

The Hour Has Come

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[0:00] Morning, church. Good to see you all. Quick ask. Have you ever been somewhere that it's so dark you can't see anything? You can't see your hand in front of your face? Anyone?

A few people? In year nine, I was on a school excursion, a geography excursion to Currie Currie, and a few people were chosen. I was one of the selected to go down a mine shaft.

And we went down this mine, and a few kilometres underground, and we all had the helmets and all the gear, and we turned off the Petzl torch. Eerie. Pitch black. And everyone went quiet, and then you could hear the shuffling of some miners down a tunnel, and their torches, it was only slight, but you could start seeing things, even though a little bit of light in the distance started to give us some perspective. The faintest light in the distance broke the darkness, and it helped us to see. Darkness is the absence of light. Darkness can be scary. After all, we can't see where we're going without light. It always feels good to turn on that light beam of light and finally see, so we don't trip over and can make our way through life. Light is used to guide, to warn, to expose, to illuminate and reveal. And light is essential. It comforts and offers security and warmth. It banishes the darkness.

We need light. Crime often happens at night. Movies depict villains as associated with darkness. darkness. They often wear black. And I even think of like vampires. They're nocturnal. They come into the light. They'll melt. There's a fear of light. The world is a dark place. And there are many of us here who know what it's like to be in some kind of personal darkness. Depression, the darkness of mental health, is even referred to as the black dog. As we look around us, we see a world that is morally dark.

spiritually dark. And sometimes even as we look to the future, it can seem bleak and dark. We need light. Light and darkness are a running theme throughout John's Gospel. Today, as we conclude our series on an abundant life, the hour has come. Darkness will finally be vanquished by the light.

[2:36] You can follow along on the St. Paul's app. Here in John 12, Jesus makes his final public address before a self-imposed lockdown and his walk to the cross. Jesus claims in John 12, verse 46, I have come into the world as a light so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

This is the last reference to light and darkness in John's Gospel. And light is one of the first images we get in John's Gospel referencing Jesus. In verse 5 of chapter 1, the light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. In verse...

Thank you, 6 to 8. There was a man sent by God, John, who testified concerning the light, but John was not the light. And finally, 9 to 13, this is a bit abridged. We heard it at the start of church today. The true light gives light to the world, but the world he made doesn't recognise him. But to those who believe, they are to become children of God.

In John 3, light and darkness theme continues as Nicodemus seeks out Jesus at night. He's keen to know if Jesus is the promised Messiah, but doesn't seem to want anyone else to know that he's trying to catch up with Jesus. So he meets under the cloak of darkness.

[3:59] Jesus lets him know how much God loves him. That he'll give his only son, whoever believes, will not perish, but have eternal life. Then he goes on to conclude, but the world hates the light. In John 9, Jesus makes the bold claim, I am the light of the world.

And then he proves it by healing a man born blind. But then he goes on to say in verse 39 of chapter 9, The blind will see, and those who see will become blind.

Jesus is the light in the Gospel of John, and the light reveals what is true and good. And those who come into the light are those who believe, and they become children of God. Darkness, on the other hand, is an image of unbelief and evil.

Judas betrays Jesus in the darkness of Gethsemane. Jesus is illegally tried at night, in the dark. Jewish law stipulated that all court cases had to be in broad daylight.

Nothing to conceal. In darkness, before dawn, Peter denies he even knows Jesus. And when Jesus dies, light is temporally cut off from the world.

[5:09] Both spiritually and physically. Darkness comes over the land. There's a supernatural eclipse. Jesus said in John 12, verse 46, I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

Of all the things that are being said by people today, could you get a better offer than somebody who is qualified to say to people in the world, you don't need to be in the dark about God. You don't need to be in the dark about yourself. You don't need to be in the dark about the world. You don't need to be in the dark about what life is all about. You don't need to be in the dark about the future.

I'm the light of the world. And you can have the light of life. The important thing to see here is that according to Jesus, people are in moral and spiritual and eternal darkness without him.

Even if right now, and I can see you and you can see me, we have physical sight, and you could have 20-20 vision, but if we don't see Jesus for who he is, we're blind and living in darkness.

[6:18] In terms of moral sight, in terms of spiritual, in terms of eternal, we need Jesus to light the way. I think I can prove to you that people are in the dark.

Think about what people come up with on God if they don't have Jesus to tell them. It's quite amazing when people start to think about God without Jesus. They're not sure whether there's one God, whether there's two, whether there's a thousand or ten thousand.

And they can't work out whether God is good or bad, whether he's kind or ruthless or even real. We like to say that the human race is enlightened.

But I wonder if you can think of anybody, apart from Jesus, whose life, the way they've lived, and their teaching that you would follow. Not just in this world, but out of this world.

Religions around the world have teachers who try to explain what they think God is like. Jesus here says, Want to know God? Look no further. I'm right here in front of you.

[7:25] Chapter 12, verse 44. And Jesus cried out and said, Whoever believes in me believes not in me, but in him who sent me. And whoever sees me sees him who sent me.

I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

When Jesus stands up and says, I have come into the world as light of the world, and whoever sees me sees him who sent me, he's actually saying something very profound and powerful.

And it's important because he's saying, Not only have I made a massive claim, which you've got to work out pretty quickly, whether I'm crazy or lying or telling the truth, but I've also got all the Old Testament behind me looking for the light.

And I've also been doing miracles in your presence, which are proof that God is with me. And you believe in God, and it looks very much as though God is with me, and therefore I have the one you believe in, God, making his presence felt through me.

And I'm actually in front of you to make a decision. We now have clarity. There's no more guessing or speculating. If we want to know God and what God is like, look to Jesus.

[8:38] All the promises of the Old Testament, all the promises that speak of God being the light and the pillar of fire, leading the Israelites through the wilderness, and all the promises that have been made that light has come to the Gentiles, the light for God's people, the light for outsiders.

It all comes together as Jesus suddenly stands up and says, I am the light of the world. Jesus expects us to make a decision on the basis of excellent evidence and then to follow him.

And for those who do, they will receive the light of life. And for those who don't, they will stay in the darkness of death. And that decision must be made by every one of us.

Everybody who takes Jesus seriously must work out whether Jesus has the credentials and the authority and the ability to provide what he promises. So leading up to this moment, John records seven key signs Jesus performed to inspire belief and reveal Jesus' messianic identity.

Water to wine. Healing the official son. Healing the paralytic. Feeding the 5,000. Walking on water. Healing the man born blind. And raising the dead.

[9:59] John makes it clear belief is the purpose of his gospel. Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life, life in his name.

But the religious of all people, even the chosen people of God, there is a hardness to this message. There is darkness. There is unbelief. Verses 37 to 40.

Even after Jesus had performed so many signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him. This was to fulfill the word of Isaiah, chapter 6, verse 10, the prophet.

He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so neither they see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts. Jesus performed signs so people could believe, but remember these are the descendants of the people delivered from slavery in Egypt who actually walked through pillars of water and not long afterwards on the other side got all their gold and all their jewellery and melted it down and made a calf and worshipped that calf.

It's no different today. As people say, show me a sign and I'll believe. It's an attitude of the heart.

[11:31] Don't hear me wrong. We can't put God in a box. God's still in the business of miracles. If you now live in the light, this is the biggest miracle of all.

But Jesus here has walked amongst them and he's even raised the dead. He's effectively said, do you know who I am? Do you know my identity? Have you worked it out?

Because once you have, you'll never be the same. But they still didn't believe. They can neither see with their eyes nor understand with their hearts.

They are blind. They don't know Jesus, so they don't know God. Yet at the same time, many even among the leaders believed in him, but because of the Pharisees, they would not openly acknowledge their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue.

Why? For they loved human praise more than praise from God. Some believed, but their religious facade is more important.

[12:36] Their image, their brand, their community standing. They were more concerned with what others think about them than what matters to God. They have a religious persona, even hiding behind, oh, this is my ministry.

But their public life doesn't match their private life. This is a real trap people fall into today. It's a deal breaker for some. Image of what others think now is more important than what God says and thinks now.

And in the long run, that's not going to work out well for those who make this choice. If we're to have an illuminated mind about God that's lit up, we must have a humble mind.

There must be humility. That's one reason why so many people are not Christians. It's actually not a lack of information. It's a lack of humility. A willingness to submit and to surrender to God's word.

Jesus' claims aren't popular today. People are blind. Hearts are hard. We see people who are in great darkness around us. And the pressure is on us, both individually and as a church, to just drop the subject.

[13:48] Just live in our own little box. Keep it to yourself. Oh, why can't you Christians just have a quite personal faith? As long as there remains information that I can read in a book, that I can shelve and it collects dust, and as long as I don't have to think too deeply about Jesus' claims, I'm fine.

As long as Christians remove everything that's unfriendly and say all the things that are friendly, I'm happy. The real trouble is people don't like having their motives and passions questioned.

They don't like the confrontation that Jesus' claims propose as he calls us to examine our hearts. And they're unwilling to be honest with themselves.

So they rage because they've been caught out. Because the light of Jesus is like a spotlight on the dark hearts and deeds.

I've got to say, you know, I go to functions and I go places and eventually in that conversation people go, so what do you do for a living? And then they say, I'm a minister. And they go, what political party? Because for some reason I don't look like a Christian.

[15:00] I don't know what a Christian is supposed to look like. You know, calculator, pens, I don't know. Well, hey. But then they go, oh, minister, a Christian. Oh, right. And then you see them backtracking in their head.

Oh, I've been dropping these words and blaspheming. And then they go, oh, sorry, sorry, sorry. And they're, you know, like as if like I'm the judge. But suddenly they're, what they've been saying, the way they've been behaving seems to have been exposed.

And it's not, anyway, it's interesting. The light of Jesus. I'll come back to that in a moment. But it's this call to repentance and the stark claims of Jesus that see unbelief.

People don't like to change. Let's think how this should affect us. Jesus says to everybody who is spiritually blind and eternally blind, I am offering you the light of life.

Jesus brings us out of darkness into spiritual light. Jesus comes alongside us and sheds light on our path. Jesus' light transform us from the inside out.

[16:03] To all those who believe Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Jesus totally lights up our future with life to the full now and abundant life and life eternal to come.

When we come into the light, John's gospel reveals how Jesus offers again and again really wonderful things. Jesus says in John 4, 14, the water I give you, you will never thirst.

Life has purpose. In John 6, 35, I am the bread of life. Feed on me spiritually. In John 8, 12, I am the light of the world.

I'll give sight to the blind, rescue you from darkness and you'll walk in the light of life. John 8, 32, I'll give you the truth and what will the truth do?

It's going to set you free. John 10, 10, I've come that you have an abundant life. John 10, 14, I am the good shepherd. I'm going to guide you. I'm going to give you direction. I'm going to protect you.

[17:04] John 11, 25, I'm the resurrection and the life. You're going to live now. You're going to live forever. Everything we do counts. Who else offers this?

And yet every single time Jesus makes a generous offer, which he's able to fulfill, there's those who respond in unbelief and even hostility. Everybody in this building has walked away from Christ by nature.

We've walked in darkness. We may have human sight, but we live in darkness. It's only that Jesus has come into the world looking for us and brought us the light of life that we have hope for the eternal world.

In John 12, having just triumphantly entered Jerusalem the day before, Jesus is now five days out from the Passover festival where this rescuing king who has arrived is going to rescue us in a most unlikely way in laying down his life.

So in John 12, 23, the hour has come. The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. God has walked across the pages of history, entered his creation, and now all of Jesus' human life has anticipated this hour.

[18:24] Now the hour has come. All history hinges on this hour and it's utterly terrifying. Verse 27, now my soul is troubled.

What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour. No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. Father, glorify your name.

Then a voice came from heaven, I have glorified it and I'll glorify it again. As early as John 4, when Jesus turned water to wine, he knew, my hour has not yet come.

But he acknowledged his hour would come. And this hour shaped him from the beginning. In John 7, verse 6, when he went up to Jerusalem privately for the Feast of Booths, he knew, my time has not yet come.

Once he began to teach publicly, it wasn't long before they were seeking to arrest him, but no one laid a hand on him. Why was he spared? Well, John explains it in chapter 7, verse 30, because this hour had not yet come.

[19:30] Then again in John 8, he taught in the temple, but no one arrested him again. And John explains in verse 20, because his hour had not yet come. But when Jesus finally came to the Passover week, he knew at long last, the hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.

Truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit.

The reason that we have the light of life is because Jesus died. Because he died, God's kingdom grows worldwide and we can live and bear fruit.

It's because he was lifted up into the darkness that we can be in the light. It's because he suffered on the cross that it's possible for us today to be set free from sin and death and darkness and walk triumphantly in the light.

And a voice was heard at his baptism. This is my son, who I'm well pleased. And a voice was heard at his transfiguration and now a voice is heard. He will be glorified and glorified again. I want to try something with you all and it's something that you've possibly never done before or we've attempted at church.

[20:48] It's a visualisation exercise. So you're going to actually need to close your eyes and it's short so you're not going to fall asleep, I hope. So if everyone can please close their eyes, I'm going to talk you through a scenario and I want you to picture it in your head but it really does help if your eyes are closed.

So let's get started. I want you to right now imagine you're in a dungeon in chains, in complete darkness. You're alone but you're not alone.

The dungeon contains billions of people who've walked this earth. You can hear the cries of torment of others around you but you can't reach out or touch anyone. you're surrounded by lost souls and yet you're terribly alone.

They can't help you and you can't help yourself. You're in despair, helpless, there is no way out. There is no escape from this horror and complete darkness.

Outside you hear the clash of swords. There's a battle taking place. Eventually, everything goes quiet. after some time you hear a single key turn in a lock and as the door opens light comes into darkness.

[22:04] A blinding light. You close your eyes tightly it's so penetrating, exposing everything. Someone approaches. They're wounded but they lean down, unshackle your chains, hold out their blood-stained hand and ask you to rise and follow them.

You step out of the prison into light. Jesus holding your hand and leading you into the light. You can open your eyes now. Are we able to picture that?

To some degree? Something someone talked me through once. I found it really helpful. Jesus is the light of the world. He rescues us from the shackles of sin and utter darkness.

How should we respond? I think we should be forever grateful. We must remind ourselves and all believers here as we go out of this building why do I believe who Jesus is?

Why do I understand who God is? Why do I have eternal life? Why does the gospel make sense to me? I was in the dark and I deserve to be in the dark and Jesus came and he lit me up.

[23:15] We must be grateful that God has revealed himself to us and saved us. It's nothing we've done. It's all the work of God. And second, we should be courageous. One of the marks of being a disciple is that we must be persons of conviction.

Not proud with our convictions but humble so that we can say I think this because Jesus thinks it and I say this and I do this because Jesus says it and Jesus did it.

So when we see injustice, immorality and disease and know they're real there are things that must be said. And once we know that hell is real and we have friends and family and complete strangers that don't know Jesus who are living in darkness there are things that must be said.

How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news. If we don't say anything is it because we don't believe anything? We must be people of conviction.

We must be grateful and we must be courageous because we have the light of life. D.L. Moody once said we are told to let our light shine and if it does we won't need to tell anybody it does.

[24:31] Lighthouses don't fire cannons to call attention to their shining. They just shine. Which is to some degree that situation in the party where I was saying oh I'm a minister and then the light of Jesus because Jesus even declared in Matthew 5 you are the light of the world.

Don't hide your light and light the world up for Jesus for the glory of God. Let your light shine. And we've also got to be careful and on guard.

Don't look back. So you've just come out of that dungeon and the dungeon door's open and you've been released from that and you look back at what was in the dungeon. The life you used to live. And Satan's got a grappling hook and he's grabbing onto your ankle and he's trying to drag you back into the darkness.

Don't look back on sin like you're missing out. Like I wish I was doing that still. It's the stench of death. In fact in 2 Corinthians 7 verse 10 we're reminded Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and has no regrets.

But worldly sorrow brings death. What's that meaning? Well worldly sorrow everyone goes oh I'm sorry for doing that you know but then they find themselves doing it again. So they're not really sorry.

[25:47] That's worldly sorrow. But repentance repentance is a transformation of your heart and your mind. And you don't keep doing it. You don't have regrets about not doing it.

There's no turning back. We walk in the light. And another way we need to be careful not to fall back into the darkness is to fall into that trap of desiring praise from people rather than praise from God.

When you do that it's like saying I'd rather stay in the darkness than come into the light. I'd rather be given praise now than hear those words come good and faithful servant. Not prepared to shine Jesus' light into the darkness.

And we're reminded of this in Romans 1 verse 21 and through to verse 32 but again I'm going to bridge this. For although they knew God they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

They exchanged the truth about God for a lie. And although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death they not only continue to do these things but also approve of those who practice them.

[26 : 56] And you find that people going if they're up to mischief they want other people to do it so you can feel not as guilty maybe. Stand firm walk in the light even in the face of unbelief and hostility so that one day you will hear come good and faithful servant not depart from me I don't know you.

Faithfully walking with Jesus works its way out differently in each of us in all our callings into life know that God is sovereign he has called us he knows how to protect us he knows how to provide for us just as he protected his son until that precise moment of the hour his death had come but even then he was glorified as he resurrected he's able to protect you and me as we stand in this world in Jesus in the light.

But this is the verdict that Jesus gave in John 3 and I'm going to use words from the message here this is the crisis we're in God light streamed into the world but men and women everywhere ran for the darkness they went for the darkness because they were not really interested in pleasing God everyone who makes a practice of doing evil addicted to denial and illusion hates God light and won't come near it fearing a painful exposure but anyone working and living in truth and reality welcomes God light so the work can be seen for the God work it is.

Step out of darkness and into the light live an abundant life walking with Jesus the light of the world. Amen.