

Jesus - The Light of the World

John 8:12

Beginner's Church Dismissal – If you are 3 or 4 years old, and your parents would like you to go to Beginner's Church, you are welcome to head out of the auditorium near the Entrance 2 doors, where you will have a teaching time for the rest of the service.

Just a month and a half ago, I begin a series that I thought, by the time I would finish, would take us all into old age. But look, I am back for Part 2 already, and you all are looking still as young and fresh as ever.

We are going to look, whenever we have the chance to do so together, at how Jesus describes himself. He tells us who he is, and what he is like. He reveals his character to us. In the book of John, the author records seven of these stories – descriptions of Jesus *by Jesus*. And, in these descriptions, we find truth – not only about Jesus, but also for about how we are to live. Last time, Jesus told us in John 6 he was the bread of life – that he is the God who satisfies us. A couple chapters later, in John 8, we find his next description.

Let's set the scene: it's late September or maybe the beginning of October. There's a weeklong Jewish holiday going on in Jerusalem – *The Feast of Tabernacles*. This holiday was marking a central historical moment for the Israelites. This holiday feast was to remember God leading the people of Israel on their exodus from slavery in Egypt to freedom in their own land. But first they had to travel through wilderness, where in order to survive they had to depend on God – and God miraculously delivered. That meant this holiday was a celebration. If we had anything to compare it to – it might be a little like July 4. The book of John takes us into this holiday, where we find Jesus teaching in the temple. During the Feast of Tabernacles, each night during the feast, huge candelabra (giant lamps) would be lit, illuminating the temple at night. *It might have looked something like this picture*. There, in that temple area, the people would sing and worship God. They would remember that God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night – illuminating the way. God's light led them to where they were supposed to go. They were totally dependent on Him to lead them to their destination.

Today, we are used to buildings and streets being illuminated at night, but back then, a building illuminated at night – that was a spectacle.

It was in this setting that Jesus described himself in John 8:12. Turn in your Bibles to John 8. If you don't have a Bible, you might find one underneath a seat near you. *Read verse 12.*

With the temple illuminated every night with all sorts of lights, Jesus says *He is the Light* – not a light, *the* light.

What does it mean that Jesus is the light of the world? How can this make sense for us?

Well, one, Jesus describing himself this way is a bold statement. I mean, really, the light of the world? Who can say something like that, and it actually be true? Well, God. God could say that.

Who can say they are the light of the world? Only God can.

This seems like a pretty big thing to understand then. What does the light of the world mean for us?

This is why I think we ought to pay attention to this statement from Jesus. Jesus is offering life-giving light, and without this, we are destined to walk in darkness. I don't want my life to be characterized as walking in darkness. I would imagine that many of you would want to say the same thing. I want my life to be lived truthfully, joyfully, and godly. If this is what the light of Jesus offers, then I want that offer.

If we want to understand what this means, we have to get the big picture. Right now, we are zooming in to just a portion of John 8, but if we were reading the book of John in a sitting, then when our minds would read this passage, we would remember the very beginning of the book – because John brings up this idea of Jesus being the light right at the start.

So let's go back to the beginning of chapter 1. *Read John 1:1-5*. These verses are just packed with truths about God, but we only are going to highlight a couple. You see in verse 1 and following this discussion of "the Word." Who is the Word? Well, verse 14 gives us the answer. *Read vs. 14*. You see who that might be? We are talking about Jesus. The Word in verse 1 is Jesus. So we could go back to beginning of this chapter and fill it in with Jesus. *Read John 1:1-3 again*. These verses as a whole take us all the way back to the book of Genesis as Jesus is creating this universe and life. Sometimes, I don't think of Jesus as being there during creation – but Jesus, the Son of God was there. As we see in verse 4, it says "in him was life"; we find life in Jesus Christ. And life

in Jesus is more than just this physical life – John is saying life with Jesus is eternal.

Life comes from Jesus Christ. The first four verses John is talking about the very beginning with Jesus and creation. Now, notice this. In verse 5, suddenly we are not talking about the distant past of creation. We are in the present time. You see those present tense verbs? The Bible was written a long time ago - so when is this present tense? It's when the author John, an old man, was writing about the earthly life of Jesus that he witnessed decades before. And look what he says: the "light is shining" – it's shining right now – and darkness has not beaten the light. You could say it like this too: *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.* Why the sudden change? John is giving away the ending of his book in just the first few verses. This light is going to win. And if I had to guess, he's happy to give away the ending – because as you read the book of John, you find out that he has really good news to share. You find out that this light, Jesus, is coming to rescue all those that follow after him. Jesus is coming to save. Jesus is coming to win. Darkness doesn't have a chance. That makes me really want to know how to be in the light.

So remembering that Jesus is the Word, he's the truth, and he's the light, let's go back to John 8.

When I first was studying this passage, I was imagining Jesus' light like the sun – illuminating all the earth. Light everywhere. But that's not what Jesus is saying in this passage. Look at verse 12 – "whoever follows me will have the light." You get the light when you follow. Jesus' light is moving. The light isn't everywhere. The light is there when you *follow* Jesus. Jesus is encouraging those that are listening to stay close to him.

Jesus is our salvation. Jesus as our light is our guide to truth. Following Jesus and his Word provides us with everything we need to have eternal life and a life successfully following him. There is no other pathway – what Jesus says, what the Word says, that is our light.

But why walk in the light? Why can't I go and do what I want to? Why can't I walk the way I please?

Transition: To not walk in the light means you are walking in darkness. To think that you can live apart from the truth of Jesus is not a good place to be.

When we see Jesus as the light of the world, it destroys the appeal of the darkness. The appeal of the darkness is strong, but Jesus is better.

When you see Jesus talking about darkness in the Bible, know that he is talking about evil and sin – being away from God. If the light is life and truth, then the darkness is sin and being away from God. So let's reveal the darkness of sin for what it is. When we live in the darkness, *darkness blinds us* from how wonderful and amazing Jesus is. When we can't see truth, sin offers us lies to believe. The enemy often packages lies in eye-catching ways.

1) There's the lie that *you should follow your feelings* over the truth of God's Word. I need to stay true to myself – and my heart tells me that this what I need to do. What's better than listening to how I feel? How often do I listen to me and not God?

2) There's the lie that *you're too damaged* from sin to do any good for God. You've lost. You should just give up because God really can't use you anymore.

3) There's the lie that if you can *just have this one thing*, this one relationship, this amount of money, this one career – then you will find lasting happiness.

4) There's the lie that *you are in control*. You can take the place of God and make your own path. I can make it without God. I mean, come on, haven't you lived some of your days without really even thinking about God? You're still here. You're okay. You're in control. It's a lie.

When we believe these lies that the darkness offers, we begin to forget just how wonderful Jesus is. We lose the motivation and the heart desire to live our life honoring him. Living in the darkness takes that away from us.

The darkness also is entangling. As you read your Bible, you will find that the Bible describes sin as something that clings to you, catches you, ensnares you, and traps you. Sin is entangling. It brings to mind the picture of an addict who is trapped in his or her own habit. They can't find a way out, or maybe they don't want to find a way out. They want their desires fulfilled. Living away from God confuses us on what is good and true. It causes us not to find God's way.

The darkness doesn't deliver on its promises. Sin often *initially* looks appealing. Doesn't sin *initially* appear to be better than God's way? Our minds try to rationalize sin into making sense. You know those situations that come up where you are about to be viewed by others pretty poorly, so you start to "adjust" the truth a little to paint a better picture of yourself? Or when you think no one will know if I cheat on my taxes – because, hey, I'll use the money better the government would. Or responding with an angry word seems better than

responding in kindness – because that person had it coming to them. Or having an affair may seem better than staying true to your spouse because you don't love him anymore and you deserve better. Those reasons in your mind won't deliver what you hope. You can live and splurge into all sorts of temptations away from God, and it will not bring you satisfaction.

Darkness brings us death. We can go all the way back to the very beginnings of creation when God said to Adam, Eat of all the trees of the garden, but don't eat from this one tree. You will die if you eat from this tree." To disobey God means that we walk away from him. And when we walk away from him, we find emptiness. We don't find joy. And we ultimately find death. *James 1:15 says that when sin is fully grown, it brings death.* It's the opposite of what God offers – with him there is life; away from him, there is death.

My hope is that when you see that the darkness lies to you, entangles you, doesn't deliver on its promises, and brings death – you would realize that it can offer no appeal to the follower of Jesus. Do you want to know how to correctly view the darkness of sin? Listen to the wisdom of Proverbs:

Proverbs 8:13 - The fear of the LORD is hatred of evil.

By God's grace, slay your sin and find Jesus better. Living in the light of Jesus is God's gracious gift to us.

When we see Jesus as the light of the world, it makes Jesus beautiful.

Illustration: Let me take you back a few years to when I first met my future wife. It took me approximately one date with Melissa to be convinced that I should marry her. It was our first date, and I knew. She was just that amazing. I remember telling my sisters that I found the girl of my dreams. They politely told me that I probably didn't have a chance with her. She was way too cool for me.

Doing what most all brothers do when they hear advice from their sisters, I ignored it. But they were right – she was too awesome for me. However, I was undeterred - although it did take Melissa a lot more dates to figure out if she should marry me than it did for me. But after much pursuing of Melissa and pleading with my future in-laws to allow me to marry their daughter, we got engaged.

And I will always remember Melissa walking down the aisle on our wedding day. It was beautiful. She was beautiful. And despite having little knowledge of

how to be a good husband, I was thoroughly convinced that I would do everything I could to take care of her and provide for her. She was completely worth leading and serving.

Do you see Jesus as beautiful? What I mean is this – do you see Jesus as so magnificent that there couldn't possibly be another way to live your life?

Following the light of Jesus is no easy task, but walking in the light with Jesus is beautiful.

As I started thinking about how beautiful Jesus was, more and more reasons why he is beautiful kept leaping into my mind. In the light of Jesus, you will find **mercy** when you sin against God; you will find God's repeated, yet undeserved **grace** rain down on you; you will find his **goodness** in happy times and sad times; you will discover his sure **hope** of waiting to meet him one day; you will find his **peace** when trouble is at your doorstep; you will your **purpose** in life through loving him and serving him; you will find **satisfaction** and **contentment** in God's sure promises; you will find **joy** and **delight** in God's good word and in worshiping him; you will find **guidance** in his wisdom; you find your **identity** in what Jesus thinks of you; you will find your **worth** in a God who thinks and cares for his children; you will find a guaranteed **future** with Jesus; and you will find **salvation** in the finished work of Jesus.

That is the beauty of Jesus. Please realize living in the light of the truth of Jesus is worth it.

And realize something more – Jesus is pursuing you. The light that Jesus offers – he wants you to have it. He is pleading for you to be repenting of your sins and believing that Jesus is enough to save me.

This light of Jesus is worth suffering for his sake. It is worth resisting the darkness when it comes at with its temptations. It is worth the daily struggle of discipling your children in the ways of God. It is worth showing love and kindness to the neighbor who doesn't reciprocate that love and kindness. It is worth giving your time and money to serve the cause of Jesus.

Anyone can come to the light of Jesus. If your sins are many, and if you have spent much time in the darkness of sin, (and I include myself in that club) remember Jesus' words again, "I am the light of the world. *Whoever* follows me will have the light of life." And the beauty of following Jesus means that you will not walk in darkness. They are mutually exclusive. If you are truly following what Jesus says, you are not in the darkness.

Graduating Teens – Can I offer you some advice on how to stay in the light of Jesus? Tim mentioned our Senior Night coming up this week – where we get to celebrate the faithfulness of God in these senior’s lives and their families. Some of you are about to leap off into college and jobs and summer time prep for the next stage in your life – it’s a big step, right? This summer, resist the temptation to put off Jesus until all of that busyness settles down – until you get less busy. If you put off Jesus (put off walking in the light), you will forget how wonderful and amazing Jesus is. Would your education be worth it if you got a degree but forgot Jesus in the process? And then when you arrive at your new station in life – whether it’s a new school or a full-time job, let me encourage you to go full-throttle in finding a church and friends that celebrate and worship and follow Jesus. Make time to study his word and seek him in prayer. That is staying in the light of Jesus. Be a “light-chasing” believer. By God’s grace, do the hard work of following Jesus.

Adults - Some are looking for a formula to help them become more spiritual and more like Christ. Do you know what? There are no shortcuts in the believer’s life. Through the Holy Spirit’s power, we have to study our Bible and meditate on it, pray to God, allow the Holy Spirit to guide us, worship Him, share the gospel with others, fellowship with other believers, and separate from sin. If we want to be in the light of Jesus, then it is a day by day command to go walk in the light. It’s in the lifelong journey of knowing God, that we follow him.

Parents of teens and children – Let me encourage you to make Jesus beautiful in your home. Have many moments in your day when you point out just how wonderful Jesus is. Next time you are on a walk or outside, stop and point out the huge trees or the flowers that will soon be blossoming, and tell your children – “Our Jesus made that! It’s that beautiful?” Next time a thunderstorm rolls in be in awe of the God that is in charge of the peals of thunder and the flashes of lightning. When you are driving down the road on summer vacation, and you see something new, don’t miss the opportunities to marvel at the creativity of God together. Don’t underestimate what all those little moments talking about Jesus will do. As you point your children towards the light of Jesus, let there be no doubt in their mind that mom and dad truly find Jesus beautiful and amazing.

And that is not just a parent thing, FBC. Each of us should be making Jesus beautiful to those around us.

If Jesus is the light of the world, then that means that he is *your* light. This is good news.

I John 1:6-7 - If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

That’s God’s Word for us today. I will pray, and as I do, those that serving communion can come forward.