

The Light Of The World

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[0 : 0 0] And 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 and chapter eight.

John chapter eight, 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 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 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.

[1 : 1 9] 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.

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 onto our feet and a light onto our path. But as Jesus is standing at the door, the door has rusty hinges and it's overgrown with ivy.

[2 : 3 2] 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's 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 and it's based entirely upon the words of our text this morning, where Jesus says, I am the light of the world.

[3 : 50] 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 Defense of Jesus and the Departure of Jesus.

So the Declaration of Jesus, the Defense 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, chapter seven and eight, they form one scene.

And the scene is the Feast of Tabernacles. And as we've learned that 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 or Tabernacles, hence the name of the Feast, the Feast of Tabernacles.

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

And the Feast of Tabernacles 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 seven and eight, 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.

[7 : 20] 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 fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles.

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 seven. 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 were all gathered 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 they 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.

[8 : 42] 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.

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.

[9 : 43] 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 one to 11 of chapter eight, 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.

And now we come to verse 12 of chapter eight. 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's words all the more powerful.

[10 : 52] 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.

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 will be four large lamps lit in the temple courtyard.

[11 : 58] And these four large lamps, they were sent 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 commemoration 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 symbolize that the full salvation of the Lord had not yet come, because the Messiah had not yet appeared.

And as the Jews left that large lamp unlit, their ceremony, it was accompanied with the prayer of Psalm 43, which we sang earlier, O 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 Persian of Jesus Christ, because it was into the darkness of the Feast of Tabernacles that Jesus stood up and spoke out.

[13 : 14] 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, 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, but he was Lord.

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

[14 : 28] 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 judgment 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.

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 Persian of Jesus Christ. He is the great I am. And we witnessed Jesus's first I am saying back in chapter six.

[15 : 43] 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 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 six, seven and eight of John's Gospel, John, he combines three key features of the wilderness wonderings.

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.

[16 : 52] 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 eight, 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.

[18 : 15] 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 Savior, 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.

[19 : 44] 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 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 unless his works should be exposed. But whoever does what is through, they come to the light so that it may be clearly seen that their works have been carried out in God.

And you know throughout his Gospel, John is saying to us about Jesus. His testimony is through. His testimony is through. His testimony is through. Therefore you must follow Jesus. You must believe in Jesus. You must trust in Jesus.

[21 : 00] 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 through.

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.

[22 : 21] 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 through. Jesus says, in your Lord is written that the testimony of two people is through.

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.

[23 : 24] 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 defense 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 worshipers 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.

[24 : 24] 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. Unlike these religious leaders, you know your Bible.

[25 : 41] 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, I am going away and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come.

[26 : 56] 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 for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. So as the religious leaders, as they listened to the declaration, the defense, and the departure of Jesus, they were still completely shrouded in darkness.

Because when the religious leaders heard that Jesus was going somewhere, where they, somewhere where they couldn't go, they 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 6th commandment states, thou shalt not kill, which not only forbids killing someone else, but it also forbids killing yourself.

[28 : 10] 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, and as it's been highlighted to us in the Bible, that whenever you have thoughts of suicide or even self-harm, 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 specialized charities that can help you and talk with you, 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.

[29 : 30] 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.

[30 : 33] 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 off 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 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 Savior, 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.

[32 : 09] 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, then 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, 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.

[33 : 10] 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, He's saying, Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice, open the door and I will come in.

[34 : 07] But as Holman Hunt explains to us in his sermon, the picture sermon, he says there's no door handle on the door.

The door must be open from the inside. The only way to let Jesus in is for the one in 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.

O Lord, our gracious God, that none of us would be left in the darkness of eternity, but that we would come into that most marvellous light, that none of us would experience and hear the words of Jesus.

[35 : 28] 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.

O 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.

O forgive us, Lord, we plead and we pray that even as thy word goes out this morning, that it would not return to the empty, but accomplish in the thing where thou descended.

O 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 night light.

[36 : 40] We're going to conclude in Psalm 36 at verse 5. Psalm 36 in the Scottish Psalter, that 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 just as 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 heavens, thy truth, doth reach the clouds, thy just as is like mountains great, thy judgments deep as floods.

Lord, thou art peace, God, and thus man and me, our precious kids, I pray, therefore in shadow walk thy way, then some stature shall play.

[38 : 30] May with the kindness of thy heart shall be well satisfied.

From where thy thought, thy precious child, we'll sing to them, Proline, because of life the floods and pure remains alone with thee and in that purest light of thine we clearly light shall see.