

I am the Light of The World

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[0 : 00] I would like you to turn your Bibles this morning to John chapter 8 and ask that you follow along! as we open the scriptures together and begin reading there. John chapter 8 verse! And 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. Let us pray.

Gracious Father, this morning as we take up this word, we're thankful that you have given us scripture by inspiration, by the work and ministry of the Spirit, and we are thankful that we who are your people may rely upon the Spirit to help us understand and apply the Word of God. At the same time, we recognize the importance of our hearts being humble enough and objective enough to recognize our natural tendency of not listening carefully and with a tender heart toward the things you have.

And so we ask that you would work and that you would be glorified both in our attention to the word of God and then our application. And Father, we want to be a people whose lives display the work of Christ in a world that desperately needs to see the light.

We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, in that we have been away from John for a while, and that goes with, first of all, having Christmas and then having New Year's and other things associated with that. And then I got to preach on stewardship, right? You are all looking forward to that. Waiting, waiting, waiting for a pastor to step on that one and get right to it. And then we had the farewell service for Caleb and Charity. But we're back to John. And I got to tell you, it's a good book. It happens to be the best one I know right now. And it is dynamite. As I begin, I'm several weeks ahead in where we are, and I remember even as I was finishing up details on stewardship and then Caleb and Charity's service, I was beginning to look back to the passage and refresh my heart in the book of John, and I found myself just having this surge of affection for this book. It is unbelievable. It really is.

It is a book that opens up the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ in a spectacular fashion. And it's important for us to remember a couple basic details about John. For one, it's completely different than the other three Gospels. The first three Gospels are descriptive. John's Gospel is more reflective. The first three Gospels give us...I have a cough. Bear with me.

[3 : 38] Lord, help him, please. Frail instrument that he is, help him, okay? That's what you're praying, right? The first three Gospels give us lots of details, accounts of different things Jesus did.

John only gives us seven miracles, a number of different statements, but very little detail. On the other hand, John goes out of his way to help us think carefully about who Jesus is.

To put it another way, we could say that the first three Gospels say it this way, here is what happened. John's Gospel says, this is why it happened. Do you follow that? It's important to keep that in view. And there is a sense in which John's Gospel, from the very beginning to the end, stays focused singularly on the person of Christ. Now, you should remember John chapter 20, verse 31, more or less by heart. How many of you think you could get a rough stab at reciting it without looking at it? These things are written, what? So that you may know that Jesus is the Christ, and believing in Him that you may have, what? Everlasting life. I mean, this is all about knowing Jesus is the Christ. It helps to kind of have the outline in front of you. What I mean by that is, what's the goal? What's the target? Why is this part here? And it is this singular focus on the deity and the supremacy of Christ that almost overwhelms us with joy when we open up the book of John, and we see the evangelist, the Gospel being laid out for us and presented so clearly. Man, I see it.

I see it. Jesus is the Christ. And so as we take up this passage this morning, let me remind you, for one, it is the second of the seven I Am statements in John. Does that strike you as interesting?

For one, remember when Moses, at the burning bush, a little concerned for the responsibility that he had or he was being charged with of leading the nation out of the land of Egypt, he said, and all right, all right, who should I tell him is sending me? And God said, what? You tell him I am is sending you. And Jesus, second person of the Godhead, fully God, makes it very, very clear that he indeed is God's son, the second person of the Godhead. And these statements that we find, the seven I Ams, make it undeniable. So we look here and we find the second of these statements.

[6 : 56] You remember Jesus said earlier in John chapter 6, I am the... Let's try it again slowly. I'll throw it out there kind of like, this is not T-ball. It's a real slow delivery though, okay? Jesus said in John chapter 6, I am the bread of life. Second one is, I am the light.

And so here's the statement, Jesus is the light. That's what he says. And you have to understand that this was a stunning statement of his messianic authority, and it was made in the very center of Israel, namely in the city of Jerusalem and in the court of women in the temple.

Now, we all appreciate light in varying degrees. And light is important. It makes things grow. It allows us to move. It helps us work. It helps us decide if we can take action with greater assurance.

Many of us here can probably think back to times when we've traveled around in our own home even, without the benefit of light, and we found out that somebody moved something into our way, and we wish we had light. Light's important.

But I want you to understand when Jesus said this, there was more to his statement about I am the light than we may pick up on the surface.

[8 : 24] And so, we want to take a minute here and think about this bottle of water is here for me to try in moments of extreme duress, okay?

Poff drop. Belinda, thank you so much. I had no intention of doing this, but bear with me. Thank you. Oh, three.

Please thank Belinda for having extras in her purse. We'll see if it makes any difference. I know, I know. Illustration of progressive sanctification very slowly taking place.

Okay. Anyway, as we get into this passage, I want us to remember a rule of Bible study is to pay attention to context. And so, when you look at this passage, and here we are, 21st century, we have lights, we have electricity. Some of you leave them on all night just because you don't know that turning them off is an economic decision that you need to make occasionally. You know, we're all about, we understand light. It's there.

The ancient world did not have that privilege. And so, when Jesus said, I am the light, it immediately got people's attention. But remember, it's important for us to think, who was he talking to?

[9 : 52] He was talking to Jews for one, who had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. It was a phenomenal feast. It was actually of the feast that God expected his nation to participate in, it was the most celebratory.

It was one that had a number of different rituals in them that really communicated the ministry of God to his people.

Now, remember, he said this during the Feast of Tabernacles, but he also said it, well, in the context of the Feast of Tabernacles, he also said it, in the court of women that was marked out by these large, towering torches, candelabras of some sense, actually rising according to historical records, or at least Josephus, etc., up to 75 feet, that during the Feast of Tabernacles were lit every night.

How many of you have ever been around a gargantuan bonfire? I mean a big one. Pretty spectacular. And so here were these four towering, flaming torches in the court of women, and they were so powerful, their presence and light, that all of Jerusalem kind of was affected by the aura and the glow of these torches.

And here is Jesus in that context saying, I am the light. But there's something else you need to understand. When he said, I am the light, he said it in the ears of Jews that had a deep longing for their Messiah, and they understood that when Jesus said, I am the light, he wasn't saying, hey, I'm a pretty bright guy.

[11 : 52] He was saying, I am the one. Let's take these three contextual facts and kind of weave them together so we can understand it a little more fully.

For one thing, he was saying this, I am God in your presence. I am God in your presence. That's what he said. The nation of Israel, from the day they left the land of Egypt until the day they arrived in the promised land, and this is something that always kind of befuddles me.

How in the world could Israel be so absolutely brain dead about the presence of God when every night, what did they have over the camp? Over the tabernacle was a pillar of fire.

I mean, can you just imagine arguing with God when there's a big cloud over the tent, and there's a fire, and you're like, well, I'm not real sure God cares about me.

Just stop and think about it. In case you're wondering, they're not the only ones that have been pretty stupid in the presence of information.

[12 : 57] But when Jesus said, I'm the light, he was drawing attention to the fact that God was the light of the nation of Israel. I think about the psalm that says, Blessed are the people who hear the joyful sound, speaking about the word of God.

They shall walk in the light of your countenance. How many of you can remember what it was to live a disobedient, God-rejecting life, and not have the benefit of the light of his presence, right?

Israel said, You are our light and our salvation. And here is Jesus standing up and saying, I want you to know this, I am the light.

Second thing he was saying in that context is, I am the one who gives you light to your life. The Jews who heard him saying this were standing in the court of women.

It was the largest of the courts. It was as far as women could go into the temple. It was large. And in that place, there were these four towering candelabras that were not lit during the daytime when Jesus were talking, but they could see these things.

[14:25] It was a reminder, I am the one who brings light into your life. Probably the most significant thing, however, is that when Jesus said this, the Jews understood that he was claiming without question to be the Messiah.

Think with me just a minute, and let's turn to the passage. Go back in your Bible. Keep your finger in Isaiah, because we're coming back. But Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2.

Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2. Boy, that cough drop helps.

Thank you very much, Belinda. Needed. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2. Isaiah chapter 9, verse 2. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. The passage is one that around Christmas time we're pretty familiar with, aren't we?

[15:33] We recognize that the coming of the Messiah, the virgin-born Son of God, referred to clearly as the light of the world. And so here, when Jesus made this statement, you can understand that those who heard it understood Jesus to say this, I am not a kind of a representative of God and someone that it might be a good idea for you to listen to.

You know, how do you like up-talk in town? It was like, hey, guys, I'm it. I'm the light. Get it? Now, I want you to remember in John chapter 20, verse 31, that John makes it very clear, Jesus, all that we have in the book of John is for this singular purpose of letting you know that Jesus is the, what?

The Christ. For what purpose? So that you may believe on Him and have everlasting life. Well, I want you to understand that there's some practical application that we need to apply in relationship to this.

For one, following Him means not walking in darkness. Following Him, and we'll say this slowly so you get it, means not walking in darkness.

Now, understand, in primary terms, walking in darkness refers to the state of the unsaved. When you walk in the darkness of rebellion and sin, there are innumerable bumps and scrapes that happen in the dark.

[17:08] There are things that take place that just end up being bruising. I refer to it as, and I want you to mark this in your own thinking, as the unintended consequences of sin.

Everybody look at me and smile because I want you to follow this. Let me explain something to you. When you sin, when I sin, my little perverted mind and your little perverted mind has thought at the moment that it was a reasonable thing to do.

How many of you understand that? Whatever it is. And then God allows unintended consequences to come around and give us an epiphany. It's like, whoa, I didn't realize that if I did this, this would happen.

Even though God tells us ahead of time, how many of you realize one of the characteristics of God is He gives you all kinds of information about that's a bad idea. And so when the bruises and heartaches of life strike the wicked, part of the intention is God helping the wicked come to realize that walking in the darkness is a miserable state to be in.

But I want you to understand something else. Now listen to me. Believers can walk in relative darkness as well. You can pinch down the candle of your conscience.

[18:29] And how do you do that? I don't have to clue any of you in because all of us here have done it on occasion. But one of the things you can do is say willfully, hey, I'm not going to do that even though I know that's what God wants.

I think back over the years of situations where I've counseled individuals saying, hey, hey, don't date that unbeliever. And why not? Because the Bible says don't do it.

Well, I want to anyway. She happens to be the best looking girl in the class and in fact she was actually smiling at me and that deserves some attention, right? And then the heartache rolls out and years later you end up in my office and you're saying, I didn't think it would end this way.

Really? Well, that's why God said don't do it. When you willingly close your eyes and ears because you don't want to hear the truth, you're going to end up with some bumps and scrapes you didn't count on.

Well, there's another way that believers, knowing better, end up walking in the dark and that's because they end up being seduced by their own fantasies and walking in the mirage of what they think is reasonable rather than the light of Scripture.

[19:37] I want to appeal to you. One of the things that should characterize you as a believer in this present day is that you weigh all things against the Word of God.

Do you hear me? What does God think about that? Where does that idea appear in Scripture? What's the context in which I can frame that?

I've got to tell you, one of the sad tasks of a pastor who is being faithful to the work of the Word of God is that there are occasions when I have to warn people when they're intentionally pinching down the light in their life and I watch people stumbling towards heartache and I have to say to them, listen, no, it's not going to work out.

That's not walking in the light and the outcome is going to be very hard for you. Well, I want you to understand as you look at this passage going back to John chapter 8, we find Jesus saying, I am the light of the world.

I'm it. I want you to look at a second thing. How the dark always reacts to the light. Look at verse 13.

[20:49] So the Pharisees said to him, you are bearing witness about yourself. Your testimony is not true. He had just finished making this stunning statement about himself and you can hear, you can hear a whining kind of high-pitched nasal sound coming from a Pharisee.

You got it? I mean, how many of you ever just kind of think to yourself how stupid they were? Do you ever do that? Pharisees? Ah!

Here is Jesus. I mean, what had he done so far that kind of cast reason? I mean, what had he done so far that gave everybody good idea of believing that he had the power to do what he said, right?

I mean, miracle after miracle. I mean, it was all out there. Nothing secret. And here he says, I am the light. I mean, he had been dynamite. And so you can hear this little nasally sound.

Yeah, you can't be right because you're tooting your own horn. Now, a general rule in court is that a person should not be the only witness to bear witness to themselves.

[22:04] They're saying, hey, you can't talk about yourself. And in Jewish law and in the general rule of court is that you want an independent and impartial witness or observer.

But, I like the way Jesus responds. What does he say here? He looks there and he says, hey, even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true for I know where I came from and where I'm going.

Here's what he's saying. He had first-hand evidence. You got it? Think about it. I know where I came from and where I'm going.

He had the supreme right to speak about heaven and about the Father. Why? He'd been there. And everything he said was accurate and dead on.

How many of you on occasion have wanted to retract something you've said? I mean, you know, regrettably, there's not a day goes by that I'd not like to get a do-over on things I've said.

[23:11] That wasn't the case with Jesus. Everything he said, it was like, bang! Not only that, but everybody could research exactly what he said in comparison to Scripture.

Scripture. If you look at his Bible lessons, his sermons, you will find the substance of the Old Testament laid out for you.

If you look at his prayers, you will find the information, the text of the Old Testament brought to your attention. And here he was speaking about the Father. He was speaking about heaven.

He was speaking about the plan of salvation. And he was speaking about their need for salvation. And he spoke with authority because he had come from heaven. And he saw the Father firsthand. Second thing is that he had authority from the Father.

You look there in verse 15, he says, hey, you judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. And I can hear the voice in the background saying, well, if Jesus didn't judge, we shouldn't judge.

[24:11] How many of you ever heard that one? You know what? How many of you have a tongue that can taste food that's gone stale? I mean, some of you rely on dates on the thing.

Growing up in India, I had to rely on my tongue. That is not safe. Just because it was in the refrigerator, you know, refrigerators keep things for almost way beyond their due date.

Let's not stop. Let's stop there. Okay. Here's how we know whether something is right or wrong. The Word of God.

The Word of God helps us determine what is right and wrong. And Jesus had authority given to him by the Father. And here's Jesus saying, even if I do judge, my judgment is true for it is not I alone who judge but I am the Father who sent me.

And incidentally, in the day when all are judged, the one who judges will be the Lord Jesus Christ and he who judges will be the one who willingly bore the penalty of sin on the cross.

[25:24] Furthermore, I want you to recognize that Jesus had supportive evidence. He says, I am the one who bears witness, verse 18, about myself and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.

What witness did the Father give to Christ? Well, for one thing, but you could bear with the fact that not everybody was there. At Jesus' baptism, what took place?

There was a voice from heaven that said what? This is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased. I like the next part that appears in one of the Gospels. Here it is. Listen to him. Isn't that nice?

You know, don't tell me that Jesus is the Christ. Everybody look up because I'm talking to you. Don't tell me that you're all about being a Christian but you're not listening to Jesus.

There's some of you here whose lives are a contradiction of what you say. That's not right.

[26:29] If he's the Christ, listen to him. Jesus had supporting evidence. That's the thing that I want you to recognize. He says, the Father bears me witness. What he was pointing to were, here's miracles.

I want you to look at a couple different passages in relationship to this. Keep your finger there in John chapter 8 because we'll come back to it but turn back just for a moment to John chapter 3 verse 2. Cough while people are turning.

Note to myself. Okay. John chapter 3 verse 2. This man, talking about Nicodemus, came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God.

How come? For no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him. God had confirmed Christ's task and ministry by undeniable miracles.

I want you to look at another passage that brings it to us for the same purpose but from a completely different light. turn to John chapter 9.

[27:55] The entire chapter is the account of the man who was born blind. Jesus and the disciples walking along and so one of the disciples poses a theological question.

They look at the man who's been born blind and they kind of they want to get the lowdown on this guy and they say, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind? The idea of the Jews was that, hey, a little bit like karma for the Hindu, you know, you do bad things, bad things happen.

How many are glad that karma isn't real? Do you follow what I'm saying? Anyway, you remember Jesus heals the guy and then he ends up in front of the Pharisees, okay, and the Pharisees have this ongoing discussion with him about, well, who did this?

It was on the Sabbath. There are lots of days to heal on, but Jesus really loved to do it on the Sabbath. Just like a finger in the eye of those poor Pharisees.

They probably sent him emails saying, could you do it on another day? Anyway, Sabbath was his day. I mean, he just loved to get after it. And so now they're having this discussion and remember they bring the parents in and what do the parents say?

[29:12] I love it. He's of age, ask him. I love it. That's a good answer. How many of you use that with your kids? You know, it's like, don't talk to me, officer. Okay.

No, no, no, no, we won't go there. Okay, here. Look at verse 25. Okay. There, they're saying, you need to give God the glory.

I mean, God is the one who healed you. This is pretty spectacular, we admit it, but this man's a sinner. Really? Really? Verse 25, he answered, whether he's a sinner, I do not know.

One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see. Well, let's kind of speed ahead a little bit, go to verse 30 and look at what happens.

The man answered, why? This is an amazing thing. By the way, he was talking to the Illuminati of the Jewish faith. You follow what I'm talking? He was saying, he was talking to the guys who had three PhDs in Old Testament studies who could handle the Old Testament like, I mean, they could do it slam dunk behind their back, that kind of thing.

[30:18] And he says to them, why? This is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners and if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him.

Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do what?

Nothing. Is that convincing? Yeah. And so here is Jesus. These Pharisees are a little worked up over the fact that he says, I'm the light and he says, back up.

I know where I come from. Back up! The Father supports my judgment, the Word. Back up!

Look at the miracles I've done. They prove who I am. Now let's come to some practical application that we can fit into our daily lives. For one, here's the truth, there are some of you here that have never come to the light.

[31:34] You've gone to church. I'm glad you're here. But the truth of the matter is, you've never trusted in Christ as your Savior. You've never repented of your sins and called on Him to forgive you and you have never come with humility and brokenness and said, the truth of the matter is, my life is an absolute mess and all the chaos around me is just the result of walking in darkness.

And I need the one who is the light, it's Jesus. the heartache and the shame, the fear that clouds your life are just signals of the fact that you need the Lord Jesus.

And I've got to tell you something, as I was praying this morning, I thought about what hell's going to be like. Are you listening to me? For one thing, hell will be a place of incredible suffering.

But that's not all. Hell will also be a place where those who spend eternity there will, with unrelenting bitterness, angry against God, resent His authority to judge.

But that's not all. For all of eternity, those who spend their time in hell will admit that they sinned against the light. they saw the truth, they heard the truth, they were convicted by the Spirit of God, and they said, I don't want it, and you will spend for it.

[33 : 01] How many of you know what it is to regret bad decisions that you can never undo? That's part of what hell will be. And there's some of you here that have never come to the light.

There's some of you that have come to the light, but you're living in willful disobedience. There you are. You can think back to a time in your own life where the Spirit of God got a hold of you and revealed the darkness of your soul, and you cried out and asked for mercy, and you repented of your sins, and you came to know the sweetness of faith and the blessing of fellowship.

And then you've been seduced by the world, drawn away. And there really is no substantial difference between the life that you're living presently as you flounder around in the dark in the life of a person who's never known Christ.

You can sprinkle fancy words all over it about how you're praying and about how your feelings are leading you, etc., but Abel, let me tell you something. Whipped cream on a cow pie doesn't make it anything other than a cow pie. You need to understand that.

And when you eventually step in it, it's just the same. Now, this is what blows me away. I want you to get a hold of this. This is the most stunning thing of all.

[34 : 36] Turn in your Bible to Matthew chapter 5. It's not the most stunning thing of all. Jesus is the most stunning, but it just blew my socks away.

Hang on. Matthew chapter 5, verse 14 through 16. Here's Jesus kind of winding up the Beatitudes, Beatitudes, and He lets the thunder go. Listen to me. Look at me.

You're the light of the world. I don't know about you, but it gives me cold chills. It is sobering.

It is humbling to realize what Jesus, who is the light, said when He said that. You're the light of the world. Look at verse 15.

People don't light a lamp and put it under a basket. You didn't light yourself. Do you agree with me? You didn't light yourself.

[35 : 44] You didn't kind of make an objective decision, say, you know what? I think I, maybe I need to be a better person, and you know, let's do a little bit of self-improvement here, and I'm going to let everybody know how wonderful I am. Jesus got a hold of you and your mess, and He lit your candle.

Well, why did He do that? so that other people may see your good works and glorify the Father who's in heaven.

The truth is, is that Jesus lit my candle so other people can see Him. He lit your candle so other people can see Him. Does that make sense? What right do I have being lit by His grace to live a life that makes no difference in the dark and miserable corners in which He puts me?

And God's people said, yes! It's right! I'm a candle because He lit me, and I belong in the place where He put me for His glory and His glory alone.

We need to do a better job of being candles.

[37:09] Wouldn't you agree with me? Wouldn't you agree with me? And let me tell you something. You won't be a better candle unless you get your eyes focused on Jesus. It doesn't happen just because you walk out of here and say, you know what?

I think I need to pray seven more minutes. Or maybe I need to stop, you know, whatever. Lock your eyes on Jesus. Be overwhelmed with the person of Christ.

Fall in love with the one who loves you. And the unintended consequences of that focus is other people begin seeing something different in you that cannot be attributed to your self-help program, but the work of the Spirit of God in a broken and miserable life.

He lights the candle. Don't put it under a basket. And the purpose of preaching is to put God's people on the spot of doing what?

Saying yes or no to God. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for Jesus being the candle, the light, supreme and sufficient, glorious in all things, the one whose light will adorn heaven and satisfy us completely.

[38:36] we need to have repentant hearts because we have been so easily seduced by things that don't count.

Our lives are occupied by activities that have so little to do with the one who is the light. And only your Spirit can bring about genuine repentance and I plead that you would do that in my life and in the lives of your people that Jesus Christ who is the light of the world would be seen and adored.

Bring genuine repentance to those who are here and are sinners and desperately need salvation. Bring humility and brokenness to believers whose lives are deeply entwined by ungodliness.

and we ask this for the glory of Christ. Amen.