

JESUS – THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Introduction

1. It is difficult to speak of the Christmas season without the mention of light. The commercial side of Christmas tells us to light up the tree and put lights on our houses and attend various “Festival of Lights” community celebrations with our families. We get in our cars and drive around the neighborhoods to “see the lights.”
2. In the faith community, our Jewish friends celebrate Hanukkah as they light the candles for the eight-day celebration of the supposed miraculous supply of oil for their lamps. We light the Advent candles, as Pastor Jim explained last week, to tell the story that the light of the world has come in the person of Christ. Light was an important part of that first Christmas as the angels lit up the nighttime sky with the glorious declaration of the birth of Jesus. The star guided the magi from the east so they could pay homage to this promised Messiah. The candles and the star and the angelic announcement all remind us that the true light has come into the world. That is why we celebrate.
3. Consider with me what the Apostle John says about the Light. (1:1) *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God...* (1:4) *In Him was life, and that life was **the light of men***. Is that not great? The true light of the world, the light that would make visible the path to God had come! John continues, (1:9) *The true light that gives light to every man **was coming into the world...*** (1:10) **He was in the world**. Can you believe it? The creator God, the Lord of Glory, the true light of life...had arrived for a time to dwell among us!
5. You would expect that the world would have marveled and cheered and been awed and overwhelmed at the grand entrance of the light of heaven – God Himself in human flesh. Everything about this coming was right and good. It answered the centuries old question of Job for a mediator between God and man. This coming provided the way for people who were dead in sin to be saved and made alive. The message of the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled. **And they will look to the earth, but behold, distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish. And they will be thrust into thick darkness.**

But there will be no gloom for her who was in anguish...The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. What an announcement! In the darkness, the light has shined!

6. It is precisely here that this next statement in John's Gospel is so confusing. *He was in the world and though the world was made by Him, (v. 10) **the world did not recognize Him.*** Okay. So they did not know who He was. Certainly as soon as it became known, people would immediately embrace Him. Right? John continues, (v. 11) *He came to His own, **but His own people did not receive Him.*** The Jews were looking for a Messiah and here He was. But even though He came, claiming to be the fulfillment of the ancient prophets' words, and providing all of the credentials of deity, His own refused to receive Him. And people continue to reject Him, even those who claim they know who He is. Why? John says that it has something to do with the light.

I. THE WORLD IS REPELLED BY THE LIGHT (John 1, 3, 8)

- A. By **nature** we love the condition of darkness (and light **dispels** the darkness) – The response is to try to **get away** from the light!
1. Light and darkness are symbols of life and death, of righteousness and sin, of truth and error, of good and evil.
 2. When Jesus came into the world, He was light. He says as much in John 8:12, "**I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.**" That is clear enough. Those were Jesus' claims and generally the people who followed after Him and listened to Him understood what He was saying. But they refused to acknowledge Him as the light. Why? They were by nature in the darkness and darkness and light do not mix. Darkness will never chase after the light.
 3. There was a sense in which many saw the light, but instead of embracing the light, they ran back into the darkness. By nature we do not like the light. (Have you ever been sound asleep in a dark room and someone came in and turned on the light, suddenly waking you? What did you do? "Turn off the light!" as we wave our arms and cover our eyes and reach for the covers to pull over our faces!) John 3:19 makes it clear: "**This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light...**" Jesus then explains why. (By nature we try to get away from the light).

- B. By **experience** we love the deeds of darkness (and light **disturbs** the darkness) – Our response is to try to **put out** the light.) "**People loved the darkness rather than the light, because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light lest his works should be exposed**" (John 3:19-20).
1. It was not necessarily because people did not know who Jesus was that they did not believe in Him. In many cases, they knew exactly who He was – or at least who He claimed to be, but they still rejected Him. Why?
 2. At least part of the answer is because men love darkness. Men love the deeds of darkness and do not want those deeds to be exposed by the light. Instead of running into the light, men **hid** in the darkness or tried to **extinguish** the light.
 3. It puzzles many how the "religious leaders" of Jesus' day could have stooped so low as to seek to kill Jesus. The reason was precisely here. The light was bothering their darkness and they sought to put the light out. Men by nature and behavior love the darkness and hate the light. (Have you ever wondered why people react when we try to tell them about Jesus and how He can save them and give them eternal life? They are reacting because you are shining the light in their sinning faces. Please don't stop shining the light, but also don't be surprised at the reaction. They will try to hide from the light and they might try to put out the light – and since you are the one holding the light in their face, they may try to take you down too)!
- Remember, **the world is repelled by the light**, but there is more. Turn now to John 9.

II. THE WORLD IS BLINDED BY THE LIGHT (John 9)

A. The illustration

1. John 9 paints a picture of Jesus' miracle ministry. When we read of the miracles in the Gospels we may become sidetracked considering the miraculous power of Jesus without comprehending the spiritual lesson the miracle was designed to teach. When Jesus did miracles (especially those included in John's Gospel) they were used as an introduction or illustration of a very important spiritual truth. John 9 is no exception.
2. Jesus found a blind man who had been blind from birth. Jesus healed him. Now that was good for the man born blind, but that was actually secondary to the message Jesus was about to deliver in regard to blindness, light and how He was

able to make the truly blind really see. Immediately after Jesus gives the blind man sight, there comes...

B. The inquiry

1. Enter the Pharisees. They do their investigative reporting, but with far more concern with the **time** of the miracle (it was performed on the Sabbath) and with the **character** of the miracle worker (v. 24) "we know this man is a sinner") than with the result of miraculous healing of blindness. In fact there is no rejoicing, only condemnation!
2. Remember that this is a miracle that has just happened, yet note how it ends (**vv. 26-34**). That leads us to...

C. The judgment

1. Here is what I wanted to get to. Listen to verses **35-41**. Note verse **39** particularly. Jesus said, ***"For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind."***
2. The Pharisees were exposed to the light. They saw firsthand something of God's glory before them. They knew who He was, but they refused to acknowledge Him. These religious leaders were exposed, but because of their rejection of the light, they were actually **blinded by the light** so that they could no longer see.
3. Do you get the contrast? The man born blind was exposed to the light. When the light came, his eyes were opened and he believed and was brought into the light. The Pharisees were exposed to the light and saw the light, but they closed their eyes to the light and refused to acknowledge the light and so the light blinded them so that they could no longer see the Lord of glory. The light had brought sight to the eyes that were blind and had blinded the eyes of those who claimed to be able to see but who refused to believe. And how great was the darkness! Do you see how this glorious Lord Jesus, the Son of God, the maker of heaven and earth, the Word in flesh, could come to the world which he had made and have the world reject Him? Do you see how He could come to His own and His own receive Him not? By nature the world was and is blind. And in that blindness, when exposed to the light, the light may judicially blind some so that they will never ever see. That is the work of God. We are to keep shining the light. God may open the eyes of many. He may for a time close the eyes of some. For others, He may close

their eyes forever. I can only keep shining the light. Let's look together at one more passage of Scripture.

III. THE WORLD IS BLINDED TO THE LIGHT (2 Cor. 4:4)

A. The god of this age has blinded our minds.

1. As though it were not enough that people are blinded by nature and behavior and further blinded by the light itself. Now we discover that an outside force is working to blind the minds of unbelievers so that we cannot see the light of the Gospel.
2. Think about the content of the Gospel for a moment. A man who lived 2000 ago, who claimed to be God, was put to death on a cross by Roman soldiers at the demands of Jewish religious leaders. The teaching is that this death by this individual was sufficient to take away our sins and to grant us eternal life. Many thinking people would say that such a story could only be that – a story, a fairy tale. Now those same people will buy the theory of evolution, accept the idea of an active spirit world, maybe even believe in reincarnation. But believe the Gospel? No. Why? Their minds have been blinded by “the god of this world.”

B. The god of this world makes every attempt to keep our attention away from the light.

1. When Jesus was tempted, Satan showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and said, "All these things I will give you if you will bow down and worship me." He essentially makes the same offer to us. (He keeps offering us stuff to distract us from the light. Even religious leaders cheapen the Gospel by reducing it to health and wealth. That's darkness, not light).
2. Ephesians 5:6-14. The god of this world desires to keep us distracted from the gospel - from the light. He has many means at his disposal using our own bent toward sin and the influence of the world around us. And frankly, he is fairly successful in his attempts. That is why Paul is so adamant in his counsel to us.

C. The god of this world makes every effort to take away the message of the gospel.

1. Remember the Parable of the Sower? When the seed landed on the hard soil, the birds came and took away the seed. Jesus said that the birds were symbolic of the evil one that comes along and snatches the gospel away so that it will not penetrate the soil - the heart of the unbeliever.
2. Do you understand what happened here? Jesus, God the Son, came from heaven to earth. He became a man - the glorious Lord Jesus Christ comes to earth and

takes on the form of a servant. He comes that we might have life. He comes that we might be forgiven from our sin. He came that we might be delivered from the darkness into the light. And yet the world knew Him not. He came to His own and His own received Him not! He is the light of the world – but men love darkness rather than the light.

3. What do we do?

Conclusion

1. The bad news is that the world rejected the true Light when He came. And the world continues to reject the light for the very same reasons as we have identified today.
2. To add further to the bad news, if we die in the darkness we will continue in a place of darkness. Jesus called it outer darkness. Jude said it is a place that has forever been reserved - a place described as "the blackest darkness." Nothing about the eternal destiny of those who rejected the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is good.
3. But, there is some good news. You have heard the gospel today. The enemy will try to take it away from you. The light is shining and you are now exposed. My prayer and your only hope is that you might cry out to God, "Have mercy on me a sinner." And if you see your utter darkness and you believe in Him who said, "I am the light of the world", He will do a wonderful thing in your life.
4. Peter said in 1 Peter 2:9, that for those who have seen the light, we have been "called out of darkness into his marvelous light." To the Colossians, Paul said, "For He has delivered us from the domain of darkness... (Col. 1:13). True, (Eph. 5:8), **for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.** Therefore we must **live as children of light.** As Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5, **But you are not in darkness, brothers, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.** So we are instructed by Paul in Romans 13:12, **let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light.**
5. And here is the capstone, 2 Corinthians 4:6, **For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.**
6. So what should be our response? If you are in darkness, you need to embrace the light. John 8:12 – **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."** That is a promise

from Jesus Himself. You not only will have the light of life, but you are then identified in Matthew 5:14 this way: **You are the light of the world.** And as a light, you are to let it shine so others can see. Don't hide the light. Don't be afraid of the light. Hold it high. Let it be seen far and wide. And we do that when we are **blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world** (Philippians 2:15).

7. The Light of the world has come! Are you in the light or in the darkness?