

I Am the Light of the World

John 8:12, 9:1-7

You and I worship the Great “I Am”. And the Gospel of John helps us to see more clearly the very nature of the One we worship. Jesus said to the children of Abraham: “Before Abraham was, I am.” Last week we talked about the difference between being full and being satisfied and declared the message that Jesus is the Bread of Life. It is our relationship with Jesus and our trust in God’s provisions that allow us to live in a spirit of contentment, to discover the real meaning of satisfaction.

This morning we hear Jesus saying to his followers: “I am the light of the world.” When it comes to discovering the identity of Jesus, it should not surprise us that he would use this image. Light is one of the main themes of the Bible. Over and over again there is reference to light. Right from the beginning in the creation story: God spoke in the midst of deep darkness: “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. And the very last chapter of the Bible includes these words describing the new heaven and earth: “There will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light. This is the nature of who God is: John declares it in I John: “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”

Just think for a few minutes about this contrast of light and darkness. And how it exists in the vast expanse of the universe. Astronomers say that we can see light from stars that no longer exist. Light that has been travelling at 186,000 miles a second. One of the interesting phenomena that scientists have discovered is the “black hole”. It is a dark area of the universe composed of collapsed stars whose gravity is so strong that they cave back into themselves. Now that is really dark – complete darkness. Scientists have also discovered the opposite phenomenon. The opposite of the black hole are quasars. Discovered in the 1960’s quasars have been recorded as the most energetic objects in the universe. They are violent balls of unbelievable energy and seem to emit more light than everything put together in our galaxy. The brilliance of a quasar is said

I Am the Light of the World

to be that of 100 galaxies. Now that's light! The black hole and the quasar: what a contrast between darkness and light.

I remember when I was a student in college, I had the opportunity to go with a group to visit Mammoth Caves in Kentucky. The thing that stands out about that experience was the journey down into the deepest parts of the cave, and then the tour guide putting out our only source of light. Talk about a frightening feeling, to be in such complete and utter darkness. We stood there in darkness for maybe 30 seconds, but it seemed like so much longer. What a comfort it was when the guide re-lit the light!

And here's the wonderful truth about all this: Light has the power to overcome darkness. Darkness cannot stand up to the light. So what a difference it can make for you and me when we see the spiritual implications. The Bible describes our alienation from God as darkness, like we are in that deep, dark cave, but the presence of God brings light. John tells us that we cannot be in fellowship with God if we walk in darkness. Darkness is the place of separation from God, but light brings God back into view. Listen to how John describes it in I John: If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus purifies us from all sin. What awesome news: The black hole of our sin is overcome by the quasar of God's love in Jesus Christ! God's grace and forgiveness opens the door for the light to shine through.

Today's I Am Saying is from John 8:12. Again Jesus spoke to them saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Our book, [The God We Can Know](#), helps us understand the historical context of these words: Jesus is attending the Feast of Tabernacles. A Feast of the Jews also known as the Feast of Booths. The feast commemorates the journey of the Israelites through the wilderness. Each year the people would build these booths which would serve as a reminder of the temporary shelters the Israelites lived in during their wilderness journey. The people were always on the move being guided by God as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Such a celebration would always serve as a lesson to God's people, that life is a

I Am the Light of the World

pilgrimage. We are on a journey that has a destination. Any of you who have ever been a parent and been on a trip with small children have heard this often repeated question. Are we there yet? And it's asked over and over. As children of God we must realize that we never fully arrive in this life, but we are on a journey toward a heavenly home.

What a difference it makes when we are able to see life in that way. So often we think of life in terms of destination...when I grow up, when I graduate from college, when I get married, when I have enough money in the bank to feel secure, when I retire. Rev. Fuquay states it like this: "Think for a moment about what it means to believe that life is a pilgrimage and everything in this world is just temporary. When I understand and accept that, I realize I never fully get "there". When I become frustrated with where I am and begin asking, "When will I ever get there?" I have to remember, never! At least not in this life, My ultimate destination is to be with God."

Our ultimate destination is my connection to the Great I Am. The Light of the World. Who shines his light on my pathway...usually just one step at a time, so that the only way we can move forward is to simply trust in the Lord.

There is a special night during the Feast of Tabernacles called the Grand Illumination. Perhaps it was on this night that Jesus uttered these words: "I am the light of the world." Giant torches would be lit that lined the courtyard of the temple. All of Jerusalem glowed in the light. The one who came to overcome darkness would declare: "I am the light of the world."

It makes sense then, that John would tell the story of the man who had been blind from birth. As Jesus and his disciples are walking down the road and they encounter this man, instead of expressing compassion, the disciples want to get into a theological discussion: Was the problem of this man's blindness related to his sin, or was it the sin of his parents? Jesus had to correct their misguided thinking. What was at stake here was the revelation of God's truth. John 9:5 says it plainly: While I am in the world, I am the light of the world. Later the man gives his own testimony about Jesus when questioned by the Pharisees.

I Am the Light of the World

Whether he is a sinner or not, I do not know. All I know is that once I was blind, but now I can see.

John tells this story to illustrate a much greater truth. Spiritual darkness can be overcome by the light of God. Our sin, our disobedience, or mistrust, our attitudes of prejudice, our bad behavior, all expressions of darkness are overcome by the light of Jesus.

The only way to deal with darkness is to allow the light of Christ to overcome it. In the light of God's presence, we see ourselves as we really are, we see our own areas of darkness, and we our need for God's grace and forgiveness.

That's when we can begin to let that light be our Guide in this journey of life. One of the illustrations that comes from The God We Can Know is the description of what is called Flashlight Faith. Like being out camping and you leave your tent at night to find the restroom. You take your flashlight, but you can only see the few feet in front of you. You continue to follow the light of your flashlight to eventually you come to your destination. Jesus, the light of the world is our source of light. What is required is simply trusting that light as far as he leads you. I know that can be difficult at times. We want to see further down the road, but walking by faith is trusting God to lead you one step at a time. There may be some of you this morning who are seeking God's direction about a particular concern or wanting to know God's plan for the future. And we liked to have it all worked out, so that we can see the whole plan, the whole picture. Sometimes, like the light of that flashlight, we need to allow God to lead us in those small steps and eventually we discover where he is leading us.

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk I darkness but will have the light of life." The light of life...

Once we discover this powerful truth, we can be set free from the power of that darkness, and we can ask God to let his light shine through us. As followers of Jesus, we too become lights. Jesus made it clear in the Sermon on the Mount. "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under a bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives

I Am the Light of the World

light to all in the house. In the same way, let your lights shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father I heaven.”

The things we do for Jesus, the good works of mercy, compassion, healing...this is letting your light shine. There is a little chapel in Yorkshire, England where at the end of each pew there is a tall candlestick. Each family, when it comes to the church for the evening service, brings its own candle, lights it, and sits under its glow during the service. If a family is absent from church, its pew goes unlighted, and to that extent the light of the entire church is diminished. Each family recognizes the importance of their own light.

We need the light of each person to shine in this congregation. Just like we light our individual candles on Christmas Eve, we each have light to give. And how important it is that we take that light into the world, for light has the power to overcome darkness. Our lights together become a witness for Jesus Christ.

What a privilege to serve the Great I Am, the One who is our light and salvation.

The largest mining disaster in the Durham coalfield in England, was at West Stanley Colliery, known locally as "The Burns Pit", when 168 men and boys lost their lives as the result of two underground explosions at 3:45pm on Tuesday 16 February 1909. But incredibly, there were still men alive underground. A group of 34 men and boys in the Tilley Seam had found a pocket of clean air. They were led by Deputy Mark Henderson. Sadly a few of them panicked and left the group, they died instantly after inhaling the poison gas. The remainder sat in almost total darkness, when one of them began humming the Hymn "Lead Kindly Light". In no time at all the rest of the miners joined in with the words, "Lead kindly light amidst the encircling gloom, lead thou me on, The night is dark, and I am far away from home. Keep Thou my feet; I do not ask to see the distant scene; one step enough for me." What a powerful message in this hymn giving inspiration and courage to these coal miners. These 26 men were rescued after 14 hours, four others were later rescued.

It was that same hymn "Lead, Kindly Light" that was also sung by Betsie ten Boom, sister of [Corrie ten Boom](#), and other women as they were led by the S.S. Guards to the concentration camp Ravensbruck during the Holocaust.^[4]

I Am the Light of the World

While in prison camp, Betsie Ten Boom shared these powerful and challenging words: “The most important part of our task will be to tell everyone who will listen that Jesus is the only answer to the problems that are disturbing the hearts of people and nations. We shall have the right to speak because we can tell from our experience that His light is more powerful than the deepest darkness. How wonderful that the reality of the Lord’s presence is greater than the reality of the hell about us.”

Jesus said: I am the light of the world. His light is more powerful than whatever darkness you may be facing. What a privilege to experience the power of that light, and what a privilege and responsibility to let that light shine from us, by our love, our witness and the way we serve others in this world.