

I am the Light of the World

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[0 : 00] Amen. Pleased to have a seat. And it's great to see you this morning. How great was that to hear from the young folks about what they've been learning over the last few weeks? Isn't it incredible that this God who we come to today really is the light of the world?

He really is the one who transforms lives. And we will see that this morning as we look at who Jesus is claiming to be. He is the light of the world. So John chapter 8 in front of you. So crucial that we have God's word open in front of us as we seek to learn.

Not from me, not from any of us, but from him. And let's pray as we come to God's word together now. Father God, the psalmist would talk about how your word is a lamp for our feet.

And it's a light for our path. And it gives understanding. And so Father, our prayer this morning is that you would speak to us. And that you would mold us.

And that you would transform us by your spirit as we look at this word together now. Thank you that it's living and active. And so Father, we know that you hear us wonderfully. Because we pray in Jesus' precious name.

[1 : 09] Amen. Well, there was a big purchase made in the Shanksville household last winter. As they say in Scotland, with the night's fair drawing in. At the request of our three-year-old, we purchased a nightlight for her room.

Now, hands up here if you had a nightlight when you were young. Okay? We're all friends here. It's a room in the air. Quite a few of us had nightlights. So three-year-old, she wants a nightlight. So we go straight on to Amazon. And we find out that there are literally hundreds of different nightlights that you can choose from. And so we browsed for a while. And eventually we settled on an owl.

And here is Owly. How the girls come up with that name, I'll never know. But here's Owly. And here he is doing his thing. And here he is shining his light into the darkness.

And I guess I've been thinking a lot about Owly this week, as I've spent time in John chapter 8. Because this chapter is all about light and darkness.

[2 : 12] In fact, the book of John is really all about light and darkness. Now we started, if you were here last week, this little series in John's Gospel, looking at these I am sayings of Jesus.

These sayings that he makes about himself, through which rather he reveals his true identity to the world. And we saw last week that Jesus said, I am the bread of life.

So he is the one who is able to eternally satisfy our restless souls, because only he can give eternal life.

And we thought about how that claim was humongous in its implications. It's a huge claim to make. No other religious leader, no other leader on the planet makes a claim like that one. Huge claim.

And today we'll see Jesus make another massive claim about who he is. And if you get your Bibles there, you'll see it in verse 12. Chapter 8, Jesus declares, I am the light of the world.

[3 : 11] Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. A claim that is huge in terms of its meaning, and a claim that's enormous in terms of its reach.

Jesus says, I am. Remember we thought about that last week. He's taking the sacred name of God, talking about himself. The name that God had chosen to reveal himself to his people.

This is what Jesus is using for himself. I am the light of the world. And it's a claim when we take it and we think about it and we examine the contours of it, has massive implications for our lives here today.

And if we're to see the enormity of what Jesus is saying about himself, what we need to grasp is that Jesus doesn't make this claim at a random time and in a random place.

Okay? He's not like we would do. He's not sitting on his own on Facebook and he's typing in that little box that says, what's on your mind today? And he's thinking, hmm, I am the light of the world post-send.

[4 : 19] Okay? He's not doing that. He's doing this where and when, and he's doing it significantly. Okay? Once we understand this, we'll understand why this claim was so explosive.

Now, if you've got your Bibles there, follow with me and let's see together what's going on here. Have a look at verse 2 of chapter 7. It's the time, this is what John tells us, it's the time of the Feast of Tabernacles.

This is where we are in the calendar. This is one of the great Jewish festivals that takes place every year in Jerusalem. And during the festival, what the people used to do is to light four enormous lights in the temple area.

And the reason that they did that, these humongous lights, is because of what the Feast of Tabernacles was all about. It was commemorating the 40 years that Israel had spent wandering in the wilderness.

And it was to celebrate the fact that during that time in the wilderness, God had graciously and miraculously and wonderfully guided his people and led them all the way to the land that he had promised them.

[5 : 34] And how did he do it? By light. More specifically, he did it by a pillar of fire at night and he did it by a lighted cloud during the day.

And this is how God led his people. So to celebrate that and to help the people remember what God had done, God's goodness and faithfulness, they lit these four lights and they let them burn all night.

And what a party it was. Went on all night. Now if you do a bit of reading around on this one, historians will describe this scene with these four huge lights blazing away, that it was like a spectacular glowing diamond in the night sky.

Remember Jerusalem City on a hill? Cannot be hidden. You could see this from miles away. And it was so bright in fact that not only did it light up the temple, but it lit up the whole surrounding region or the houses rather just round about.

Now verse 10, Jesus has gone to the feast. And verse 14, he's in the temple teaching.

[6 : 38] In verse 37, John tells us that it was the last and the greatest day of this feast. You see, this festival wasn't just one that looked back.

It was one that looked forward. Prophet Isaiah had talked about how God would one day visit his people once more gloriously and he would act to save them and he would lead them by light.

And his Messiah, the one through whom God would do that, wouldn't just be a light to Israel. He would be a light to the whole world. He would be a light to the nations. So what would happen on the last day of this festival is that only one of these great lights would be lit.

And it reminded the people that they are still waiting on God's promised Messiah to come. Now with that backdrop, it's this moment in the most public place in the temple, in the Old Testament charged night air that Jesus chooses to declare to his listeners, I am the light of the world.

I am everything that this festival is all about. I am God come to rescue you. I am the one who has come to save you and lead you to heaven.

[8 : 03] I am the one who has come to give you life. And I am the light that you need to not admire, not look on at a distance. I am the light that you need to follow.

Now it's so important that we see. Do you see it? Jesus is claiming to be the light of not a world. He's not claiming to be a light in the world. He's claiming to be the light of the world.

And so Jesus says, follow me. Friends, here's the question I've got for you this morning. Who are you following? Who are you following?

Because we're all following somebody in life. A good friend of mine, he runs a wooden sunglasses company down in London. I remember chatting to him recently about how he went about getting his brand out there.

And he told me that the key to it, he said, is to get the right people to be seen wearing your sunglasses. And they hit the jackpot recently because Meghan Markle was pictured wearing their sunglasses.

[9 : 10] And he told me that the day after she was pictured wearing those sunglasses, that they could not keep up with the demand from the public for those sunglasses. The orders were just flying

in. And the reason was that because so many people follow Meghan Markle.

So many people around this planet follow her. Whether it's on social media, whether it's in the papers, whether it's online, so many people follow Meghan Markle. They love her, they watch her, they listen to her, and they want to be her.

Friends, all of us are following someone in life. We've all got a grid through which we understand and through which we interpret the world. We've all got desires. We've all got goals and beliefs that drive the things that we do.

We're all looking for someone. We're all looking for something to give us understanding in this world that we live in. And I'm reminded of this at this time of year in Edinburgh as I walk around town.

Because what do you see as you walk up the Royal Mile? You see people queuing to have their palms read. You see people offering to be able to tell your fortune. You see people out walking on ghost tours as if the dead have got the answers to our understanding and guidance problems in life.

[10:28] Friends, we're all following somebody. The question is, who are we following? Because into our lost world and into our hearts of darkness, Jesus makes an exclusive claim.

He makes an absolute claim to be the only voice out there in our world that's worth listening to and basing our lives upon. Why? Because he is God. And Jesus says, follow me.

And that was rather an explosive claim then. And it's just as an explosive claim today.

Now as we journey through these verses, I want us to see two things about Jesus' claim.

Particularly as we look at the reactions to Jesus' claim. Here's the first one. Firstly, this is a claim that confronts.

Because the enormity of what Jesus is saying about himself, do you see, is not lost on the Pharisees. They're not sitting there thinking, I wonder what he's on about. Because they know exactly what he's on about.

[11:32] They're offended by him firstly because of what Jesus says about him. Look at verse 13 of chapter 8. They challenged him. His testimony, what he's saying about himself, who he's claiming to be.

They think it's nonsense. Because Jesus is claiming, verse 19, to be what? One with the Father. Do you see it? One with the Father.

And he claims to be one who has been sent from heaven. And he claims to be one who will return to heaven. And what's more, he's saying that he's the light from heaven.

Who has come to reveal the Father. And to give true understanding to the world. And they need to listen and to follow him. And they don't want to hear it.

They're offended by what Jesus says about him. And they are offended by what Jesus says about them. Because when it comes to understanding God. When it comes to claiming to know God.

[12:34] These Pharisees think they are top of the class. I mean if there was anyone in their day who could say, I know God. Then all the world is pointing at these people thinking it's them.

But Jesus says, no you don't. Because, verse 19. If you really knew God. You would listen to me. Because I am the one that makes God known. In the dark world. I make him known. I am one with him. He stands with me.

We're not an either/or deal. And the fact that you don't know me. And the fact that you won't listen to me. God in the flesh shows that you don't know God. They're piling up.

Do you see it? Verse 23. You are of this world. You are in the darkness. And because you will not listen to me. You will die in your sins.

[13:36] Ouch. You spend enough time with Jesus. And you come to see that he is never interested in winning popularity contests. He's not running for election.

He's not running for president. He's come to be the savior of the world. And this is truth talking here. That he is the light of the world. Goes right against the grain of everything that our world teaches us. And it's a claim that confronts. Because that's what the Bible would say about all of us. That outside of a personal saving faith in.

And outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ. By very nature. You and I. Are in the spiritual darkness. And that darkness.

Will lead us. To death. It's kind of the thing about light. Isn't it? That you don't really need it when it's light. But boy do you need it when it's dark.

[14:37] Jesus said I am the light of the world. Remember when we were young. And when we were bored at home. My brother and I used to go into the garden.

And we used to lift up the slabs that were there. Or we used to lift up a piece of tree. If we couldn't lift up the slab. One of our favorite games was to see what was underneath the slab. Do you know what we found under there every time?

Maybe you did this as a child as well. Woodlice. Yeah? Or somehow in Scotland they're called slaters. That's what we went looking for. But in all the times doing that.

Do you know never once did a woodlice stop to say. Thank you so much for exposing me to the light. Rather every time. They headed straight for the darkness. And that's exactly what's going on here.

As the Pharisees respond to Jesus. You see the tragedy of this chapter. Is that Jesus. The light of the world. Has come flooding into the world. God. And these people.

[15:33] The people that should have got him. They want nothing to do with him. So much so. If you want to flick to the end of chapter 8. They've got stones in their hands. And they're ready to kill him. Because this is a claim that confronts.

But secondly. And if we listen. And consider what Jesus is saying. Friends. This is a truth that illuminates.

Because during this back and forth with the Pharisees. Have a look at verse 30. John wants us to know. That even as Jesus spoke. While this is all going on.

Many believed in him. Now whatever is going on. With these people. At this point in the chapter. As they hear Jesus speak. The light that he has come to bring.

Is doing its work in their lives. Do you see it? Heaven's light is flooding into their minds. Heaven's hope is penetrating. Infiltrating their hearts. As people respond to.

[16:33] And are drawn to. The light like moths to a flame. This is what's going on. Because of what Jesus says about him. Verse 12. That he is the light of the world. That where there was death.

He's come to be life. Where there was darkness. He's come to be light. To be those things. And to give those things. Because. Verse 27.

What is it that Jesus is about to do? He's about to be lifted up. Do you see it? It's a reference to the Calvary road.

That he's going to soon walk. The place where he will go. And be physically. Lifted up on the cross. And the place where Jesus. The light of the world.

Not only did he step into our darkness. But he experienced our darkness. And he took the punishment. That our darkness. Our sin deserved.

[17:32] On himself. Because it's through his death. That he's able to give. Life. This is what Jesus says about him.

And to all those who would put their trust in him. Who would come to the light. See what Jesus says about them. So the command is to follow him. And the promise is for all those that do.

They will no longer be walking in darkness. But they will have the light. Of life. What a promise. Of course it's no coincidence.

That this chapter 8 finishes. And as we enter chapter 9. That we see Jesus doing what? Healing a blind man. The blind man. This social nobody.

This religious nobody. Sees Jesus. Believes in him. And the Pharisees. The social somebodies. The religious somebodies. They see Jesus.

[18:28] And they reject him. And it's just a wonderful chapter of scripture. You see it. The Pharisees question this blind man. They say what is going on? And the blind man says. Verse 25 of chapter 9.

He declares after his encounter with Jesus. All I know. All I know. Is that I was blind. And now I can see. That's all he knows.

I was blind. And now I can see. And I love how he drops it in there. He says to them. Do you want to be one of his disciples too? Love that. Love that. Words famously echoed by John Newton.

The former slave trader turned minister. Who sang. Or penned rather. From his heart. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound. That saved a wretch like me.

Friends. I genuinely remember singing that song. And it became clear to me. That I was that wretch. I'd sung it hundreds of times before. All of a sudden. One Sunday singing it. Thinking. That was me. Saved a wretch like me.

[19:29] I once was lost. But now I'm found. Was blind. But now I see. And this is essentially. The testimony of everyone. Who ever becomes a Christian.

I mean. No one becomes a Christian. Looks back on their life. And says. Do you know what? The reason I reckon. That God saved me. Is that God looked into my life. And he thought. He could probably do with me.

And his team. Like God looked over my key stats. He. He read. He saw how many times. I read my Bible. He. He saw how often I recycle.

He. He. Saw how few times I curse. He. Saw how many times. I eat quiche. And I was clearly somebody. Who was worthy of his consideration. Friends.

You. All of us know. The depths of our own. Hearts. Well enough. To know that. That could not have been the case. Amazing grace. How sweet the sound.

[20 : 24] There is no other explanation. For this. Other than Jesus. The light of the world. He smashed into my life. Of darkness. He turned on the lights. He helped me understand. Who he is.

And he gave me new life. See. We're all from different backgrounds. We've all got different stories. About how we came to faith. But we've got one song. I was lost.

And Jesus found me. I was blind. But now I see. Don Carson.

Wonderful biblical scholar. Put it like this. Every single conversion. As a result of God. Speaking into somebody's life. And saying. Let there be light. Of course.

That's what God has been doing. Ever since the beginning. Isn't it? Let there be light. No one gives life. Like Jesus. Jesus says. I am the light of the world.

[21 : 22] Whoever follows me. Will never walk in darkness. But will have. The light. Of life. And it's a claim that confronts. And it's a claim.

That illuminates. And at this point. Listen. We could all sing. Shine Jesus. Shine. Followed by this little light of mine. I'm going to let it shine. Say amen. And go home. But. Before we do.

Let me just leave you with two questions. To chew on. As we think about the light of the world.

Here's. The first one. As we work towards a close. Here's the first one. How do you respond to the light?

You know. I take it that it's. God's word. Has come at us this morning. And as it's done. It's shining work. On our lives. And as it's done. It's exposing work.

In our hearts. That many of us today. Will be sitting here. With big questions about life. And big questions about who Jesus is. And if that's you.

[22 : 21] Can I encourage you. Just go with that thought. If you've come with somebody this morning. Then grab them. And say listen. I'd love to chat that out with you. I'd love to explore who this man Jesus is.

Or come and grab any of us. Who you've seen up the front this morning. And we'd love to walk with you through those questions. Because we believe there's no man like Jesus Christ. Nobody like him.

How do you respond to the light? And secondly. Are you living in the light? Jesus says follow me.

It's not a word to me that suggests that being a disciple. Is about a one-off decision. That I made on 24th of January 1978.

Whatever it is. It's not a one-off decision. This is much more suggestive. Of an everyday. Active. All-out pursuit. Of the light. I just wonder if some of us are here today.

[23 : 17] And friends. We've taken our eyes off the light. Perhaps particularly. Maybe you're here this morning. And there's an area of your life at the minute. Where you think and you know.

That the darkness has gained. And is gaining. A foothold. And it's crushing you. Jesus would say to you this morning.

Come to me. Step into the light. Come to me. Know that I'm a saviour. Who specialises in forgiveness. And I'm a saviour. Who specialises in giving transforming light.

Know who I am. And know what I've done for you. And know the price that I paid for you. Come to Jesus this morning. And I was reflecting with somebody the other day.

That this is now my seventh year serving at Brunfield. Seventh year serving here. Friends. You know as I reflect on those seven years. The things that have encouraged me the most.

[24 : 17] It's never the upfront stuff. It's the behind the scenes stuff. That goes on in your lives. And as I walk with some of you. Through some real hard stuff.

And as I walk with you. Through the tears and the pain. And as I hear about you. And watch you making costly decisions in life. Because you want to follow. And honour Jesus Christ.

Can I just say. That's the most encouraging thing for me. As your pastor. Father. And you say no to the darkness. And with the Spirit's help. You say. I'm going to follow the light.

And it costs you big time. But through tears and through pain. You say no. I'm following Jesus.

Friends. If that's you this morning. Can I just say keep going. Keep going.

Fix your eyes on Jesus. Abide in his word. Put your whole weight of your life. On trusting him.

Would you take refuge in him.

[25 : 19] And would you come to the cross. And come to him. And find your identity. In who he is.

And what he proclaims over you. Keep your eyes. On the light.

Of the world. I put our girls down to bed. A few weeks ago. And. I did the usual routine. Jammies.

Milkies. Stories. Beddies. I don't know why everything has to end in ease. When you have children.

But it does. Okay. That's what we did. Lights off. And Owly on. But.

It turns out. That I couldn't get Owly to work. So we changed the batteries in him. I see we. Alex changed the batteries in him. And we tried to give him a new lease of life.

But it turns out that Owly's life giving days are over. John would write this in chapter one. Of his gospel about the light. That we've been thinking about this morning.

[26 : 14] Speaking about Jesus. In him was life. And that life was the light of all mankind. And the light shines in the darkness.

And the darkness. Has not overcome it. In other words. Jesus' voice. Will never be silenced.

Jesus' rule. Will never end. And this light. Is never going out. Because this light. Is the light.

That overcame the darkness. As Jesus rose from the grave. As we sang about earlier. On the third day. Jesus would be lifted up on the cross. But he would gloriously be lifted up.

From death. And declared to be. To the watching world. Like he says in this chapter. Exactly who he says he is. The great I am. Nobody's snuffing out this light.

[27 : 12] And Jesus says. Follow me. Follow. Me. I am. The light. Of the world. And this man John. Who wrote this gospel.

Would say. Follow him. Follow him. Yield your life. To him. He has conquered death. He is king of kings. Accept the joy.

Which he gives to those. Who yield. Their lives. To him. Jesus said. I am the light. Of the world.

Whoever follows me. Will never.

Walk. In darkness. But will have. The light. Of life. Friends. Let's pray. As we close. And just as we do. I want to give you.

Just a chance. To respond. To the. Word. As it's come at us. This morning. So maybe just in the silence. Now. Can I plead with you. Just to take this opportunity. Just to be with.

[28 : 05] God. Be with your maker. And just come to him. As you are just now. His son. Jesus Christ. The light of the world. God. Psalm 27.

Would say. The. Lord. Is my light. And my salvation. Whom shall I fear? The Lord. Is the stronghold. Of my life. Of whom.

Shall I be afraid? Our gracious father. We would thank you. So much. For this morning. And thank you. For your precious word. That shines light. Into our lives.

And I pray. And ask that you would help us. By your spirit. This spirit. This week. To fix our eyes. On your son. And to know. With a deep conviction.

And a certainty. That he is. Exactly who he says he is. That he is the light. Of the world. Amen.