

The Light of the World

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Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 00] Well, if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of Scripture that we read in the Gospel according to John chapter 8. John chapter 8, and if we take as our text the words of verse 12, where Jesus said, 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. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

I don't know about you, but I'm not much of an art connoisseur. I appreciate art, and I can see that there is a talent and certainly a skill involved in being an artist, but I wouldn't describe myself as an art enthusiast, especially when it comes to more modern art.

But one thing I've often found fascinating about many of the more historical artists is that they often painted scenes from the Bible, because there's, I'm sure maybe you've seen it, Leonardo da Vinci's painting of The Last Supper.

There's Rembrandt's depiction of the storm on the Sea of Galilee. Then there's Caravaggio's description of David and Goliath. Or there's Salvador Dali's bird's eye view of the cross of Christ.

[1 : 30] But you know, there's one artist that I've always found his paintings so intriguing to look at. And they're paintings by the 20th century English painter William Holman Hunt.

Because he created pieces such as The Scapegoat or The Shadow of Calvary, which is a very interesting painting. But my favourite Holman Hunt painting is the one called The Light of the World. It's called The Light of the World. And if you've ever seen it, the painting is what you would describe as, or what they often call, a sermon in a frame. It's a sermon in a frame.

Because in the painting Holman Hunt, he portrays Jesus and he's standing at a door. A door that has never been opened. And Jesus, in the painting, he's holding a lantern.

Because the Word of God, it's a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. But as Jesus is standing at the door, the door has rusty hinges and it's overgrown with ivy.

[2 : 31] And Jesus is standing at this door and he's knocking. He's knocking at the door. And of course, it's an illustration of Jesus' words in Revelation chapter 3, where Jesus says, Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man hear my voice and open the door, I will come in. But what's remarkable about the painting is that there's no door handle on the door.

There's no door handle on the door, which implies that the door must be opened from the inside. So the only way to let Jesus in is for the one on the inside to open the door.

And of course, as a sermon in a frame, Holman Hunt is preaching to us. He's preaching to us that in order for Jesus, the light of the world, to come into the darkness of your heart, you need to open the door and let him in.

In order for Jesus, the light of the world, to come into the darkness of your heart, you need to open the door and let him in. You know, it's a beautiful illustration.

[3 : 41] And it's based entirely upon the words of our text this morning, where Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

And I'd just like us to consider the passage that we read this morning. I'd like us to consider it under three headings. The declaration of Jesus, the defence of Jesus, and the departure of Jesus.

So, the declaration of Jesus, the defence of Jesus, and the departure of Jesus. So, first of all, the declaration of Jesus, which we have in verse 12, where Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Now, as we've discovered in our study in John's Gospel, chapters 7 and 8, they form one scene.

And the scene is the Feast of Tabernacles. And as we've learned, the Feast of Tabernacles, it was an annual festival in the Jewish calendar. It was a popular family feast that was held each year around September, October time, where families, they would all come together from all over the nation of Israel, and they would travel together towards Jerusalem to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem.

[5 : 06] And during the eight-day celebration, all the families, they would actually live outside the city of Jerusalem. They would live outside in booths or tents or tabernacles, hence the name of the feast, the Feast of Tabernacles.

And these tents, they were known as Sukkos. They were known as Sukkos because that's what the children of Israel lived in as they wandered through the wilderness for 40 years.

And the Feast of Tabernacles, it was a commemoration and a celebration of the Lord's protection and also the Lord's provision for the children of Israel during those 40 years of wandering in the wilderness.

But as we said before, John draws our attention to all these Jewish feasts in his gospel, not only to give us context to the chapter, but also to give us this countdown to the cross.

Because by this point in chapter 7 and 8, Jesus is two and a half years into his short three-year ministry, which means that Jesus, he now only has about six months to live.

[6 : 13] Jesus is only six months away from being captured and convicted and then crucified. But the tension between the Jews and Jesus, it's already mounting.

We can see that in the passage because in the eyes of the Jews who were the religious leaders, Jesus was Israel's most wanted man. They believed that Jesus was guilty of religious extremism and political terrorism.

And they believed that as Jesus was moving around the country, he was gathering support and inciting the people to turn against the religious establishment. To the point that these religious leaders, they believed that if they didn't stop Jesus now, he would take over the nation.

If they didn't kill Jesus and take him out, he would cause this revolution against the religious leaders. And yet what we read is that the opposition which Jesus faced, it wasn't an obstacle to his ministry, but an opportunity for his ministry.

Because it was while Jesus attended the Feast of Tabernacles that he declared and disclosed his true identity as the Christ. Jesus declared and disclosed that he is the fulfilment of the Feast of Tabernacles.

[7 : 36] He is the Lord's protection and the Lord's provision of salvation for his people. And we saw that when we looked at chapter 7. We saw that on the last day of the Feast, on the great day, as the sun was rising over Jerusalem on that last day of the Feast, all the families who were at the Feast, they would all gather at the temple entrance.

And they would follow the procession of the priests. They would follow them all the way through the city down to the Pool of Siloam. And it would be there at the Pool of Siloam that the high priest would draw out living water from the Pool of Siloam.

And then the procession of priests, they would all go back towards the temple and there would be this throng of people ascending the temple mountain. They would all be praising the Lord for his provision of water in the wilderness for the children of Israel.

And they would all gather then around the temple. They would gather around the altar of sacrifice in the courtyard. And the priests would walk around the altar again and again and again.

They would all walk around the altar seven times and they would be singing and chanting. And there would be this great drama of pouring the living water on the base of the altar.

[8 : 54] And after all the drama, there would be this stunned silence. There would be this moment of quiet where the Jews would stand in silence, knowing that the ritual was over for another year.

But the Messiah had still not come. As you know, the Jews, they longed for the Messiah to appear. They longed for the Messiah to give them that living water that would satisfy their thirst.

But as John tells us, John says, it was at that moment that Jesus stood up and Jesus spoke into the silence of the crowd and said, if anyone thirsts, let him come unto me and drink.

And Jesus said, let him come to me and let him who believes in me drink. As the scriptures have said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

And then as we saw last week in verses 1 to 11 of chapter 8, between the drama of the morning ritual and the drama of the evening ritual, we saw that Jesus dealt with a woman caught in adultery.

[10:11] And now we come to verse 12 of chapter 8. It's still the last day, the great day of the Feast of Tabernacles, but the whole experience is now drawing to a close with the evening sacrifice.

And Jesus, at this moment, he once again declares and discloses his identity as the Christ. And he does so by standing up and speaking into the silence of the crowd and declaring who he is. And you know, when you actually understand the context of what happens here, it makes Jesus' words all the more powerful. because the thing is, each day during the Feast of Tabernacles, there was a morning and an evening ritual.

The morning ritual was at sunrise. It was a commemoration and a celebration of the Lord's provision of water. And that's the water ritual that they did. And it was a commemoration and celebration of how the Lord provided water from the rock to quench the thirst of his people. And then the evening ritual, which we're looking at in verse 12, it was at sunset. And it was then that there was this commemoration and celebration of the Lord's provision of light for the children of Israel in the wilderness.

[11:33] And how the Lord had provided, just as we were saying to the children, how the Lord provided a pillar of cloud by day and then a pillar of fire by night to lead and direct the people through the wilderness.

And so every evening there was this ritual at the Feast of Tabernacles. And during the ritual there would be four large lamps lit in the temple courtyard.

And these four large lamps, they were said to be so big and so bright that they were able to light up the entire city of Jerusalem.

But on the last day of the feast, on the great day, as everything was coming to a close, as the commemorations and celebrations were drawing to a close at the Feast of Tabernacles, they would leave one of the large lamps unlit.

And they would leave the large lamp unlit in order to symbolise that the full salvation of the Lord had not yet come because the Messiah had not yet appeared.

[12:39] And as the Jews left that large lamp unlit, their ceremony, it was accompanied with the prayer of Psalm 43, which we sang earlier.

Oh, send thy light forth and thy truth. Let them be guides to me. But that prayer, as we see here in John 8, that prayer was answered in the Passion of Jesus Christ because it was into the darkness of the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus stood up and spoke out.

He declared and disclosed his identity by saying, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

You know, it's an amazing announcement that Jesus was saying, I am the light of the world. whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

And yet, what's remarkable is that not everyone believed what Jesus was saying was true. Because the Pharisees respond by accusing Jesus in verse 13.

[13:54] They say, you are bearing witness of yourself but your testimony is not true. The Pharisees, they once again claim that Jesus was a liar and a lunatic but there's one thing they wouldn't say about Jesus that he was Lord.

They wouldn't say that he was Lord which brings us to consider secondly the defence of Jesus. So we've seen the declaration of Jesus where he says, I am the light of the world but then the defence of Jesus.

The defence of Jesus. Look at verse 14. Jesus answered, even if I do bear witness about myself my testimony is true for I know where I came from and where I am going but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.

You judge according to the flesh I judge no one yet even if I do judge my judgement is true for it is not I alone who judge but I and the Father who sent me.

As you know there are seven I am sayings of Jesus throughout John's Gospel and with each I am saying Jesus he is indicating and insisting upon his identity as the Son of God and the Saviour of sinners because he is the great I am.

[15:17] He is the I am who revealed himself to Moses in the wilderness at the burning bush. He is the I am who revealed himself to his people throughout the generations of history and he is the I am who finally revealed himself in the person of Jesus Christ.

He is the great I am and we witnessed Jesus' first I am saying back in chapter 6 you remember Jesus he made that declaration to the crowds the multitudes he said I am the bread of life whoever comes to me shall never hunger and whoever believes peace in me shall never thirst and you know it's interesting that Jesus said that if we come to him we will be satisfied not only of our spiritual hunger but also of our spiritual thirst and this is interesting because it seems that in chapters 6, 7 and 8 of John's Gospel John he combines three key features of the wilderness wanderings the key features of manna water and light in fact manna water and light were not only key features of the wilderness wanderings manna water and light were also key features of the feast of tabernacles and it seems that John purposely and positively uses these key features in order to assert and to affirm to us he's saying to us on the pages of scripture

Jesus is the living bread from heaven Jesus is the living water from the rock Jesus is both light and life in the wilderness of this world John is saying to us it's all about Jesus his testimony is true and the wonderful thing is that all of these key features of manna light and water they all reach their climax and culmination when Jesus declared and disclosed to the crowds here in John 8 I am the light of the world whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life and so when Jesus declares and even defends his identity to the Pharisees he indicates and he insists that to follow him will be light and life rather than darkness and death to follow Jesus as the Christ will be light and life rather than darkness and death and that's the testimony which Jesus puts before the Pharisees and Jesus says to them that his testimony is true his testimony is true but more than that that's the testimony of

Jesus which John puts before us in his entire gospel because in his gospel John repeatedly emphasizes that to follow Jesus and to believe in Jesus and to trust in Jesus and to come call commit and confess Jesus as your Lord and Saviour that will be for you light and life rather than darkness and death and throughout his gospel John is saying to us he's saying the testimony of Jesus is true he's echoing the words of Jesus here he's saying his testimony is true you remember that even from the prologue to his gospel as John introduced us to Jesus he said about Jesus that in him was life and the life was the light of men and the light shined in the darkness and the darkness could not overcome it why as John explains he was the true light which gives light to every man to every woman to every boy to every girl who believes in him but John didn't leave it there in his introduction because when we are given that most well-known verse in the Bible in John 3 16 John tells us that the light of the world has come and he has come because God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever would believe in him would not perish but have eternal life and John went on to explain he explained to us just what Jesus is explaining to the Pharisees here that God did not send his son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him because as John says whoever believes in him is not condemned but whoever does not believe believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God and this is the judgment says John the light has come into the world but men love the darkness rather than the light because their deeds are evil for everyone who does wicked things says John hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed but whoever does what is true they come to the light so that it may be clearly seen that their works have been carried out in

[20 : 44] God and you know throughout his gospel John is saying to us about Jesus his testimony is true his testimony is true his testimony is true therefore you must follow Jesus you must believe in Jesus you must trust in Jesus you must call and come and commit your life to Jesus Christ because Jesus will be for you light and life rather than darkness and death Jesus will be for you light and life rather than darkness and death and you know as we go through this gospel we'll see that John continues to echo this testimony that the testimony of Jesus is true because you know in chapter 12 just prior to the cross Jesus says while you have the light believe in the light that you may become sons and daughters of the light for I have come as a light into the world that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness and my friend

John is going to bring us all the way right to the darkness and to the death of Jesus at Calvary John is going to show us that through the three agonizing hours of darkness that shrouded Calvary and through the awful death of what Jesus experienced at Calvary John is going to show us that through that awful death Jesus brought life and light to all who believe in him Jesus brought life and light my friend that's why Jesus could declare and defend his identity as the light of the world that's why Jesus could say to these Pharisees and to you this morning I am the light of the world whoever

follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life my friend to follow Jesus will be for you light and life rather than darkness and death but then we notice in verse 17 that Jesus emphasizes to the Pharisees that his father affirms that his testimony is true

Jesus says in your law it is written that the testimony of two people is true I am the one who bears witness about myself and the father who sent me bears witness about me they said to him therefore where is your father Jesus answered you know neither me nor my father if you knew me you would know my father also these words he spoke in the treasury as he taught in the temple but no one arrested him because his hour had not yet come and you know John's little note there in verse 20 where he highlights the defence of Jesus and he says that it all took place in the treasury of the temple it all took place in the treasury of the temple which was where worshippers would come and make their monetary free will offerings at the temple but this location is significant and I think John highlights it for a reason because as you know the religious leaders they wanted to kill Jesus and when the religious leaders do finally kill Jesus they crucify him on a Roman cross you know it's to the treasury in the temple that Judas comes it's to the treasury in the temple that Judas comes and throws down those 30 pieces of silver that he had received from out of the treasury in order to betray

Jesus and yet here is Jesus six months before his death six months before his death and he's declaring and defending his identity to the religious leaders he's telling them who he is he's explaining who he is that he is the light of the world but you know what's frightening about them about the religious leaders is that the God of this world has blinded their minds to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel and you know my unconverted friend if you are as someone who is without Christ if you're walking in darkness this morning you are in the same frightful condition that these religious leaders were the God of this world has blinded your mind to keep you from seeing the light of the gospel and like these religious leaders you know your Bible you were brought up in the church you might have a form of religion in your life you might worship

God with your lips but the truth is your heart is far from him that describes you doesn't it and you know that's why Jesus says to us in the gospel he says if the light that is in you be darkness how great is that darkness if the light that is in you be darkness how great is that darkness my friend if you remain where you are this morning in the darkness of sin and if you die in the darkness of your sin you will know as Jesus explains here you will know the departure of Jesus you will know the departure of Jesus and that's what I want us to consider lastly the departure of Jesus the declaration of Jesus the defense of Jesus and then lastly the departure of Jesus the departure of Jesus now look at verse 21 so he said to them again

[26 : 49] I am going away and you will seek me and you will die in your sin where I am going you cannot come so the Jews said to him will he kill himself since he says where I am going you cannot come he said to them you are from below I am from above you are of this world I am not of this world I told you that you would die in your sins so as the religious leaders as they listened to the declaration the defence and the departure of Jesus they were still completely shrouded in darkness because when the religious leaders heard that Jesus was going somewhere somewhere where they couldn't go their darkened minds they immediately thought that Jesus was going to commit suicide so we're told in verse 22 so the Jews said will he kill himself since he says where I am going you cannot come now similar to

Christianity Judaism believes in the preservation of life the sixth commandment states thou shalt not kill which not only forbids killing someone else but it also forbids killing yourself now I know that suicide and talking about suicide it's a very difficult and delicate topic to talk about but you know thanks to many suicide awareness campaigns and charities we have more of an understanding that most suicides are related to and a result of mental health but I want to say as it's been highlighted to us in the Bible that whenever you have thoughts of suicide or even self or even speak to someone speak to someone don't bottle it up don't keep it to yourself speak to someone about it and if you can't speak to someone in your own home or in your own family speak to someone out with you know there are a number of specialised charities that can help you and talk with you if you're if you're self harming or contemplating suicide but in this passage we see that the reason the Jewish leaders thought that Jesus was going to commit suicide was because according to the Jewish law if a Jew committed suicide they believed that they would immediately go to hell of course we have to be very careful with statements like that because well we all know people who have committed suicide and to say that they immediately go to hell would be to misunderstand the

gospel we can't make sweeping statements like that but the religious leaders they thought that Jesus must have been contemplating suicide because he said that he was going somewhere where the religious leaders weren't he was going somewhere where the religious leaders weren't Jesus said where I am going you cannot come and the religious leaders they assumed that Jesus was referring to hell because in their minds as religious leaders they were going to heaven if they were going anywhere they were going to heaven but what we see here is that once again

Jesus puts it plainly to the religious leaders and he says that he is going to heaven he is going to his father the one who affirms that his testimony is true but Jesus says to the religious leaders he says if they remain where they are and if they die in the darkness of their sin they will go to hell you look at verse 23 Jesus said to them you are from below I am from above you are of this world I am not of this world I told you that you would die in your sins for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins again Jesus was saying to the religious leaders and he's saying it to you my unconverted friend he's saying it to you Jesus is saying to you plainly and clearly this morning and you know it couldn't be any clearer he's saying that if you believe in me as the light of the world and if you trust in me as the light of the world and if you follow me as the light of the world and if you come to me and call upon me and commit to me and confess me as the light of the world and as your lord and your saviour then you will never you will never experience the darkness and death of damnation you will experience the light and life of the gospel if you come to me

Jesus says you will experience light and life but if you stay where you are if you die in the darkness of your sin you will experience the darkness and the death of eternal damnation and as you know my friend you know me by now I never say these things lightly I always try and say them lovingly my friend if you stay where you are in the darkness of your sin and if you die in your sin you'll

experience the darkness and the death of damnation in hell that's why Jesus is saying to you this morning I am the light of the world whoever follows me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life but you know I know that for some of you watching this morning

[32 : 50] I know that you're hearing what I have to say and you're hearing it but you're willing to take the risk you're willing to remain in the darkness of your sin for a little while longer but by doing so my friend what are you gaining what are you gaining what are you gaining because with Christ you have nothing to lose but without him you will lose everything my friend don't stay where you are you come to this Christ and you know that's what Holman Hunt was seeking to portray in his painting the light of the world because this morning Jesus is standing at your door he's standing at your door and it may be a door with rusty hinges and it's overgrown with ivy and weeds but he's knocking he's knocking at your door this morning and he's saying to you behold

I stand at the door and knock if you hear my voice open the door and I will come in but as Holman Hunt explains to us in his sermon the picture sermon he says there's no door handle on the door door the door must be open from the inside the only way to let Jesus in is for the one on the inside to open the door and so my friend in order for Jesus the light of the world to come into the darkness of your heart this morning you need to open the door and let him in in order for Jesus the light of the world to come into the darkness of your situation and the darkness of your sin you need to open the door and let him in let him in because he is the light of the world well may the Lord bless these thoughts to us let us pray oh Lord our gracious

God that none of us would be left in the darkness of eternity but that we would come into that most marvelous light that none of us would experience and hear the words of Jesus depart from me you workers of iniquity into the outer darkness Lord that we would come to the light to the one who is the light of the world that we would come and follow him that we would see Jesus for all he is and all he promises to be for those who will come and follow him oh Lord help us to listen help us to learn help us Lord to live to live for Jesus day by day looking to him loving him and following him oh forgive us Lord we plead and we pray that even as thy word goes out this morning that I would not return to the empty but accomplish in the thing whereto thou descended oh send thy light forth and thy truth let them be guides to me keep us we pray go before us for Jesus sake

Amen we're going to conclude by singing from Psalm 36 that was my my night light we're going to conclude in Psalm 36 at verse 5 Psalm 36 in the Scottish Psalter we're singing from verse 5 and we'll sing down to the verse marked 9 Psalm 36 at verse 5 thy mercy Lord is in the heavens thy truth doth reach the clouds thy justice is like mountains great thy judgments deep as floods and then we'll sing on down to the verse marked 9 because of life the fountain pure remains alone with thee and in that purest light of thine we clearly light shall see we'll sing these verses of Psalm 36 to

God's praise thy mercy

Lord is in the hands thy jizz of reach our hearts thy josh it is like mountain and faith thy josh and keep us lost Lord love be God that sun on thee our precious is thy grace therefore in shadow in shadow walk thy wings than sons that cross shall place may with the kindness of thy heart shall be well satisfied from where all thy pressures die will take to them provide because of life that thine endure remains the

[39 : 17] Lord with thee and in the purest light of thine we clearly life shall be earth Thank you.