

The Light Has Come John 8:12

As we come to this verse this evening, it is an amazing verse especially after coming after the Feast of Tabernacles. And we will talk something of the significance of that in a moment. Jesus announces here that he is the light of the world. And we recognize when light is needed, and light is needed in darkness. And as we look at our world and our society, we realize that there is darkness all around us. The world is shrouded in darkness, but the things we have to ask ourselves is what do we mean by darkness?

And let me name a three ways we use the term darkness. One is we mean by darkness that there is ignorance or a lack of knowledge. We say that about people all the time. "They are in the dark," means that they do not know what is going on. Listen to Psalm 82:5, "**They have neither knowledge nor understanding, they walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.**" We realize there is much that we can know about God from looking at the natural world or creation around us, but we cannot know God personally. We cannot know God savifically. We need light or knowledge for that, and we have that with the coming of Christ. We can know something about the depth of our sin, and the penalty but also the glory of his compassion and grace because he has made himself known through Jesus Christ. Without his coming as the light of the world we would be lost and without knowledge, ignorant of the one true God. Realize there is enough revelation in the world around us to hold us accountable but certainly not enough to save us.

But not only that, when we talk about living in a dark world we mean that there is a moral component - the world is evil and wicked - sinners love sin and darkness rather than the light of Jesus Christ. You can see that earlier in this gospel in chapter three when John talks about why sinful man rejected the light of Christ in verse 19, "**And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.**" What did they love? Darkness, their own sin. There is evidence of that love affair with darkness all around us. People call good evil and evil good. They live and function in the realm of darkness.

We also see, thirdly, that darkness describes God's wrath that is upon the world because of sin. His judgment is called a judgment of darkness. Listen to Zech. 1:15, "**A day of wrath is that day, a day of distress and anguish, a day of ruin and devastation, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness.**" Listen also to Matt. 22:13, these are the words of Jesus, "**Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'**" There is a horrible and eternal punishment that is coming and it is described as utter darkness.

So when you look at the teachings of what darkness truly is according to the Word of God - that it is ignorance, moral evil, and the wrath of God, you start to realize that we need light, and none other than the specific Light of Jesus Christ. To the world ignorant of God, lost and shackled in sin and evil, and under the wrath of God, we read in chapter 1:4-5, "**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.**" He is that light that we

need, and recognizing who Jesus is causes us to not only desire him but also follow Him. And that is what I want us to look at tonight. I want us to see who Jesus is and what the outcome should be of recognizing his light upon our lives, because once illumined our lives can never be the same again.

1. We need to recognize who Jesus is. V. 12a.

So often when we look at who Jesus is, people try to concoct a Jesus after their own liking, as if that is an option. Jesus is a real person, not someone you make up. You cannot make Jesus after your own desires, but the best way to know who Jesus is - is by listening to him.

And look how verse 12 begins, **“Jesus spoke to them, saying, “I am the light of the world.”** And we realize that this is one of seven great “I am” statements in the gospel of John. We have already had Jesus say, “I am the bread of life,” in Jn. 6:35. Then in 10:9, “I am the door,” in 10:11, “I am the good shepherd,” in 11:25, “I am the resurrection and the life.” In 14:6, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life,” and in 15:5, “I am the vine.” And through all of these statements Jesus is indicating who he is. And we realize the core of those statements is the phrase “I AM,” and in Greek “ego eimi,” and it is a statement of the great name of God that God gave to Moses at the burning bush. God is the self-existing God who needs nothing and no one and is eternal. He is not I was or will be but I am. It speaks again of eternity. Only God can say at all times in all situations I Am. And this is who Jesus is identifying himself as.

And notice what he joins this statement to, because he is stating something about himself when he says, “I am the light.” Not I am a light but the light. The light that everyone needs to overcome the darkness and come to God. And the timeline of this statement is amazing because this statement by Jesus made in the Temple comes right after the Feast of Tabernacles. And we already talked about the ritual of water drawing and how that pointed to Jesus in the previous chapter. If anyone comes to Christ and believes on him they will never thirst again. There was another ritual and that is where they lit four large candelabras, each with four golden bowls filled with oil, and it was lit in the Temple. And the light was so massive that it was said to have illuminated all of Jerusalem. They were lit on the first day of the festival but could have been burning through the whole festival.

And what it stood for was the presence of God with the nation. Think of what The Feast of Tabernacles was. It remembered God’s presence with the Israelites in the wilderness wanderings. And part and parcel of his presence is how he led them. He led them through a pillar of smoke through the day and a pillar of fire at night. When the pillar stopped the people stopped and encamped there. Listen to Exodus 13:21-22, **“And the LORD went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night. The pillar of cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night did not depart from before the people.”** Notice it was the Lord that went before them. He is with the nation. So as you look at the Feast, it remember that God was with them, and that they had to always be aware of his presence. His official presence was here in the Temple.

But in this stunning scene just after the festival Jesus enters the Temple and the candelabras have long gone out, and Jesus announces these words - “I am the light of

the world.” I am God. I am the hope for all. This is who I am you. You need to recognize me and worship me. I am the Light. I am God with you! I am the One who led you. I am the one who filled the Holy of Holies. I am the one you need to follow. And it is an incredible statement because Jesus is either God or he is the greatest deceiver that has ever lived. If he is not God in human flesh, then he is the epitome of darkness, and there is no middle ground when it comes to Jesus. This is who he says he is.

Now why is it so important that we recognize who Jesus is? And the answer should be obvious. Let me give two reasons. One is that it is Jesus alone that brings salvation. He is the light. He is not one option among many. He will say in another “IAM” statement in John 14:6, **“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’”** It is he alone that has entered this sin cursed world, where there is ignorance and he is the light of wisdom. He is God and able to show us God. But it is through him that he is able to overcome the wickedness and darkness in us in order to give us the forgiveness that is necessary to come into God’s presence. In the midst of the darkness of death and sorrow there is life and joy in Christ alone.

The other reason why this is important is unlike the lights that went out in the Temple, Jesus is announcing that he is the eternal light that will never go out. When he combines the name “I AM” with “the light,” it speaks of who he always was, is and will be. He is none other than the self-existent and eternal light where life is found and therefore able to give eternal life. And he is not just light to the Jews but to the world - to any and all that will come to him. He is our light. He is the God who is over all. But let me ask you: when you look at Jesus, think of Jesus - what comes to mind? Do you find God in him? Is he your Light and only light - your only hope? Since he is not a light but the light, there is nowhere else that you can come to God and find God other than looking to Christ. Have you come to him? Are you trusting in him tonight?

2. We need to see the outcome of seeing Jesus as the Light. V.12b.

There is only one outcome to recognizing that Jesus is the Light and that is following the Light. If you do not follow the light then you walk in darkness and you do not have the light of Christ. In fact John says in 1John 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.”** One of the signs that we have believed on the light is that we do the thing that any should do and that is follow the light. We follow Jesus Christ and what he has said. There are scores of so-called believers who have decided to walk in some of the ways of God and not in others. They are the ultimate authority in their lives. They are the deceiving guide or light in their lives and not God - not Jesus Christ. They are a false light which is not a light but actually darkness.

And as we carry on with the illustration that Jesus used of God leading the Israelites when the pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night, there were no sign indicators where they were, or take this route along the river until you see another sign that says - Promised land. They had to completely rely on God - where to go, when to rise up and when to rest. All of life was to be lived in total reliance of him and the light

that he sheds on our path. So when Jesus announces that he is the light of the world he is announcing that he is the one that needs to be trusted and followed in this dark world. He is the light and the only light. It is an easy message.

So look at what he says here in the second half of this verse, **“Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** Now here is the question: what does Jesus mean by follow? It means to simply trust him and be his disciple. The word was used to describe a soldier that would follow his commander into battle, or a servant that would wait on his master. It was also used of someone who committed or placed themselves under the legal aspects of the law - in other words they obeyed those laws and they followed them. And this is what it means to follow Christ - we follow him and not ourselves. He is our light and he is the one who guides us through this life.

Now how do we follow him? We follow him through his word. Psalm 119:105 says, **“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”** We cannot understand how important was a light when they did not have street lights and other modes of illumination that we enjoy today. This is a dark world and God has given us the Light of Jesus Christ, and we have been given the light of his word to follow Him. Listen to the command and promise of Proverbs 3:5-6, **“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”** We are to trust in him and not what we think is best or what we think is right. Let me share what a couple of commentators say. First is William Hendrickson, **“To follow the light, Christ, means to trust and obey him. It means to believe in him and out of gratitude to keep his commandments. Man must follow where the light leads: he is not permitted to map out his own course through the desert of this life.”** And J.C Ryle writes, **“To follow Christ is to commit ourselves wholly and entirely to Him as our only leader and Saviour, and to submit ourselves to Him in every matter both of doctrine and practice.”** It is amazing how many individuals give lip service to this command to follow his light but never do, but live as if they are trusting the light of Christ. You here so many say, “well, I think that this is best, or I know what the Scriptures say, but.” Don’t lean on your own understanding - trust in Christ - follow him.

This is not a light statement here, especially in light that the religious leaders want his death, and the people already know that. He says he is the light and to come follow him might mean your death. And the call here is so radical that we today have tried to soften the edges and make it easier and more appealing to follow Christ. But the amazing thing about Jesus is he never softens the edges, and he turns away those who just want to believe on him half-heartedly. We saw that in chapter six when he taught the need to trust in him - he is the bread of life, and many of the pseudo disciples left him because it was too hard of a teaching - just too radical. Or think how he turned away individuals in Matt. 8:19-22 that really were not committed to believing and following him, **“And a scribe came up and said to him, ‘Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.’ Another of the disciples said to him, ‘Lord, let me first go and bury my father.’ And Jesus said to him, ‘Follow me, and leave the dead to bury their own dead.’”** There are always

excuses for why one cannot follow Jesus. There are always things that I want first or do not want to give up. That is not trust or belief or following Jesus.

And if you think that is radical, listen to the Luke 9:23, **“And he said to all, ‘If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.’**” Notice this is not a one time act but daily taking up our cross and dying to self and self-desires and living lives for Christ. Listen to what James Boice writes about that, **“The path that Jesus walked is the path to crucifixion. It leads to glory, but before that it leads to the cross. Such a path can be walked only by the one who has died to self and who has deliberately taken up the cross of Christ to follow Him.”**

Now let me ask you: Jesus who is God in human flesh, the light of world calls you to follow him - does that seem to radical to you? Or maybe a better question is: why would I ever want to live that life of discipleship to him? And the answer is right here in our verse, **“Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness.”** Who would ever want to walk in darkness? And I do not think that we think long and hard of what Jesus offers here. He offers escape from the guilt and shame and penalty of our own personal darkness - our own sin and the penalty that goes along with it. He promises us as we follow him we will not be led by the darkness that has been the driving force all of our lives. Eliphaz’s words to Job although misplaced are absolutely correct when he says in Job 5:14, **“They meet with darkness in the daytime and grope at noonday as in the night.”** You can see this with the world view that individuals have and how they walk in it, in deceiving others they always have a reason, or in their hatred or in their expressions of sex and sexuality, they are in darkness and move and function even though it is noonday. Who would ever want to live, think or act like that? And remember the radical command for those who follow to take up their cross daily and follow Christ, well in the next verse Jesus gives a promise, Luke 9:24, **“For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will save it.”** Eternal life is found in the light of Christ. It is found in him.

So let me ask a few questions today: are you living and walking in darkness? And it is easy to think that this is a question that is just being asked to the non Christian, but it is amazing how many professing believers walk in darkness. They have the same hopes, dreams, aspirations, and materialism of their neighbours that happen to be around them. And they could honestly admit they have never really followed Christ in the sense of taking up their cross - dying to self and living for him. When the cost is too great they just bail. And maybe you are a Christian young person. Have you heard the call of Christ? Or is it just about being accepted by your peers, and are you drawn into the latest videos and sensuality? If you are this only show that not only are you walking in darkness but you are still in the darkness.

Maybe you are an adult. What are you focussed on weekly? Besides the activities of Sunday how much focus does Jesus have in your life? How is he motivating you daily in the decisions that you make? I think so many who claim Christ are taken up with materialism or sensuality or reputation. It is in Christ where light and life are found. Stop groping in the darkness. Believe in him and come follow him.