

John 1:1-5, 8:12-20 - Let There Be Light

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Date: 19 April 2015

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[0 : 00] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.

Good morning, everyone. How are y'all this morning? I guess that's inappropriate to ask. You can't really answer that question at the moment. I've just realized that. My name's Reed, and I'm glad to be with y'all.

Nine years ago, you helped start, and you were a huge part of starting the ministry that now is a huge part of my life, RUF, at UAH.

You called Brad and Caroline Tubasing into town. Do you realize it was nine years ago? Many of you were part of that very beginning stage of the ministry, and my family, we've been here for three years now, ending our third year on the campus at UAH, and we're so thankful for the ministry at UAH.

Thankful for you starting it and being a huge financial and prayer partner of ours in that ministry. Many of you on an individual level, and certainly as a church, you are a huge part of it.

[1 : 04] I just want to say thank you while I have the chance. We love what we're doing at UAH, and we're thankful for the work the Lord is doing there through RUF. UAH is a very changing community. I don't know if you've been around the campus much lately.

I know many of our students. There's one walking in. Hi, Rosie. Many of our students are here this morning. Get to know the new UAH. It's changed a lot over the last even five years, even three years since I've been there.

There's a lot more campus life now. There's a lot more campus community. They just built this new \$26 million student life facility that's great, and we feel like RUF is kind of at the center of what UAH is wanting to become more, and that is a campus where there's a community presence where students feel cared for and interact with one another and have a great time.

So there's a thriving Greek community and intramurals and lots of other fun things going on. The Lord's blessing our work there. We're thankful to be there. Thank you for being a part of it with us. We're going to consider a passage this morning from John chapter 1 and John chapter 8 that we will read together here in a moment on the Jesus being the light of the world.

So if you're into outlines and that sort of thing, and I imagine a few of you are, my outline for this morning will be the miracle of light, the ministry of light, and the mission of light.

[2 : 19] And I think you'll see that even in this passage as we read. So let's begin in John chapter 1, and then we'll go to chapter 8. This is the Word of the Lord. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. And over to John chapter 8. Beginning in verse 12, Jesus speaks 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. So the Pharisee said to Him, You are bearing witness about Yourself. Your testimony is not true.

Jesus answered, Even if I do bear witness about Myself, My testimony is true. For I know where I came from and where I am going, but You do not know where I come from or where I am going.

[3 : 24] You judge according to the flesh. I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, My judgment is true. For it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent Me. In Your law, it is written that the testimony of two people is true.

I am the one who bears witness about Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness about Me. And 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.

The grass withers and the flowers fade, but the Word of our Lord will stand forever. Let's pray. Oh God, Your testimony is true.

I pray that as we consider it this morning, we would see where You are the light of the world, even in our own lives, in our community, in our churches. That we would know the abiding presence, the comforting presence of the healing light of the gospel.

[4 : 39] I pray that I would. I pray, Lord, that You would speak to me through me this morning. Your Word would produce abundant fruit that is to Your glory. I pray that the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts together would be pleasing in Your sight, O Lord, our Rock and Redeemer.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. I don't know if you realize this, but next week, I believe it's a week from tomorrow, marks the four-year anniversary of those awful April 27th storms that rolled through this community.

four years ago. My family was not here yet. We moved the summer after those storms. I watched from the distance. I was watching the news every day following those storms and the aftermath. But many of you did not watch from your TVs. You lived it. You were here. I've heard countless stories of what life was like there on April 27th, and even the following days and weeks thereafter. One of the themes that keeps coming up, if it's not devastation of life, it's devastation of property, this idea of this devastating darkness that existed in that post-tornado community.

[5 : 54] I was talking with one of our students just last week who was a senior in high school when those storms hit, and she described for me the next several days of the darkness that existed at night. I understand there was a curfew because obviously the power was out for many days.

I know upwards of over a week, at least in some areas. And she talked about the... She said, I've never heard such a terrible sound as the silence at night.

When your power is out, if you don't have a generator. And she said, even the dogs stop barking. I don't know what that means, but that's a scary thought. I want you to picture that post-tornado storm darkness.

You have it in your minds, what it was like to live in that darkness? I think that's the setting of Genesis 1. Before creation, two things existed, God and darkness.

And God speaks into the darkness and everything changes in a moment. That darkness that existed was the very setting of Genesis 1.

[7 : 00] And do you realize the first words that God speaks, at least in recorded Scripture for us, are these words. He says, Let there be light. So there was darkness, and into the darkness, God spoke and light shattered the darkness away.

And we start to see this as a regular theme of how God deals with His people throughout the Old Testament and the New. You start to see this idea of light and darkness come up a lot, and it's an interesting study to do.

If you don't have a devotional life right now, just go search for light and darkness. It's all through the Old Testament. The Exodus story gives a perfect illustration. When the Israelites were leaving that bondage in Egypt, God sent the abiding presence of the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

The light penetrating the darkness, which was a regular reminder to God's people that He was with them and that He cared for them and He had not forgotten them, and that He would lead them in the midst of the darkness. Various authors begin to pick up on this theme.

Thereafter, you have it in the poets. Even David writes, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life.

[8 : 19] Whom should I be afraid? Psalm 119 famously says, the Word, your Word is a lamp into my feet and a light into my path. And then in Proverbs, for the commandment is a lamp and the teaching a light.

It continues into the prophets. Isaiah gives the same imagery when he prophesies of the coming salvation of God, and you know what he described it as? The light of salvation coming into the darkness.

He says, I will make you as a light for the nation that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth. There's many more places we could go, but I want you to start to see that this is God's MO. What He does is speaks into the darkness. He provides His presence as light scattering the darkness away. It's what He's been doing since the beginning, since He first said, let there be light. It's what He did all throughout the Old Testament. And then we come to John chapter 1. And it's interesting how John's gospel begins with those very same three words of Genesis 1, in the beginning.

[9 : 23] But this time, the light that shines in the darkness doesn't just hang in the air, but it takes on a body. The words of God aren't just spoken, but they are now personified.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. And John says, in Him was life, and that life was the light of men.

And the light shines in the darkness. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. In the beginning, God spoke light into the darkness. And in the beginning, His Word shattered the darkness away.

And now Jesus comes along, and He says, and I am the light. The thing we need to see from the very beginning is that Jesus Christ is the guiding light of God, revealing God's truth to God's people. He is the miracle of light made manifest, the light embodied. He is now the personified provision of God for His people, the light to shine into our darkened worlds.

[10 : 38] And so what does Jesus as the light do for His people? There's a lot we could demonstrate about what light does. Obviously, but I want to narrow it down to two very simple things that light does in our lives and that Jesus does being the ministry of light.

First, the light scatters the darkness away. Light and darkness do not coexist. They are not friends. They are opposed to each other. There's either light in a room or there is darkness. At night, we only see darkness unless a light is shining.

Why is that? Because light scatters the darkness away. And so when God speaks into the darkness, it moves away. Now, here's the way to illustrate it. My wife and I are both from South Alabama originally.

We've lived out of state for a number of years before we came back to this side of Alabama, which is not, by the way, Alabama. Huntsville is not Alabama. I like it a lot. I like it better than Alabama in some ways.

It's not Alabama. I'm from South Alabama and one of the things that I... We missed a lot when we moved. So we lived in Utah for a couple of years before we came back here.

[11 : 47] And there's a lot I missed about living in the deep South. I missed fried okra. I missed boiled peanuts. I missed sweet tea. It's getting to be lunchtime.

I'm thinking of... Okay, there's some other things I missed too besides food. There's also things that I did not miss about living in the South and I didn't realize this until we moved back. And one of those things came very quickly.

So we have a little house in Madison and this back deck of our house that we like to when the weather starts getting nicer like it is now. We have a grill back there and we'll cook for the girls and sometimes we'll, you know, have a dinner at the table.

And one of the things that I realized that I did not miss about living in Alabama was what happened after we were grilling one night and we had cooked hamburgers or something and afterwards we put the girls to bed and I went back to clean up from the grilling and the picnic kind of scene.

And I turned the lights on and you know those cockroaches the size of iPhones? I did not realize how much I did not miss those things.

[12 : 58] Those are awfully frightening. They're like the size of wharf rats. And all of a sudden my deck was just full of them. Do you know how to get rid of cockroaches besides paying a company? There are good companies that will do it.

Maybe some of you are in that line of work. But besides doing that, one very simple way that you can get rid of cockroaches from your back deck is this. You turn on the lights. Right? That's how it works.

You turn on the lights and the cockroaches flee. Here's what's interesting. Jesus says in another place in John's Gospel, He says, light has come into the world but men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.

He says, everyone who does evil hates the light and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. Do you know what Jesus is saying? He's saying that we are like cockroaches who hate the presence of the light.

When the light comes on, we want to scatter and run back into the darkness. We fear exposure. We are comfortable in the shadows and hiding.

[14:01] We don't want to be known. And the light of the gospel, the ministry of the light of Jesus is that he shines the light into the dark places of our lives where we do not want him to work.

And he wants to scatter the darkness away. This happens in two senses. One, this is the condition of our hearts before the salvation. Our hearts are that post-tornado darkness.

As we are lost in the bondage of our own sin, where we are in our rebellion, where we are bent against God, want nothing to do with him, that is the darkness that exists within our hearts.

And so what the light of the gospel does is it shines in to that darkness, revealing the truth of the gospel, scattering the darkness away. But it's what Jesus continues to do in the process we call sanctification.

So not only in salvation, but also in sanctification. And this is what makes us uncomfortable.

Because it sounds great for Jesus to shine the light of the gospel into our hearts initially to scatter the darkness away, but that's where we want him to stop.

[15:12] But he doesn't. Because the ministry of the light is to scatter the darkness away over and over and over and over again because he's not comfortable with us hiding. If you have a teenager, you know what this is like when you flick the light on early in the morning and they just start screaming and put the covers over their head because the light is just too bright for them early in the morning, we are comfortable.

We are comfortable living in the shadows. And so maybe, maybe you're hiding now. You are fearing exposure in your lives.

And we are very creative about the way we hide. We are. We're very creative. Even on Sunday mornings, you look very nice, by the way. Everyone looks good. I wore a suit for you.

We look like we have our act together today. We can shake hands after the service. How was your week? Great. How was yours? Very good. Very good. Good. Good.

Have a good week. And that's as far as we want to go with people because we don't want people to know what's really going on. The things that we are deathly afraid of. The issues that keep us up at night.

[16:23] The sins that we are hiding that we, if someone found out about death, we feel that we would be undone, we want to hide. It's the same sin from the very beginning.

After the first sin in Genesis 3, what did Adam and Eve do? They jumped behind the bushes for fear of being exposed. And so the first thing we have to see that the light does is it scatters the darkness away and it's something that he is very committed to.

Jesus wants to shine the light into our darkened stories in order for us to not just be exposed but in order for us to be healed.

Because there is no healing in the shadows. Jesus shines the light of the gospel into the darkest places of our lives so that we will be freed from the bondage, loved and accepted and experience his grace and his mercy.

that we will be happy and healthy. And so he wants us to be exposed in order to be healed. And so the second thing that the light does, it scatters the darkness away but also the light reveals a path.

[17:32] Parents of young children know this to be true more than anyone else. I experienced it just this week. You know, the middle of the night, like 3 a.m. when that scream comes from the bedroom and you take off across the house to figure out what's going on with one of your kids and then that Lego.

Y'all are there. You know it. Or the torturous hardened head of that Barbie doll and you step on it. It's very simple.

I don't do very good illustrations. My illustrations are very simple. What do we need to do? You turn on the light to see the path to walk through. That's what light does is it gives us a healthy path to walk in. Here's the second thing that the light of the gospel does for us is it shows us where to move.

When Jesus says, I am the light of the world, He is shining a light into the dark places so that the truth of God will radiate in the midst of it. You may feel that you're in a dark and directionless place

right now in your own home or in your life.

You're unsure about the future. Maybe something's going on in your career or in your job. You don't quite know where to go. This is something we deal with regularly with our students, especially our seniors.

[18 : 50] We have a senior dinner tonight and many of them are still jobless. Graduation's here in a week and a half, two weeks from today, I think. They're jobless. They don't know what's ahead.

There's a lot of pressure on college students to get it figured out. Even your freshman year, you've got to get your major down. You've got to get that co-op lined up so that you will have the career of your dreams at age 22 and you better have your family life planned out then too.

If you don't meet your mate by your senior year, you're doomed. That's not true. That's just the idea that our culture keeps telling our... It's not true, students. There's this pressure that we feel we have to have it all figured out and some of you may be there even now feeling the pressure.

We need to know that the light of the gospel is shining the path of God for our lives, that He leads us, He cares for us, He leads us through His Word, He leads us through His Spirit, and He leads us through His church.

Even as a church, maybe you feel there now. I enjoy talking with different members of your search committee recently and just hearing of how the process is going.

[20 : 02] You've got a great search committee put in place, but even as a church, maybe you're wondering what is the future. You need to know that just as the cloud by day and the fire by night was a continual reminder of God's people that He was with them, that He was leading them and guiding them and protecting them, Jesus, as the light of the gospel, is the continual reminder that we can look to to see that Jesus is with us, that He cares more than we do about the future of this church and of your family, of your children.

Jesus cares and He is leading and He is guiding and He is protecting. One scholar named Hendrickson who I love to read a lot on New Testament works, he says on this passage, he said, to the ignorant, Jesus proclaims wisdom.

To the impure, He proclaims holiness. To those in sadness, He proclaims gladness. We could expand on this too, right? To those in despair, Jesus proclaims hope.

To the lonely, He proclaims the presence and the love of God. To the broken, He brings healing. To the fearful, He brings comfort.

This is the ministry of the light. Bringing hope and holiness, life and godliness, joy and meaning and purpose and the very presence of God into the darkness.

[21 : 29] And many of you know that it is in the darkness that the light shines most bright. And some of you are sitting in that darkness now and that is where the light of the gospel will begin to glow.

It's like riding in the back country roads late at night. You see the stars like never before. Some of you are there even now and that's where the light of the gospel will shine most bright.

This is what Jesus is committed to. This is His mission. It's really interesting to me where this passage is stuck in John's gospel. I was just reading through this yesterday and it struck me that right before this passage, right before Jesus says, I am the light of the world, He turns to an adulterous, sinful woman who is about to be stoned to death.

That's the passage just before this. And He looks at her and He says, I do not condemn you. Go and sin no more. And then just after this passage is when Jesus heals the man born blind.

Do you remember this story where this young man was blind and the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus and they were asking Him, why is He blind? Is it because of His sin or the sin of His parents? And Jesus says, neither.

[22 : 45] You're wrong on both accounts. I'll tell you why this man was born blind so that the works of God may be made manifest in His life. And Jesus heals him through this incredible miracle in the way He heals him.

And for the first time, this man sees light. And Jesus looks at him and He says, do you see me? I am the light of the world. Here's what's interesting. Book ended on this John chapter 8 revelation of Jesus saying, I am the light of the world is a woman forgiven of her sins and a man healed of his blindness.

The mission of the light of Jesus is that He is uninterested in leaving us in our sins. and what He is committed to is giving us sight.

And He will not stop until that happens. How does Jesus do those two things? Very briefly, and I want to end with this picture. How does the light accomplish His mission? By entering into the darkness.

And I don't just mean into the world. It's true that the incarnation is Jesus leaving the comforts of heaven and entering into the darkness of the earth. That is very true and that's how He identifies with us in our own sin and our own struggle.

[23 : 55] He enters into the darkness. But remember that we said that the light of God in the Old Testament meant the presence of God and the guidance of God for His people? It's the same today, but we've got to see that the light went out for a moment.

The light had to actually go out for the moment in order for us to know the light of the world in our own lives. And here's what I mean. Do you remember the scene?

The scene on the day that the light went out when Jesus hung on the cross and the darkness came over the face of the earth. There's a moment where this post-tornado darkness covered the face of the earth once again.

And it was at this moment that Jesus somehow lost the presence of the Father for a time. I don't know what all that means. I went to seminary. I studied stuff. I don't get it.

But I know that the light went out for a moment. The only way that we will ever see a glimmer of light in our darkness is to see that Jesus, the light, took on the full extent of our darkness when He took on the cross.

[25 : 14] that He went into the darkness so that we could be delivered from it. That the presence of the Father left Jesus for a time so that we would know the abiding presence of the Father for all of eternity.

And this is why Jesus can promise, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. So do you believe Him?

If you've been looking for light to fill your darkness, and we have, look no further than the light that Jesus offers. If you're a Christian and you're in hiding, hide no more.

If you're unclear about where to go in your life, look to the light, the guiding light of God to lead you. And maybe for some of you, you've never experienced the healing power of the gospel for the first time.

You've always seen Jesus as someone who's just kind of against you. I want you to hear that the light of the world promises to heal your brokenheartedness.

[26 : 30] He promises to save you from the darkness that you find yourself in. Trust in the light of the gospel for your own salvation. Some of you may be thinking that you're hiding even now and you found creative ways to do it.

You need to remember that sometimes we have to be exposed in order to be healed. We have to be brought out from behind the bushes in order to be in the presence of the Father once again. Maybe you're confused.

You're hurting. You're directionless. The light of the comforting presence of God is to remember that He is near.

The resurrection gives us great hope to know that the presence of the Father has not left us but He is ever with us. and it helps us in our darkness.

Let me just say that this isn't the last time Jesus says I am the light of the world. Actually, it's not even the last time He uses the phrase the light of the world. I want to end with this application.

[27 : 46] It's really amazing to me that even though Jesus says that He is the light of the world and that we need His light to shine into our darkness to scatter the darkness away and to bring healing, He actually tells us that He's not in this mission alone.

Because in one of the other Gospels when Jesus was preaching in the Sermon on the Mount, even though here He says I am the light of the world in the Sermon on the Mount, He says something remarkably different.

You know what He says? He says, you are the light of the world. That's a very strange thing to say. If we've been talking about what Jesus is the light of the world does and now He looks at His people and He says, and you are the light of the world.

He said, a town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on a stand and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

If you've been invited into the light, Jesus now turns and says, and you are the light. This has significant implication for us on a personal level and on a corporate level.

[29 : 11] that God has called you to be the light of the world in your workplace, whether that's on the Arsenal or in Huntsville Hospital or in the school system.

That God has called you to that place to be a shining beacon of light to point others toward where healing comes from. In your home, one of the hardest places it is to be light, right?

God calls us to shine the light into the darkness even in our own homes to point our children and our spouses toward the one who heals, the one who brings us out of hiding, the one who works on our behalf.

Even as a church, this has tremendous applications. That God has called you here to South Huntsville and Southwood has a rich history of impacting this community and even people all across the country and all across the world have been impacted by the ministry of Southwood Presbyterian Church.

As you move in and you're in this transitional kind of phase looking forward, God has called you to be a light pointing people over and over again to the healing that Jesus brings, relational healing, healing from our own sins and sorrows into the darkness where God speaks.

[30 : 41] He's called you to proclaim the light of the gospel to this community. Jesus is the light of the world shining the hope of His gospel into the daily darkness of our lives and He invites us to be the light of the world shining the hope of the gospel into the daily lives of the people around us.

understand it was maybe eight or nine days later after the storms hit that the lights came back on and as I came in a year later I noticed that this community seemed different because of the events of what just happened over the last year.

The numbers of people who lost their lives and the families that were affected and the loss of property and even the fears that just set in to your lives every time you hear every time you hear that storm sound once again but eventually the lights came back on and everything was different. You've been through darkness somewhere in your lives in your community and your home now you see that the light of Jesus shines even brighter.

Let others see the light of the gospel too. Let's pray. Let's pray. Jesus, you are committed. You are committed to bringing us out of darkness.

[32 : 09] Jesus, you are committed that our sin would not have the final say that death even would not have the final word. You are so committed that you entered into the darkness by entering into this earth.

You entered into the darkness in the most real way by dying on the cross for our sins. Jesus, may we hold out the light of the gospel to ourselves, to our family, to the community around us and say this is where healing comes from.

This is worth everything that we would shine the light of the gospel more and more so that people would see the hope of the healing light of Jesus all of their days.

We ask for your glory alone. In Jesus' name, Amen. For more information, visit us online at southwood.org.