

# The Light of the World

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[ 0 : 00 ] Let's turn together now to John chapter 8 and again at verse 12 we'll read that verse where we'll find our theme for this morning in Jesus' words.

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.

Some of you like me will be old enough to remember the days when in the country areas especially of the island there were no streetlights.

And I well remember many times walking a fairly short distance maybe, I don't know, something like 500 yards from my uncle's house to where our own home was.

And having to just very carefully walk because it was just pitch black, you could not see where the road was unless it was a moonlit night. And when you came of course to feel the grass under your feet you knew you were getting too far to one side or the other and you would just fall into the ditch.

[ 1 : 09 ] What a difference it made having streetlights erected throughout these country villages in the island just as it had been in the town for a long time before then.

And of course Jesus uses the illustration of light or light as an illustration many times and in the Bible of course it's used frequently in regard to conveying to us spiritual truth.

And here just as in the natural world where you don't have the light you're in danger of wandering away or walking away from the safe path to follow.

So it is in the spiritual realm as well and Jesus is pointing this out to us when he says whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

And today we're going to look at the two declarations here and in the following chapter at verses 5 to 7 of chapter 9 where Jesus uses the illustration of light to speak about himself and to speak about himself in relation to our needs as human beings.

[ 2 : 18 ] The two declarations recorded for us in these two passages. I'm going to ask you to just follow me through some passages along with that under our second point which is the three responses required of us.

Here in verse 12 the response of following Jesus is required for us in relation to the fact that he is our light. And then going back to chapter 3 we'll turn to it when we come to that point.

In chapter 3 verse 21 he speaks about living the life of truth in relation to the light that Jesus himself is. And then finally in chapter 12 he brings us to think about trusting in the light so that we will be sons or children of the light.

In other words being lights ourselves in the way in which God enables us to live as lights in the world. First of all the two declarations that Jesus recorded for us.

And what we'll see in that is that the context is very important in conveying to us something of the truth as to why Jesus said this and why it would be very meaningful in the context in which he spoke.

[ 3 : 34 ] Here we are in chapter 8 verse 12. Again Jesus spoke to them saying I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

Now Jesus was in the temple or in the treasury of the temple a particular part of the temple at this moment. And if you cast your mind back to the previous chapter verses 37 you can see there on the last day the great day of the feast Jesus stood up and cried out if anyone thirst let him come to me and drink.

Now the context there is the last day of the feast. That was the feast of tabernacles which lasted for a week and which was a time of great celebration.

And one of the things the features of the feast of tabernacles in the days of Jesus was that in the temple in this particular part of the temple there were four gigantic candelabras.

just as you would find a gigantic candelabra today but these were huge and they were lit up during this time of the feast and in fact they gave out so much light that we're told the whole of the city was bathed in the light from these gigantic candelabras that were lit during this feast you could not only see them from a huge distance but they cast their light really out into most of the city of Jerusalem once they were lit and you can just imagine in that context with all of that light shining out from these giant candelabras down onto the city of Jerusalem you can just imagine the impact these words of Jesus would have had at least on some when he would stand up and say I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life as they would appreciate these four great lights as themselves representative of God's provision that they were celebrating in the feast of tabernacles so their minds would turn to Jesus and what he was saying and that he was in fact pointing them away from these gigantic lights to the greater light that he himself was I am the light not just of the city of Jerusalem I am the light of the world and of course that ties in was so much of the Old Testament where you find light used in God's description of himself and his relationship to his people as you go through the Old Testament and the whole span of history in the Old Testament back to Exodus for example of course it's there at the very beginning of the Bible isn't it the first thing that really God created in terms of the final order of the universe God said let there be light and there was light you go to Exodus where the people of Israel were in Egypt being badly treated by the Egyptians at that time waiting for the Exodus and the plague of darkness in Exodus chapter 10 and what you find is that the region of of Egypt called Goshen which means light in Hebrew where the Israelites were placed while the whole of the land of Egypt had darkness so deep that you couldn't see somebody or your hand in front of your face the children of Israel had light in all their dwellings God had given them a provision for themselves in the midst of that darkness they had light and you go through the Bible and you think of that you think of the light that the people of Israel had Exodus again chapter 13 verse 22 the pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night that was their that was their the way that they were directed by God they followed the pillar the column of cloud and the column of fire by night and when that moved they moved they followed that was God represented his presence represented there and he they followed when he moved and that pillar or column of cloud you mustn't just think of it as a cloud that's just like you see in the sky just now like whatever kind of cloud it might be dark or whatever this would be a cloud that was brilliantly lit like some sort of light as you see now in led lights or something just imagine a cloud with thousands of led lights behind it shining through it that's the kind of column of light that this would be this column of the cloud as the people followed it it was there for that direction their light was there in God himself in Psalm 27 we sang Psalm 27 there was David coming to thank God and saying the Lord is my light and my salvation [ 8 : 34 ] and Isaiah chapter 9 the prophecies of the Old Testament speak about the coming kingdom of God and the coming of the Savior the people the people the people who dwelt in darkness have seen a great light the light that Jesus himself is so there's a statement I am the light of the world the context remember how meaningful that would be secondly you find the next chapter he treats this blind man and gives him his sight and as you find that in John as a miracle the miracles in John's gospel as you go through it are each of them tied to as an extended teaching by Jesus of which the miracle is itself symbolic or if you like what he says in these great statements like for example I am the resurrection and the life in Matthew in Matthew in in chapter 11 regarding the death of Lazarus well he illustrated that the fact of that in bringing Lazarus back from the dead the miracle and the discourse or the lecture if you like fit together and so it is with what he says about being the light of the world when you see in chapter 9 verses 5 to 7 as long as I am in the world I am the light of the world having said these things he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud and said go and wash in the pool of Siloam which means scent so he went and washed and came back seeing he Jesus is saying I'm the light of the world so that those who are blind spiritually can come to see this was an illustration this man who was blind naturally physically but it was an illustration of what Jesus was doing spiritually he was giving people spiritual sight one of the problems we have as sinners as we all are is that we think we actually see and that we see clearly enough and that we know enough about our lives to manage by ourselves that's the problem with so so many people still in the world isn't it when they reject the gospel I don't need that I've got enough light on my life in my own understanding

I use my reason I've got other philosophies of life approaches to life that I live by and they give me all that I require and I'm perfectly satisfied with the life that I've got and I don't need any of this gospel stuff any of this Christian religion stuff any of this Christianity any of this born again stuff the fact is friends until God opens our eyes they are spiritually shut we are blind that's what the Bible tells us that's what God's diagnosis of our condition is I have come into the world he said and as long as I am in the world I'm the light of the world to give sight to the blind and of course in chapter 9 verse 39 if you cast your eye forward there he said Lord I believe Jesus said for judgment I came into this world that those who do not see may see and those who see may become blind now what did he mean by that well he meant especially the Pharisees who were rejecting him and seeking to get rid of him they were saying we see we're not blind you don't need to tell us how to live we know the truth but what Jesus is saying actually these are the blind people who are not prepared to accept me and what I am and who I am and what I'm saying and so they remain blind they've chosen blindness for themselves but I have come that those who do not see may see those who acknowledge their blindness and come to the light of the world that they will come to see so you see the context in the temple in relation to the two great lights the four great lights rather he comes to say I am the light of the world in relation to the man born blind to whom he gave his sight the light of the world is a very personal thing for that man because he's come to see and of course Jesus the light that created all other lights you'll find it at the beginning of John's own gospel here and you remember how the gospel begins in regard to him as the light he was in the beginning with God all things were made through him 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 then it speaks about John the Baptist he came to bear witness about the light that all men that all might believe through him he was not the light but he came to bear witness about the light you see there is Jesus again spoken of as the light who gives light to others and that great cosmic light that he is the wonderful thing for you and for me today is that it comes to direct relationship with our needs personally so that our darkness and our blindness will come to be changed radically transformed into people who see people who have light instead of groping in the dark that's what it means that he is the light of the world it's not just somewhere out there distant from us it's not something that you need an awful lot of experimentation in order to see it and find it there it is in the gospel I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life so we come to the three responses that are required of us in regard to this light and here's the first one we're required to follow Jesus whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life in other words he's talking here about walking in the path of life because he says there he will have the light of life I remember my father once telling me how during the second world war when he was serving in the royal navy and were docked in London I think it was if I remember rightly because of the blackout there were no lights allowed anywhere when you're walking back to your ship you still weren't allowed to use any lights you had to just make your way in the darkness best you could and he and his companion walking back to the ship just stepped over the key straight down into the water and he was nearly drowned it was his companion in fact and he had passed out and he felt his companion just groping about and touching him and he came back he came to and was rescued but what he said was it was so dark you just could not see where you were going so they stepped over the edge and down into the water and that's how it is for us spiritually too friends we think we see we think we see clearly we think we know all about ourselves we think we don't need any additional light but the one we have by in ourselves by nature but God is saying to us this is in fact how we come to have the light of life whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life it actually consists in life this light that he gives us this light that comes to us from following him from following the light that he is he will have the light of life you know in other words we come to be light ourselves we come to have our lives changed however good we may have been in many respects outwardly and decently and all the rest of it still spiritually we're blind until he gives us the sight until we come to follow Jesus himself there is no other way of having the light of life but following Jesus and that's why you find in other parts that he calls those who follow him he calls them lights Matthew the Sermon on the Mount the Beatitudes you remember there in verse 14 just having gone through the Beatitudes he reaches verse 14 you are the light of the world he's talking to his disciples he's addressing his disciples here he's saying I am the light of the world but when you follow me because you then become lights and yourselves living a Christian life you become light to others you are the light of the world you are the ones in whom they see the light of the world who is Christ and you know we have to take that

positively today every single person in here tonight today who follows Jesus Christ in their life and seeks to follow him in their lifetime they are lights you are lights our tendency perhaps is to say oh yes but I've got so much darkness in my life still and I'm just wondering how clearly my light is shining and all of these things are relevant and all of these questions are relevant but let's not focus so much on the negative side of things you are a light God has made you a light and he's made that light so that it will shine so that you'll give off your light and don't be afraid to give off your light and don't be taken up with the amount of your life that you see is still perhaps in doubt or in darkness or shades of darkness about it let your light shine as what Jesus said to the disciples before men that they may see your good works and glorify your father who is in heaven they shall not walk in darkness but will have the light of life of course there's a challenge in all of that for us as well a challenge for all of us who live and profess to be Christians yes positively that's what Jesus has made us let's celebrate the fact and let's shine out for him but we also have to put to ourselves every day don't we is my life drawing others as light should or is it in some way repelling people it's always a great challenge isn't it just to look at our lives and ask ourselves but then you don't leave it at that you're always going to find something if you look into yourself that will cast you down that will make you despondent that will make you uh really think that there's not much power not much influence in your life anyway the way you see yourself focus on what God is saying focus on what he has made you focus on the fact that is by your good works that people see your light and people see the light of Jesus through that you will have the light of life so walking in the path of life following Jesus that's the first response that's required of us the fact that Jesus is the light of the world whose light reaches us today through the gospel means that as that light falls upon us here today in this congregation it really is constraining us to live for him to walk in the light as he is the light for us second response coming to the light let me just ask you to cast your mind back or the pages back to chapter 3 chapter 3 and verse 21 this is of course the famous incident with Nicodemus where Jesus put to him the fact that not only he but all of us must be born again to enter into the kingdom of God and as the discourse there develops you find that the wonderful famous verses for God so loved the world verse 16 that he gave his only son and he proceeds from that whoever believes in him is not condemned whoever does not believe is condemned already and he says verse 19 this is the judgment the light has come into the world and people love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil for everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed but whoever does what is true comes to the light so that it may be

clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God there are two contrasting groups there as you can see there are those who come to the light and also firstly those who are afraid to come to the light and don't come to the light and he distinguishes them by those who do wickedly and those who do the truth and he doesn't just mean by those who do wicked those who just commit gross crimes those who commit murder or other grievous evils of that kind the Bible means by wicked very often is just living without God living without trusting in Jesus himself and it's characterized or it's shown up by not coming to the light well that's who you and I are by nature isn't it we don't like to have ourselves our inward heart exposed we don't like to have the details of our life exposed by the light when we come under the gospel and the gospel begins to affect our lives and the gospel really reaches into our inmost parts into our soul and it comes through our understanding and then it touches our conscience and our conscience tells us you're guilty before God you need to do something about your life you need to do something in order to have a life that is truly acceptable with God and you need to come to Jesus and you need to follow Jesus in order for that to take place that's what the gospel is saying but in order to reach that the gospel comes the light of God in the gospel comes and touches our heart to the extent that it says you're guilty before God as a sinner

[ 23 : 07 ] God's condemnation rests upon you until you come to be justified and your sin forgiven through coming to Christ and through accepting Christ as your savior and that's how it is with regard to the light and our relationship with the light are you afraid today to come to the light are you afraid to have your life opened up between yourself and God are you hesitant about coming to the light that God is and to the light of his truth or are you one of those who love to come to the light even though it's at times difficult to have our deeds exposed our life exposed to him but you see for a person who really wants to live for God and wants to live a life that's pleasing to God one of the concerns is Lord show me more of myself help me to deal with everything that's still wrong in my life expose my sin for me so that I can actually bring it to you and have your forgiveness and have your

help in dealing with it wherever you find vestiges of the darkness still in your heart as a Christian you want that dealt with and how is it dealt with you bring it to the light you expose it to the light the light that God is the beauty and the brilliance of Jesus himself your holy savior will actually show up the ugliness of sin and will bring his grace to bear upon that whoever does what is true whoever wants truly to be pleasing to God and for God to be to approve of that life and that's not being presumptuous it's not saying to us well we can manufacture our acceptance with God ourselves by just trying our best and living a good life that's not what it says yes we have to do our best but our best is always going to be short because our best without Jesus is still loss it's still condemnation and when we come to God and when we come to him with Christ as it were in our possession we know that we're accepted not because of what we are but because of what he is and who he is one of the wonderful things that we come to experience is listening to a song recently by a Christian songwriter Ellie Holcomb she's got a couple of wonderful albums and in one of these songs she speaks about some days you don't want to get up you don't want to really have your life brought out before God as it is but just remember she says that you are loved you are loved and it's so important for the Christian especially at times of despondency and when you're at a low up and your spiritual energy is down you remember it's not your own energy it's not your own love it's not your own doings that are really important for your acceptance with God you are loved and you are loved by this Jesus by this Christ and so you come to God for the reassurance that you are loved and what a great difference that makes to you to realize that even the likes of me the likes of you and the likes of you and I even at these times of our failures you are loved that's not going to change whenever our circumstances change

God doesn't neither does his love you come before God to seek that approval it's one of the concerns one of the burdens one of the privileges indeed of your life as a Christian that you can come to God and like Psalm 139 which is really in many ways so relevant for us in regard to this very theme where David begins by speaking about the perfection and the detail of God's knowledge of him he sees right into his very thoughts the very words that he's going to speak God knows them already before they're out he knows the motive of why he does things how does he finish that Psalm well before he finishes he comes how precious are your thoughts to me oh God the fact that God is mindful of him and the mindfulness of God remember is filled with light and with life it's precious to him and how does he conclude well he concludes by saying by asking by praying to God search me oh God and know my thoughts and lead me in the way everlasting in other words he's saying to God

Lord I'm so thankful you know everything about me to the last most minute detail so show me myself teach me more about that so that I can have more of your sanctifying grace and be more like you coming to the light whoever comes to the light and this is not just once and that's it the word is coming to the light constantly ongoing in a continuous way this whoever does the truth who wants to do what is true comes to the light comes daily comes constantly to the light so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God or under God thirdly trusting in the light if we turn forward now please to chapter 12 and we'll finish with this point chapter 12 and verses 35 to 36 this is Jesus again speaking about his own death how he needed to go from here to die that he was going to be lifted up from the earth so Jesus said verse 35 of chapter 12

Jesus said to them the light is among you for a little while longer while you have the light lest darkness overtake you walk while you have the light lest darkness overtake you the one who walks in the darkness does not know where he's going while you have the light believe in the light that you may become sons of light or children of light now you see that was relevant to Christ's own context then because this is actually the last public declaration that Jesus made at least in the gospel of John that's the last time he spoke publicly of himself what he had come to do from chapter 13 onwards speaking to the disciples and then he goes out to the cross this is his last sermon if you like in his public ministry before he speaks to the disciples and goes out to die and this is what he's saying while you have the light believe in the light that you may become the sons of light and that's so relevant for us today here and now because we don't have the light for a long time you only have the light for a short time our life even if we live a hundred years it's not all that long considering the importance of our relationship to God and to eternity and if we live for a hundred years some of these years and perhaps even many of these years might be marked by failure by failure of our faculties when we're able unable to take in the things that the light is shining onto us so the appeal of the gospel is while you have the light believe in the light trust in the light that you may become

the sons of light now is the context right now here and now while you have the light trust in this light the light that

God is providing for us through the gospel as 2nd Peter chapter 1 puts it we have the sure word of prophecy which shines as a light in a dark place until the day dawn and the day spring rise in your hearts in other words the final day the final coming of Christ the second coming of Christ the dawn of eternity for us all while you have the light believe in the light don't presume to yourself that you're still going to have light tomorrow if you haven't trusted in the light today here's your opportunity here's Jesus speaking to you here's the light of the world actually saying to you and appealing to you while you have this light believe in the light trust in the light give yourself to this light so that you may become children of light and you see then in verse 36 the final part of it Jesus is actually acting out the final crisis of the judgment when he comes when

[ 32 : 38 ] Jesus had said these things he departed and hid himself from them you see the power and the impact of these words don't you he had just spoken of himself as the light of the world and appeal to them while you have the light believe in it that you may become the sons of light and then he departed and hid himself from them the light was actually leaving them and that ties in with much of his teaching elsewhere for example in Matthew 25 the wise and foolish virgins when the bridegroom came and the bridegroom came that great cry went up the bridegroom is coming so those who didn't have oil along with their lamps the lights their light lamps were going out they made an appeal to the others but there wasn't enough oil of course to spare because you can't dole out grace like that to those who don't have it to those who haven't taken advantage of the opportunities while they had them and they went in to the marriage and the door was shut ties in with what he said elsewhere in Luke 13 where you find

Jesus speaking about that same final time where he was appealing to strive to enter through the narrow door for many I tell you will seek to enter and not be able when once the master of the house has risen and shut the door and you begin to stand outside and to knock the door saying Lord open to us he will answer you I do not know where you came from then he will be you will begin to say but we ate and we drank in your presence and you taught in our streets but he will say I tell you I do not know where you come from depart from me all you workers of evil today God is holding that door open for you and for me through the gospel the door into eternal life he's holding it open himself it's still there so that while you have the light you may believe in the light and become children of light but it's that same God who's now holding the door open for you who's going to slam it shut and it doesn't matter how hard you or I may knock once God has closed that door it's closed for good it's closed for good not just when he comes on the day of judgment but if you haven't come to believe in the light and you die tonight without Jesus that door is shut it'll never be open again this is your opportunity believe in the light while you have the light that you may become the sons of light so the three responses following the light coming to the light trusting in the light and coming to know

Jesus as the light of the world that we may become the children of light for him let's pray Lord God we thank you for the light that shines into our lives the light that you shine upon us through the gospel the light that emanates from yourself we bless you today for that opportunity we have while the light is still with us to trust in the light give us grace we pray to place our confidence in you to give ourselves wholly to that light so that we may walk not in darkness but have the light of life so receive our worship again we pray and pardon our sins for Jesus sake amen the final psalm at this time is psalm 36 psalm 36 on page 44 and singing verses 5 to 9 the tune is Huddersfield your steadfast love is great O Lord it reaches heaven high your faithfulness is wonderful extending to the sky and verse 9 which speaks about him being the source of life in your light we see light so to the tune Huddersfield on page 44 verses 5 to 9 to God's praise verse 5 to 10 the tune is psalm 36 on extending to the sky your righteousness is heavy great like mountains high on sea your justice is like ocean death oh man and peace to king how precious is your hope what confidence it brings oh my God and love find shelter in the shadow of your wings your wings it feeds within your hearts and dream from streams of your delight your heart and dream from streams of your delight for with you is the source of life in your heart and dream from streams of your delight for with you is the source of your delight your life and your life we see light and your life we see light

I'll go to the side door after the benediction I'll do the main door this evening let's stand for the benediction now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you now and always amen amen amen amen amen all along

oh