mentioned this in my blog.

I don't know if many people read my blog. That's fine. But I'm skipping a story, which is in many of your Bibles. And if you look carefully at most of your Bibles, if it's at all a modern translation, there's brackets around it.

[2 : 20] And that's because the story of the woman caught in adultery probably shouldn't be in the Bible. It's not found in the earliest manuscripts. And because we preach the Bible, I'm going to skip it, because it probably shouldn't be there.

And you can read my blog. And if you have more questions, you can talk to me about it during coffee. You can give me heck if you want or push back. But the text flows quite interestingly if you take out the story of the woman caught in adultery.

And so the context that's going on here is Jesus has been making some big statements in the context of lots of disagreement, lots of confusion.

Some people believe him. Many people are calling him demon-possessed. His family are rude and gnarly to him. And he makes this very, very big claim about rivers of life.

If you believe in him, rivers of life will flow out of him. And so the religious and cultural authorities, they're sort of all one. And they've been trying to kill Jesus since chapter 5.

[3 : 31] But it has this brief scene where they get together once again and say, listen, we've got to do something about this guy. We've got to capture him. He's condemned. We've got to get rid of him. And Nicodemus puts up a little quivering hand and says, like, maybe is this against the law?

And so, you know, as the part that we're reading right now, it continues on in that vein. It's talking. In fact, you know, if you think about it, it's a world very much like ours, isn't it?

We're both in religious circles and outside of religious circles. Sometimes the law is just inconvenient, isn't it? Like, I'm not going to get into politics, but the whole pipeline issue with B.C.

The fact that the summer jobs program, the government misrepresents, the government that's supposed to know what the law is misrepresents the law, ignores the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to mean that certain people can't get summer jobs.

I mean, there's many times, it's the world we live in, isn't it, that often the law is an inconvenient thing for those in power.

[4 : 41] And it's not just in the secular world. It's a common problem in churches and religious movements and in mosques where people just disregard what their holy books say when they get inconvenient for those who are powerful.

And so it's in this type of context that the Bible says, again, it's a bit of a loose time marker. Sometime after what has just happened, but continuing this same thought, this is what Jesus says. Verse 12. Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Now, just pause here. This is one of those verses that Christians should memorize. And it's definitely a verse that we should meditate upon. It's an unbelievably huge claim.

Jesus doesn't say, I point the way to the light. He doesn't say, I have a little bit of light within me. We all have a little bit of light within us. And let's all just pool our light. He says, I am, which is a claim to being God.

[5 : 53] I am the light of the world. And there are a small number of religions and faiths and spiritualities which are basically very dark. They worship things like blood and violence and death and destruction.

But for most people, the light, and even those dark religions sort of do so in a type of rebellion and anger against the light. But it's sort of a universal idea in pagan religions, in the East and in the West.

This idea of the light being something which is fundamentally good and powerful. And Jesus makes this sweeping claim that he is the light of the world.

Not a light in the world, but the light of the world. And that to follow him, which is another analogy or another metaphor for believing in him, for trusting him, to believe what he says and to actually try to follow him, that we will receive something, that we will actually have the light.

What does it say? The light of life. The light that is living. The light that gives life. It's an absolutely huge claim.

[7 : 09] On Friday at lunchtime, I had the great privilege and honor to be invited to speak at Parliament Hill to the Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship. It sounds more impressive than it is.

It's a small number of mainly Christian staff workers on the Hill who gather on Fridays to spend a bit of time looking at the Bible and maybe a brief time in fellowship to get to know each other.

And so I got to speak there at Friday over the lunch hour. And I always give them a rough draft or a first draft of the talk I'm going to give. And in their case, I introduced it by saying, none of you folks will be able to relate to this text because it deals with the problem of flagrant self-promotion, something which you, of course, on Parliament Hill have no experience with whatsoever.

And, of course, it got a bit of a laugh. And then, of course, somebody said, of course, in the church nobody's familiar with flagrant self-promotion either, which is completely and utterly a valid point. By the way, Andrew, are you having our 1-800 number and how to give flashing above the screen right now as we speak for autographed copy?

Never mind. You know the problem which we live under. So, you know, on one hand, we're going to return to this statement a little bit at the end because it sort of casts its bright light throughout this entire text that follows.

[8 : 30] But, you know, let's just be honest. I mean, I've talked last week about the Rajna Sri Bhagwan in the film thing, The Wild Wild West.

And he claimed he was basically divine. In fact, it's very interesting. When he was buried, they don't say that he was born and that he died. What they say is that he only visited this earth.

And he began his visit in whatever it was, 1932, and he ended his visit in 1990. But, you know, that's just all malarkey, isn't it? I mean, the fact of the matter is, is if you went back, you could find out when he was born and you know that his...

I mean, you can't find his body now because it was cremated. But you know that he lived and died. It's just malarkey to claim that he only visited the planet and then came for a little while and left. So Jesus makes this unbelievably huge statement.

It's flagrant self-promotion, isn't it? I mean, for people who aren't Christians. And that's how it's recognized by the people who hear him. It isn't as if they go, oh, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. No, no. [9 : 43] Jesus is in the middle of all sorts of conflicts. So how is it that they respond to this big claim that Jesus makes? Look at verse 13. In verse 13, it says, they push back.

So the Pharisees said to him, you are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony isn't true. They just push back. I mean, you know, you can just picture Christopher Hitchens saying something like that.

You can picture your grocer, your accountant, your mechanic, the stay-at-home dad who lives next door to the artist. They just say, okay, well, sure, yeah, go ahead. You can make those claims if you want.

Just you making a claim. Like, why should I believe it? So how does Jesus respond to that pushback? Well, once again, we talked about this similar type of thing a couple of weeks ago. At first glance, and at second and third glance, in fact, his answer is profoundly disappointing to us. But how does he answer? Well, let's look at how he answered. It's profoundly disappointing, but if you press through our disappointment, which really tells us something about our heart, not about him, but our heart, it's a very, very powerful answer.

[10 : 50] So how does Jesus respond to their pushback? Yeah, you're just talking about yourself. It's not true. It's just malarkey. It's baloney. It's garbage. So verse 14, Jesus answered, He said, Now, Now, there's sort of three really big things in this innocuous and initially disappointing statement.

The first is the context. The text begins with a game. And if you go back and look at the end of chapter 7, what is it following?

They've illegally, unjustly, and immorally condemned him to death. Illegally, immorally, unjustly, and in defiance of their scriptures condemned him to death.

And when Nicodemus makes a very timid but still very brave little comment, Isn't this maybe not right? They just call him a name.

They just say, You know what are you? Are you from Hicksville? Like, are you from, Like, what are you from? Like, are you from northern Saskatchewan or something? Or northern Ontario? Like, are you just from where people don't know anything?

[12 : 44] Like, just shut up. So, here it is. He's having this conversation with people who have unjustly, immorally, improperly, illegally, and unscripturally found him guilty without any type of trial and are seeking to have him captured and kill him.

And they're saying, You're only bearing witness about yourself. And he says to them, Well, if I judge, I judge by the truth.

And doesn't your Bible say something about judging? Now, as you're going to see from the rest of the story, it doesn't seem as if any of them get red or embarrassed.

I don't mean they become red Tories or something, like, or liberals. Like, none of them get red in the face. None of them seem to have any sense of shame or embarrassment about this. They have a complete and utter indifference to what they're doing.

So, this raises a very interesting point. How on earth could Jesus ever bear witness to people like that? Like, how could he, actually?

[13 : 56] When they show no embarrassment or shame when the topic comes up after what they've done. It shows there's a bit of a problem, isn't it, in terms of Jesus trying to reveal himself.

And by the way, the reason that the Bible says this isn't so we can say, Gosh, those people are really stupid and evil. Like, the question, the reason it's raised is for us to say, Is that me?

You see, that's, we, in a sense, become just like the Pharisees if we hear this and we say, Gosh, I wish Trump would hear that. Or, gosh, I wish Clinton would hear that.

Or, gosh, I wish Trudeau would hear that. Or, gosh, I wish Kathleen Wynne would hear that. Or, gosh, I wish Andrew Scheer or Elizabeth May. Go through the political spectrum. And the second that we wish that somebody else would hear it, there's a bit of a question.

Wait a moment. Am I hearing it? Am I hearing it? And then there's a second, even bigger problem with the text.

[14 : 57] And it's a problem which is, it's so big we don't see it. I know that's a bit contradictory, but it's so big we don't see it. Look at verse 15 again.

Sorry, in verse 17. In your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. Well, think about that for a second. Why is it that the Old Testament laws say that you need at least the testimony of two people?

It's because we human beings lie. Don't we? We human beings lie. We dissemble. We cloak. We give ourselves passes.

We make excuses for ourselves. We flatter ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin. We overestimate how smart and brilliant we are and we put other people down.

Unless we get very depressed and everybody seems brilliant and we seem unbelievably dumb. But that's in fact just the shadow or the other side of the teeter-totter from the fact that we often think of ourselves as like gods.

[16:01] And so it's because God knows. You see, if everybody in the people, if we human beings told the truth, the Old Testament law would just say you only need the testimony of one person. Because we know that one person tells the truth.

But we know that truth is a complicated, inconvenient... I mean, the Bible doesn't say that nobody ever says the truth at all or knows the truth.

But it's very frank about the fact that there's a truth problem for human beings. And when I'm saying human beings, I'm including myself. I really am.

It's not that because a person becomes a Christian all of a sudden, it's been like there's been a brain transplant in their head and they now... and a heart transplant and we only speak the truth. We know that's not true, don't we?

And so this actually is pointing to another... Once again, well, how actually is it that the Holy God, who is true, how does he break in and reveal himself amongst a people who tell lies and love lies and have a tricky relationship with the truth?

[17:13] Well, how actually can God reveal himself in such a context? And that brings us then to the third sort of aspect. It's an even bigger problem.

We think to ourselves, we're very disappointed in Jesus' answer. Well, I know where I'm coming from. I'm speaking the truth. And God the Father also bears witness. And by the way, in John 5, a similar type of argument happened.

And in John 5, if you go back on it and look at it, basically Jesus says to the Jewish people that when you hear the Bible, you're hearing God the Father's witness. But in this particular case, there's another bit of a problem.

If you think about it for a second, who can bear witness to God? Like, when I shared this at Parliament Hill Christian Fellowship yesterday, or Friday, you know, there's like three or four levels of security to get into the East Block on Parliament Hill.

There's security guards outside. They have to make sure the door gets opened. I go through a screening process. Then there's a desk. My things are mic...

[18:23] Not microwaved. They look, they scan everything. I have to go through this as if I'm going to fly in an airplane. And if my name's not on the list, I don't even get through the first door.

But if that happened, if for some reason my name wasn't on the list, which happened a couple of months ago when I went invited to speak, I can call Craig. And Craig will either come down himself or somebody else.

And they can come and they can deal with it. He can bear witness to me. He's another human being. He can bear witness to me. But who's going to bear witness to God? And if you think about it for a second, if we human beings have a truth problem and a lying problem, then, like, how's that going to actually work?

Like, if we just think about it for a second, how's that going to work? And that's one of the things which is so profound about John's Gospel, is that John just keeps on...

Jesus keeps sort of pointing to this particular thing. And we think he's dodging the bullet, but he's actually just forcing us to ask ourselves the question, one second, let me just think about this for a second.

[19:26] How is it that any human being can bear witness to God? Like, there's going to be a bit of a problem. If you could put up the first point, Andrew, and this is something... I got inspired for this point by a man by the name of Leslie Newbigin.

He gave me the germ of the idea, and I sort of changed the language. But the only way for light to bear witness in darkness is to continue shining bright and clear.

The only way for light to bear witness in darkness is to continue shining bright and clear. You see, light can't ask darkness for a witness, can it? Darkness, could you just give me a little bit of a push? Darkness is dark. Now, some of you might say, well, George, I can sort of see the problem, but, I mean, does that just mean anybody can just make these big claims, can't they?

In fact, there's a very, very different thing that's going on here in the story, and part of it is that you have to remember that the gospel of John is a book. Story, I have a little bit...

[20 : 39] Because I've watched this movie about the wild, wild country, which you don't have to watch it. I just found it very... I found it very moving, very curious and everything like that, and this guy, Rajneesh, who made this claims to be God and was going to create, like, the new man in the middle of Oregon, all the while amassing more semi-automatic weapons than all of the police forces in Oregon at the same time.

Like, is there any discont... Is there any dichotomy between these ideas? Well, the fact that a lot of his followers didn't sense any type of dichotomy is that I found this out from a Christopher Hitchens, actually, that he actually had gone to the original ashram in India in the early 80s, and, I mean, he's been dead a few years now, but he actually...

There's a thing on the internet you can find about Hitchens commenting about this guy, and what he says, which they don't show in the documentary, is when you go into the ashram where the Rajneesh was going to be doing his teaching, there was a big sign over the ashram before you entered, and it said, please take...

I should have written it down. Basically, please remove your shoes, or please take your shoes off and turn your mind off, basically. Oh, no, that's it.

Sorry. I got the wording now. Leave your shoes and your mind at the door. Leave your shoes and your mind at the door. Now, Jesus never tells us to leave our mind behind.

[22 : 06] And at the end of the day, the full answer to this in the context of Jesus is just his wisdom, his shrewdness, his insight, his goodness, his gentleness, his humility, but the full answer to their question won't come for another 13 chapters and in real time six months when he dies upon the cross and he rises from the dead.

That's, in fact, how God vindicates his son by having him die on the cross and rise from the dead. the Romans crucified thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of people and to my knowledge in all of the history of crucifixion there was only one person who ever partially survived a crucifixion but it was a very unusual one.

It didn't go with the flogging beforehand and they weren't crucified for a very long, just like an hour or something like that and there were physicians who were right there to care for him and he sort of survived.

But in centuries of this as a punishment, hundreds of thousands, that's the only case and it's not like Jesus is with the flogging, with the spear thrust.

And it's not just the resurrection of Jesus which is going to be the vindication of it. It's both as we're going to see in a moment. It's his death upon the cross which in an odd way vindicates who he is because he said he's going to die on the cross and his resurrection from the dead vindicates who he is and what he said.

[23 : 52] So there's going to be a vindication by a spectacular miracle on top of the other signs and miracles which Jesus has done and there's never any invitation for us to leave our mind behind when we read the Bible.

In fact, the problem we have when we read the Bible is that we don't actually look deeply enough at what's being said to pierce behind our arrogance and our disappointment in the answers.

It's the shallowness of our thought which is the problem and the scripture keeps calling us to pay heed, to look deeper, to look at our own heart, to look at how our own mind works, to look at the problem, to consider it.

So, Jesus has pointed to a big elephant in the room about judging and the fact that they've done something illegal, unjust, and immoral.

how is it the Pharisees respond to Jesus' bringing an elephant into the room, whether they notice it or not, whether they're so filled with pride and conceit that they don't notice it or how do they respond?

[25 : 06] Well, let's look in verse 19. They said to him, therefore, where is your father? Jesus answered, you know neither me nor my father. If you knew me, you would know my father also.

These words he spoke in the treasury as he taught in the temple, but no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come. It's a very interesting thing. They don't say to him, who is your father? They say, where is your father? Isn't that an interesting question? Where is your father? Now, part of it's probably a little bit of a put down because they might know that there's these claims of a virgin birth and that Joseph really, in a sense, had to adopt Jesus and didn't marry Mary until she was quite noticeably pregnant and it might be a little bit of a put down about, yeah, where is your dad? Jesus, where is your dad? Do you even know who he is? But, of course, the great tragedy and irony is that God, the Son of God, is standing right in front of them.

God, the Son of God, who reveals God, is standing right in front of them. of all people in the history of the planet most privileged and blessed that they could see God, the Son of God, stand in front of them and have a conversation with them.

[26 : 36] But instead, they sneer. Is this talking about me? So, Jesus said to them again, verse 21, and this is a very, very, it's a very small little sentence, but it's a very, very powerful sentence.

And it's one of those things which I'm sure for John and the disciples later on as they thought about it, they thought about the profound insight of Jesus and the profound tragedy of what he says.

He says in verse 21, we'll read 21 and 22, I am going, Jesus said to them again, so Jesus said to them again, because you're not getting it, I am going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin.

Where I am going, you cannot come. Say it again and then we'll read 22, I am going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin.

Where I am going, you cannot come. So the Jew said, will he kill himself since he says where I am going, you cannot come? Now here's the great, great, great, great tragedy of this text.

[27 : 56] The people who say this are plotting his death. That's how the story goes. They are plotting his death. Just before this, they said they weren't able to arrest him because his hour had not yet come.

It's just in the shadow of their attempts to arrest him so they can have him put to death. And in a sense, they have the gall to wonder whether he's talking about suicide. He's not talking about suicide.

He's talking about his impending murder by those same people who are asking him these snarky comments and questions. And the great tragedy is there seems to be no reddening of the face or looking down or shuffling of the feet or embarrassment or catching of the throat.

They seem to be completely blind. But look, listen again to what Jesus says, I am going away. He's referring to his death. He's referring to the fact, as we'll see in another couple of verses, that he knows that he's going to go, that he's going to die.

And then he says, and you will seek me. But isn't that very interesting? Because that's exactly what does happen. They seek his body because they can't believe he actually rose from the dead.

[29 : 21] And as you know from reading the other biographies, they seek the body, they bribe the soldiers, they collude with the Roman authorities to make sure that the soldiers aren't punished, and they pay the soldiers and they put out lies because they can't find the body.

What do they seek? They seek his body. They don't seek him. They don't seek him. They seek his body.

And so what does he say? I'm going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.

Now this is where we're going to talk a little bit about hell. Let's read verses 21 to 23 and 24 first.

So you notice how just at the end of 21 he says, where I am going, you cannot come, and just before that you will die in your sin. And three times you will die in your sin is said. The first one in 21, you will die in your sin.

[30 : 39] 23, he said to them, you are from below, I am from above, you are of this world, I am not of this world. I have told you that you would die in your sins.

For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Three times. Just a couple of months ago, one of the people that I've had quite a few conversations with about the Christian faith, and I've tried to share the gospel with her.

Out of the blue, she said, George, do you think I'm going to go to hell? Are you one of those Christians who believe in hell? And if you do, that must mean I'm going there. Is that what you believe, George?

I wasn't prepared for the question. And it's one of those things I wish I could tell you that I gave you a really snappy response. I can't really fully remember my response.

I wonder if there was a videotape, if it would have shown me looking like I was a deer caught in the headlights. I hope not. I know I didn't back down and say no. And I know afterwards I thought of about three different things I could have said that would have been a better answer.

[31 : 51] But I know I did say that, yes, there is a hell, and I mean, that's all part of the reason of Jesus, is to put your faith and trust in him so that you don't go to hell.

And I probably said something about how my, it's not that I'm better than anybody else. No Christian should ever think they're better than another person, that we are dependent upon God's grace. I know I gave some type of an answer, and I know I didn't back down and say, no, no, no, no, no, we don't believe those things, or no, no, no, you don't have to worry.

Like, I know I didn't say anything like that. And I, we've never returned to the topic, and she still speaks to me sometimes, so I guess it was, you know, this is a, I just want to share this with you because, you know, one of the things that we worry about when we bear witness about Jesus is that we're going to blow it.

So here's the good news. You will blow it. So get over it. Because you will blow it. Everybody blows it. Everybody without exception blows it.

But that's, Jesus is the evangelist, not you and me. The Holy Spirit is the one who moves. Just try to be as honest as you can and as loving as you can and do the best you can, and it's the Holy Spirit that does the work of evangelism, not you.

[33 : 00] But if you could put up the next point, Andrew, here's the thing. Jesus warned of hell, so if I never warn of hell, I am not being Christ-like.

By the way, this point and my next point, there's a guy by the name of J.C. Ryle, and he said something like this, and I've sort of adapted his little insight just to, I just adapted it, but I have to give the credit to Ryle for this in the next point.

But Jesus warned of hell. So if I never warn of hell, I'm not being Christ-like. And that's what Jesus says.

Look at that verse 21 again, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come. And then they repeat it in 22 as a sort of a question.

Will he kill himself? Since he said, where I am going, you cannot come. So you sort of notice it. And then in verse 24, he says, I told you that you would die in your sins.

[34 : 06] For unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Now, in evangelism, I would never raise the topic of hell in Canada because it would just cause people to roll their eyes.

There's other ways you have to bear witness to Jesus. Jesus. But the reason I put this up is because every Christian has the problem of potentially turning into a duck.

You know that old thing, if you start walking like a duck, talking like a duck, pooping like a duck, shedding little duck-lean feathers, and you've just turned into a duck. And it's really easy for us to sort of just become completely and utterly comfortable in the world.

And before you know it, we just don't look any different than people in the world. And the fact of the matter is, is all we've done is become worldly, and maybe we've never been a Christian at all.

And so even though it might be that we very rarely have to actually warn somebody about hell, it's one of those truths which is central to the Christian faith, which we need to hold clear. Because even if we're talking to people and we're doing lots of other different ways of bearing witness to Jesus, we have to remember where true north is.

[35 : 21] We have to remember where we are. We have to remember what's true. And the fact of the matter is, is that hell exists. And one of the great problems that I have, and probably you, is that we've lost any sense of the lostness of the lost.

We start to lose any sense of the lostness of the lost. And so we can have a very hard time sharing the gospel with those who seem to be very good.

And we start to live and pray as if the good people in Canada, and there's lots of good people in Canada who live far better lives than you and I, and it's as if they don't need the gospel.

But everybody, good people need the gospel. The lost are lost. And I don't say that because I'm special. I just say that because what does Jesus say?

Jesus warns us of it, and he said, he invites us to believe that he is the one, that he is the light that comes into the world, that he is the one who's the source of the river of life, that he is the bread of

life.

[36 : 33] He keeps saying things like this, that we would say, Jesus, I need you. Please be my savior. Please, I want to follow you. I want to be yours. I want the light that gives life.

I can't do it myself. I humbly acknowledge that I'm completely and utterly dependent upon you.

Jesus doesn't say these things to depress us, but that we would call out to him for savior.

And you know, these lines here, it tells us something about the gospel. It tells us something about the gospel. Let's just keep reading to see how they respond.

Verse 25, so they said to him, who are you? And Jesus said to them, just what I have been telling you from the beginning. Verse 26, I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true and I declare to the world what I heard from him.

Verse 27, they did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the father. So Jesus said to them, 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 authority, but speak just as the father taught me.

[37 : 40] And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him. And all the way through John's gospel, when you hear the phrase, when you have lifted me up, when I am lifted up, it's always referring to his crucifixion.

So you see, here's the blessed hope. If you could put this up, Andrew, that would be a great help. In Christ, when you put your faith in, when I put my faith in Christ, when you put your faith in Christ, your sins die before you do, because it dies with him.

Without Christ, you die in your sin. That's the gospel. When I follow Jesus, when I put my faith and trust in him, my sin has died with him.

When I die, I don't die in my sin. I die in him. My sin died 2,000 years ago in him.

That's the hope of the gospel. Brothers and sisters, if you are in Christ, when you die, right now you might be struggling with depression. You might be struggling with feeling very unworthy.

[38 : 53] You might be struggling with feeling like you are a failure. You might be struggling with some great besetting sin, which seems as if it's going to devour you. You might be struggling with dashed hopes and failed dreams, but I can tell you right now that when you die, your sin died 2,000 years ago because you put your faith and trust in Jesus.

You do not die in your failure. You do not die in your sin. You do not die in your shame. You die in Christ. But without Christ, without Christ, you die in your sin.

You die in your sin. And so would I. I am not special. I am saved. But I am not special.

And I am not being a narcissist and saying that. Far from it. That far from it. Because a Christian isn't saying, I'm a narcissist. I'm so wonderful. I'm so beautiful.

I look at Facebook and I never get depressed because I just think I am so wonderful. That's not the Christian life. The Christian life is my sin has to die.

[40 : 06] I don't want to die in my sin. Jesus, take my sin. If you could put up the final point, Andrew, that would be very good. Jesus says to you and me, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. That's the bright light that shines over this. In the face of people who have judged Jesus unjustly, immorally, and unbiblically.

In the face of people who have no shame, no embarrassment. Jesus just says, listen, I am the light of the world. I am the light of the world. Listen, George, I know you have a truth problem.

I know you have a sin problem. I know you have a shame problem. I know all these things about you, George. I am light of the world. Follow me. Come and follow me.

And what am I going to give you? The light that gives life. We all know that truth can be very cruel and very, very hard. And truth can condemn.

[41 : 12] I was speaking to a retired professor on the streets of Ottawa just the other day, and he went on about a 10-minute rant about how terrible university students are nowadays. how they're all a complete dead loss.

He's lucky if he finds one in a billion who have even a spark of interest or intellect or desire to read or learn. I could go on and on and on. I could not master his eloquence. But he went on for 10 minutes.

And I said after that was all, and he talked about how the whole educational system is completely corrupt. It's a complete and utter scam. The government knows this. Everybody knows this.

Students go into it knowing that it's like getting a lottery ticket.

You don't get jobs out of it. On and on and on and on and on. And after he finally caught a breath, I said, well, thank you for giving me a dose of optimism this afternoon. Whether or not he's true or not, I don't know.

But the truth can be cruel. I doubt he's true. He was filled with despair. The truth often just brings death. But Jesus is the light, the truth that brings life.

[42 : 14] And he offers it to us. One final thing, brothers and sisters, just before we go, two final things. First of all, if you haven't given your life to Jesus, follow the light. He's calling you. He's calling you to come to him and say, Jesus, you are the light of the world.

I want to follow you. And I know if it's just up to me following you, I'm going to fail. So grab a hold of me and Jesus, thank you that you will never let me go.

And give me this light that gives life. And the second thing is one of the things that we can pray about us as a church. Our culture is increasingly becoming a culture that pursues and embraces death.

Can you pray that we will become an island of life, an island of light in a nation that is slowly but surely embracing death?

Make us an island of light that prays for our nation, that it will turn away from a culture of death.

Please stand. Bow our heads in prayer.

[43 : 27] Father, we know that light is life. We know that light is life. And we thank you for Jesus. We thank you that he is the light of the world.

We thank you, Father, that he came into this dark world and he just shone bright and clear and pure. That he shines in a way that touches our hearts, that changes our destinies.

And not just changes our destinies, but changes how we can begin to live today. As the light that brings life becomes the ground upon which we stand, the covering over our head, the oxygen that we breathe, the drink that we drink and the food that we eat.

Father, make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live by following Jesus and having the light that gives life.

Father, help us to be gripped by the gospel and live for your glory. And we ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.