

John 8:12-30 “The Light of the World”

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- [0 : 0 0] You are listening to a message from Southwood Presbyterian Church in Huntsville, Alabama. Our passion is to experience and express grace. Join us.
- We're going to talk about the light of the world this morning. Before we do that, this is a special morning because you get a bonus sermon.
- That's nervous laughter. Before the actual sermon, you get an extra one. We have come to a section in our study of John's gospel that almost certainly doesn't belong here.
- So I'm not going to preach on it. It's John 7, verse 53, through chapter 8, verse 11. It's probably in brackets in your Bible if you're looking at it there.
- And I want to address this situation briefly before we turn to our text for this morning. Two things about this strange section that are really important to me.
- [1 : 1 0] The first is that this should strengthen, not weaken, your confidence in the Bible. The primary reason that we know that this story does not belong here is that we have over 5,000 manuscripts and fragments of the New Testament.
- Thousands more than any other historical document studied from this period in history. And so we can now trace that the earliest of those handwritten copies of John's gospel, all the way back to around 200 A.D., do not contain this account.
- They go from 752 to what is now labeled 812. And we have tremendous records that show the reliability of the Scripture.
- So in the small number of cases where it is hard to know what was original, there is no matter of history or doctrine that is at stake in any of those.
- What a gift that is, that we can confidently study the Word of God. The Word that He has given to His people that He's preserved for us by His Spirit.
- [2 : 3 3] And that is why I've chosen not to preach on this story of Jesus and the woman caught in adultery, even though I would really like to.
- It's a great story.
- If you can't say amen to anything to that, you should say amen to that. Well, we need to hear from God, not from you. That said, this story where religious leaders seek to trap Jesus by bringing a woman caught in the act of adultery to Him and asking if she should be stoned.
- Where Jesus eventually responds, let him who is without sin cast the first stone. Where they then one by one walk away.
- And Jesus then tells the woman, neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more. That story, which you may have heard, most likely really happened.
- [4 : 0 0] It sounds like Jesus, doesn't it? It sounds like the religious leaders that we read about elsewhere. And so this is the second important thing I want to tell you.
- The beautiful truth of this story you don't have to throw away. Because it illustrates powerfully truth that the Bible teaches elsewhere.

Many of us love this story. I would love to preach it. Because it's a beautiful picture of Jesus' forgiveness, isn't it? It powerfully pictures the order of Christianity.

First grace, then godly living. Go and sin no more. This is so important.

Because this order is reversed from most other religions in the world and most of the instincts of our hearts. They're backwards from this.

[5 : 00] Christianity is not, we love God and neighbor well enough, then God loves us. That's not what the Bible says.

It's not be godly and then God will accept you. No, it is first grace.

Neither do I condemn you. God loves and accepts you. Then godly living. Go and sin no more.

Because of the incredible heart transforming, life changing forgiveness you've received your whole life is different. Friends, that's the good news of Jesus Christ and the whole Bible.

And this story illustrates that truth that we know already from the rest of Scripture. So celebrate that relationship you have with God before you do anything for God.

[5 : 58] End of bonus sermon. Let's pray and then we'll move on to more really, really good news. Pray with me. Father, we thank you for your word.

We so need it. We need to hear your voice. And so we've opened it this morning. Would you so work by your spirit that we would trust you, that we would find life in you, that we would place our hope in you.

We ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. People around the world throughout the centuries have celebrated the power and the beauty of light.

Some have worshipped the sun. Hindus in India celebrate Diwali, the festival of lights. Imagine that you went every year with your kids to the July 4th fireworks and y'all just enjoyed them together and you wanted them to know what was really being celebrated when all these fireworks went off.

And it was going to be the very last time that you were with your kids for this celebration. You'd want to talk about sacrifice and freedom and such things as that that these celebrate.

[7 : 30] The Jewish people gathered in Jerusalem gathered in Jerusalem each year to celebrate the feast of booths. To remember God's provision bringing them out of Egypt and walking them toward the promised land.

They lived in these makeshift tents for a week as they did for 40 years when they wandered while God fed them with manna. And now all of a sudden here is Jesus, the bread of life we read about in chapter 6.

There was the water celebration as part of this festival in the temple that Pastor Derek taught us about last week. As Jesus came and promised living water to those who believed in him just like the water God gave from the rock back in the wilderness.

But God also led his people when they had no idea where to go in that desert wilderness. His glorious presence in the fiery pillar every dark night.

It gave them light for this whole huge caravan of Israelites to follow. And that was celebrated at this festival. Every night what they would do there in the temple is that they would climb ladders to the top of four golden lampstands.

[8 : 51] And they would fill four huge, these massive tall lampstands would have massive golden bowls that they would fill with oil. And they would light them aflame at the end of the evening.

And it illumined the whole city of God. Jewish records reveal this. There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light of these lamps.

Could you imagine how far that's stretching? Everywhere it's reflecting. People cheered and they celebrated the promise of the prophet Isaiah. That a great light would one day shine on the land of darkness.

That a Messiah was coming to be the light of the nations. That's the setting for what Jesus says right here. You've got to feel that excitement.

This annual celebration that they've all gathered for. And then remember, this is the last feast of booths that Jesus will have here. He wants to tell them what they're really celebrating that they may not realize.

[9 : 59] John 8 and verse 12. God's holy, inerrant, infallible word. 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. So the Pharisees said to him, You're 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.

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 am the Father who sent me.

In your law, it is written that the testimony of two men is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.

[11 : 01] 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. So he said to them again, 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 Jews said, Will he kill himself since he says where I am going, you cannot come? He said to them, You are from below.

I am from above. You are of this world. I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins.

So they said to him, Who are you? Jesus said to them, Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. 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 have heard from him.

[12 : 09] 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.

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. As he was saying these things, many believed in him.

There is very little scarier to me in a dark room at night than Legos.

I have broken CDs. I have bumped my knee on bed frames. But nothing makes me more desperate for a light to be turned on than realizing that there are Legos all over the floor, and I don't know where they are, and I'm stuck in the middle.

We all live in painful darkness like that, just in different ways. The darkness of this broken world that Jesus acknowledges that we face, all of us.

[13 : 34] In this room, just individually, we're facing the mental darkness of depression, of dementia, struggling to help those who are battling those difficult situations.

The emotional darkness of being left out by friends, of feeling overlooked by everyone. It's easy to feel alone in a dark room with no light, and it hurts. But then many of us feel not so much the alone dark room.

We feel like we live in a crowded dark room where we're just constantly bumping into others. We wake up uncertain, anxious about life, torn over schooling decisions for our children, facing conflict with classmates and coworkers, and we're walking into it again.

We end up in arguments about elections, not knowing how to handle money. What will I do today to eat? How do I organize my business so I can provide for my family tomorrow?

[14 : 52] We're fearing unknown threats from Russia, wondering if I really know what I'm doing in life, honestly feeling less than, probably, I think to myself, more confused than everyone else is about how to do life.

Then there's the unconfessed sin. Sin we're hiding, probably unwilling to admit even to ourselves.

The greed, the addiction, the pornography, disobedience to parents, the bitterness and resentment that we harbor, the anger we lose control of.

Need me to keep going? But this aspect of darkness, Jesus is specifically clear about that this darkness in us, if we keep that sin unconfessed, if we don't believe in Him as the light that exposes and expels our sin, we will die in our sins.

That is serious. Friends, we are a desperate people, yes? As enlightened as we like to call ourselves sometimes, we are desperately needing deliverance from the darkness within us, the darkness around us, aren't we?

[16 : 30] Isn't that true of us? Now, some days we prefer to live in denial about that. Life is fine. I mean, I totally know what to do all the time in every situation, don't you?

With all our society's technological advancements, we have finally now, in our enlightened society, figured it all out and gotten life under control. Isn't that what your phone has done for you? It's made everything simpler for me.

Sure, Pastor, I can be totally transparent, totally comfortable with every thought and word and deed that I have, every fear and failure. Expose any of them.

Tell my wife all of them. Scroll them on the screen for everybody to see this morning. No darkness here. Nope. Bring it on. No way.

No. No. Like the Israelites in the dark desert, uncertain where to go next. in the temple courts, at the feast, uncertain really how to follow God or where they're going to find freedom from Rome.

[17 : 45] We desperately, like them, need light from outside of ourselves. I hope we can be honest about that in our hearts. I hope we can be honest about that with one another as well.

Share a struggle of darkness with someone today. it will make the light so much sweeter. See, that's the context into which Jesus announces his second great I am statement in the Gospel of John.

I am the light of the world. What does he mean? Let's connect some dots briefly. I am the very presence of Yahweh himself with you to guide you step by step in this dark world until you reach the promised land.

In fact, apart from me, verse 12, you will be stuck in darkness with no true sense of direction in this life.

and it's not merely, Jesus says, that I show you how to live to get to God. No, no, no. I am God come to you.

[19 : 04] Verse 19, if you know me, Jesus says, you know the Father. I will lead you out of your sin if you will but believe, verse 24, that I am he, that I am the one the Father has sent as the light of the world, the promised light of the nations that you've been longing for, the glory of God risen upon you with his people like the pillar of fire, the one the lamp stands remind you to hope in every year.

Here I am! Are you beginning to see what a grand and glorious statement Jesus is making here?

Can you imagine being there and hearing him pronounce who he is? The light of the world. This is the light that John told us about in chapter 1.

In him was life and that life was the light of men. Light that shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.

Light that powerful. Remember the power of light? Have you been in a dark cave where you wave your hand right here in front of your nose and you can't even see it? And then all of a sudden somebody turns on the light and the power of that light drives out the oppressive overwhelming darkness.

[20 : 33] It's the light of life that Jesus says he is again verse 12. Light is the source of all life and creation isn't it?

Think photosynthesis. It produces life. It guides life. So instead of death and darkness of sin Jesus is promising to be the one who brings life in every way physically emotionally spiritually.

Could it really be true? I need that. light. Many of us are so deep in our darkness that we fear there is no true light.

Or if there is or possibly could be it can't be Jesus. What he promises is too fantastical and there couldn't be that great of a light that could actually shine into my darkness.

I just see no light at the end of the tunnel will. The darkness is too real. Listen. Jesus says I know all too well that the darkness is real.

[21 : 54] Hang with me. I'm not asking you to deny that. Hang with me Jesus says because I am going to a cross to lay down my life. Verse 28 when you have lifted up the son of man we know in John's gospel that's the cross right?

then you will know that I am he. Then when he dies when darkness comes in the middle of the day we'll know he's the source of life and light.

Yes. That's why the darkness goes out then. That's why creation mourns. We'll see he's not in that moment merely blowing smoke with all these claims to to gather followers and become a celebrity.

No, no. His life is really about sacrificing for others so that they get life. Now we see it. Doesn't it resonate with your inner sense of worth and dignity and value that you were created for to be loved like that?

Jesus is saying that he is the voice from the outside world. He comes from beyond this world verse 23 he's that one that can then shine light into all of this world's confused uncertain darkness.

[23 : 22] See Jesus doesn't ask you to deny your deep darkness. No, no, no. That's not how he gets rid of the darkness. He enters right into the darkness for us when he dies to give us life because he knows that apart from his intervention that aspect of our darkness will be permanently hopeless will be left stuck in our sins.

So he is the light that we desperately need. Listen the kind of light we need is light that says you can call darkness darkness and yet have hope.

That you can admit your confusion as a parent and not lose heart. That you can acknowledge your repeated struggle with the same sin and not be condemned.

That you can look death itself in the face and cry and yell and grieve and know at the same time that it does not get the last laugh and you can have hope.

That's the kind of light that we desperately need in our darkness. Light that will shine again. Amen? Glory to the light of the world.

[24 : 46] That's what Jesus comes to be for us. how can this happen for you in your darkness? Listen to this last bit of good news in verse 12.

Jesus is being the light of the world means those who follow him who believe who he is who embrace him as their light not only will not walk in darkness even when life's hard there's hope and there's purpose but also how does it end?

We'll have the light of life. Catch this don't miss this. What is the light of life? It's Jesus right?

He just told us that. The light himself we will have within us. Do you remember just a few verses ago when Jesus set the living waters would flow to us and then through us his Holy Spirit his presence in us to give life just as the water flowed from the temple at the festival now as they finish the celebrations and the lampstands blaze as they start reflecting off of every courtyard in Jerusalem Jesus says the same thing about light.

He comes as the light to us and then he is the light shines through us all over the place. A couple weeks ago at Laura Wolfson's memorial service I quoted author Edith Wharton who wrote there are two ways of spreading light to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it.

[26 : 41] see Jesus was Laura's light so she loved to sing a song some of you will be familiar with this little light of mine I'm gonna let it shine let it shine let it shine let it shine she got to be a mirror to reflect the true source of light the light of the world she had him the light of life so she faced desperate poverty with a peace that she would have whatever she needed most she brought joy and warmth into the dark and difficult places in other people's lives including many of you because she knew love that entered the darkness to love the hurting she faced aging and health concerns and heart surgery with a certainty that home was not a place here on this earth but a place

Jesus was taking her one day with him see she had the light of life and as a result she does she still does because Jesus came to her he lived in her and shined through her to many many others that is your joy too as Jesus lives in you now by faith as you trust him as you embrace him for that light to shine through you to this dark world to hurting neighbors to hopeless friends maybe maybe having the light of the world living in you the light of life will shine through your honesty about your mental health struggles because you know that no matter how long it takes and how long the struggle goes on here he is making you whole maybe he will shine through your sincere words of sympathy and hope offered to a friend who has just had a spouse or a child run off on them maybe he will shine through your intentionality with the friend and your grace group you can tell just is not buying this

Jesus stuff right now but you ask them to coffee and you listen to them and you share your story your journey with Jesus whoever follows Jesus will not walk in darkness but have the light of life isn't it glorious that though Jesus came from another world by his spirit he makes his home in you and in me so we can know light and life to shine in whatever darkness we face he's come to be with you for that pastor Tim Keller recounted an old fairy tale about a man who was born and grew up in a prison dungeon he and everyone else in that dark dungeon had only ever seen the prison and they often debated whether or not anything existed outside the prison wall the wicked warden told them repeatedly this is all there is but the man wondered one day a new man came to the dungeon the guard said from another part of the prison but the new man said he came from outside the prison from the outside world and he began to scribble pictures on the wall to show them what life was like beyond the prison walls a tree he scribbled on the dark walls the sun as best he could represent it he told him about colors not just black and gray gray but red and yellow and white could this other world be real one last thing the man said there's a prince in the outside world whose commitment it is to break into this prison and to set you all free to the outside world the new man eventually left the dungeon but soon thereafter the man who had only ever seen the dungeon heard scratching on the wall of the dungeon and a hole suddenly broke through the size of a man's hand and light beamed through the hole he looked out through the hole and he saw what oh it must be a tree he saw what oh that must be that must be the sun they weren't exactly like what he had pictured in his mind but but sure enough they had to be and then he heard the voice of the prince say now you know that I'm real and this world is real

I'm preparing to break through and bring you out here in the meantime live in hope of what you see through the hole in the wall almost instantly a hope that he'd never felt before transformed the man in the dungeon every day he went and looked out the hole longingly and as light poured in he turned around and with a new sense of his own value everything around him changed in that dungeon his seemingly mundane tasks there in the now less dark dungeon were part of a bigger world the other inmates around him in the dungeon had a new worth in his eyes and they talked together hopefully about the outside world and the prince whose voice they had heard see the light transformed his view of everything in him and around him he couldn't wait to be with the prince in the other world this is what

Jesus the light of the world offers to us isn't it a chance to live every day now in this dark world with him the prince in reality is actually with us and in us so as we look to his light every day as we get to sit with him and say Jesus what does it look like today as we look through the hole that he has made in this dark world and hear his voice we have the privilege and the responsibility to shine the light of the reality of another world a light that gives us peace and even courage in the face of our fears a light that gives us love for everyone around us especially those who are hurting and hopeless because we want them to know about this light a light that gives hope no matter how dark things get in the dungeon that there is another world where we'll be home and with Jesus forever in a city where he the light of the world eclipses the need for a son and is the lamp of the new

[34 : 13] Jerusalem where we live finally free from the darkness amen and forever forever shining in his light oh Jesus let your light so shine on us today that we would see the very glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ that we gazing on you Jesus would be so transformed into your image be so different so renewed we'd be transformed into those who would shine the light of the light of the world you are our hope you are our king you are our rescuer and we thank you amen for more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://yetanother sermon.host)