

# JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12-30

Key Verse: 8:12

**“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”**

Last week, we heard of Jesus’ wonderful grace to an adulterous woman whom the Pharisees had wanted to stone to death. We also thought about how we can judge others just like these religious leaders had done. The fact is when we commit sin or judge others we are walking in darkness and need to come into the light. Presently, so many people are full of darkness. They follow the ways of the world trying to find light in temporal things. Others reject the light altogether enjoying the pleasures of sin. In today’s passage, Jesus reveals that he is the light of the world, and whoever follows him will never walk in darkness, but have the light of life. Our message today will focus on dividing up our key verse into two parts, 1) Jesus’ declaration and 2) his promise. Let’s pray that we may accept Jesus as the light of the world, and that he may illuminate our lives in order to bear great fruit.

**First, Jesus declared, “I am the light of the world” (12a-30).** Look at verse 12a. **“When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, ‘I am the light of the world.’”** We know in chapter 7 that Jesus had been speaking to the people during the Feast of Tabernacles. He taught earlier about the rivers of living water which symbolized the water ceremony well known during the Feast. Toward the end of the festival there was also a light celebration. Within it, the priests would dance around lit candelabras while the Levites played accompanying music. It was a beautiful event as the light of the temple shined over the whole city. Yet, Jesus revealed he was a greater light that extended far beyond the limits of Jerusalem. Jesus declared, **“I am the light of the world.”**

What does Jesus mean when he refers to himself as **“the light of the world”**? To begin with, let’s think about the introduction of the declaration, **“I am”**. Jesus’ statement is considered one of the seven ‘I am’s’ in John’s gospel. Jesus said, **“I am the bread of life”, “I am the resurrection and the life”, “I am the gate”, “I am the good shepherd”, “I am the way and the truth and the**

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life”, “**I am the vine**” and here he states, “**I am the light of the world.**” These statements give us clear insight to who Jesus is. Each has important and independent meaning, but simply “**I am**” is very significant in itself. In Exodus 3:14, “**God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’**” Likewise, Jesus was sent by the ‘**I AM**’, the Father God, who sent his one and only Son to die for the sin of all mankind. Jesus also declared himself as ‘**I am**’ repeatedly because he came to the world as God incarnate. It’s interesting to note that ‘**I am**’ is in the present tense and not the past tense. Jesus did not say ‘I was.’ He said, ‘**I am.**’ This means that Jesus is alive and ever present in our lives. He loves us, provides for us, and works with us. He is always with us and will never change. Hebrews 13:8 says, “**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**” Praise Jesus who is the eternal creator God!

Next, Jesus claimed he is “**the light of the world.**” Light of course is a very important element in our lives. It gives life. It brings energy. It provides warmth. It reveals beauty. Science tells us that there are more than 300,000 varieties of light such as fluorescent, incandescent, ultra-violet, and infra-red. There is sunlight, moonlight, starlight, and flashlight. Jesus is the source of all light. He is the eternal light. His light is the source of life. Jesus’ light illumines all of God’s creation. The prophet Isaiah painted an early portrait of Jesus exclaiming in Isaiah 9:3, “**The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.**” Indeed, the whole world had been waiting for Jesus to enter into history as the light of the world. His light shines upon all mankind, and over all nations.

Throughout verses 13-30, there is explanation as to why Jesus is the light of the world. The Pharisees had challenged him that his testimony was not valid. Of course, anyone can utter a statement boldly but it doesn’t mean it is true. Yet, Jesus’ testimony is valid for a number of reasons.

Firstly, his testimony is valid because he is the truth. In verse 14, “**Jesus answered, ‘Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.’**” The truth is to know the basis of our origin and the way of our ultimate destination. Many people throughout history have

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wanted to know the way and were truth seekers. To know the truth is very important. Confucius had a saying, “If one learns the truth in the morning, one would never regret dying the same evening.” Religious figures like Buddha and Mohammad were trying to seek the truth but could not find it. Yet it was Jesus that could make the claim in John 14:6, **“I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”** Jesus’ affirmation as the light of the world is valid because he is the truth. His testimony is self-sufficient. No one can argue.

Next, Jesus could claim his testimony was valid because according to verse 15 the Pharisees judged by their human standards, while Jesus passed judgment on no one. In John 12:47 Jesus also mentions, **“If anyone hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”** Jesus had the authority to judge because of who he was. Jesus was the promised Messiah. The Jews thought the Messiah would come to the world to judge and exercise authority. But in Jesus’ first coming, he came as the good shepherd who showed grace and mercy upon weak and weary sinners. In his second coming, Jesus will finally come as the judge. Yet, Jesus’ testimony was valid here because he came as the graceful light of the world to save all mankind.

Thirdly, Jesus’ testimony was valid through the law. In the Old Testament, a testimony required the knowledge and support of two witnesses. Jesus provided this evidence in verses 16-18. **“But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”** The Pharisees knew the law only required the testimony of two human witnesses. But Jesus and the Father were far greater than mere men. How much more should they believe the testimony of two divine witnesses.

Next, Jesus could also give testimony because he was God incarnate. He came from God and was going back to God. The Pharisees had no idea about who Jesus was. This was because Jesus revealed in verse 23 that he was from above and they were from below. Yet he came to the world as the Immanuel God to live among and serve wretched, dirty sinners. He performed many works and miracles, like healing the sick, the lame, the blind, and even raising the dead. This was

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because Jesus was God himself. In John 10:30, Jesus claimed, **“I and the Father are one.”**

Finally, Jesus’ testimony that he was the light of the world was valid because he was the Messiah who came to solve our sin problem. Look at verse 28. **“So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.’”** Jesus here references the ‘Son of Man’ and declares, **“I am he.”** This was a bold declaration that Jesus was the Messiah of God whom all of Israel had been waiting for. Jesus would soon be lifted up by the Jews. It was symbolic of his crucifixion. When Jesus was nailed and died upon the cross, it became evident at that moment that he was the Christ. Peter boldly preached this when he addressed the crowd at Pentecost in Acts 2:36, **“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.”** When Jesus died on the cross it had appeared that evil had won. But the cross was not a symbol of defeat and shame. It was one of victory, forgiveness and reconciliation (Colossians 2:13-15).

In all, Jesus’ testimony is more than valid because he is from God. He came to the world not as a powerful warrior or authoritative Messiah, yet as a humble and lowly servant who lived and shared among sinners. He came to serve, not to be served. He came to sacrifice his life on the cross. In this, He knew his Father would not abandon him. As verse 29 says, **“The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”** Jesus came to obey God’s will for our sake. Praise Jesus who is the light of the world!

Second, Jesus promises, “Whoever follows me...” (12b). After Jesus’ declaration that he is the light of the world, he shares a beautiful promise. This promise is meant for everyone. There are no exclusions. Look at verse 12b. **“Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** Simply speaking, there are two kinds of worlds, the darkness and the light. What does Jesus mean by ‘the darkness’? When God created the world it was very good. Yet when Adam sinned in the Garden, the Lord took away the right to eternal life which separated man from God. No longer could man rest in God’s love and light, but had to suffer the pain and troubles of a dark world. For centuries, since the fall of Man, people of the world have been living and walking

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in the darkness. The fallen world we live in is this darkness. It is a dark world out there that struggles to know and understand the Father God, and strains to see His light. John 1:10-11 say, **“He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.”**

Darkness is very serious. It is not a light matter. Jesus repeats three times within verses 21-24 that those who did not believe in him would die in their sins. Sin only leads to one place. Sin leads to death (Ro 6:23). Still, many do not take sin and death with any urgency. They say, “It’s no big deal, everyone dies, so be it.” But that is not the end. Sin not only leads to death, but even worse, after death every sinner must face the Creator God and His judgment (Heb 9:27). It will not be a joyful day for those found guilty in their sins. It will be a terrible time of eternal suffering that no unforgiven sinner can escape.

Not only is the darkness dangerous, but it is hard to find our way through it without light. What happens when you get out of bed in the middle of the night? You stub your toe. That hurts. In the darkness, we are always blind and are walking into trouble. The Pharisees had been walking in the darkness. This was because they did not recognize Jesus as the light of the world and rejected him. Outwardly, the Pharisees looked very good in their elegant robes, and impressive phylacteries. They were also intelligent, memorizing the law word for word. Yet, they were dying in their sins in their unbelief. These days young college students also seem so bright. They are the future leaders of our nation. By outward appearances, they seem that they are moving along the right path. But we cannot be naïve about them walking in darkness. Last year three Northwestern students committed suicide. Everyone was shocked and didn’t have a clear explanation why. How terrible that they could not find their way in the darkness. We also remember the adulterous woman from the last passage. Her life was enveloped by the darkness through her lustful desire. Her sin would have been subject to the death penalty by law if Jesus hadn’t shown her mercy. In today’s world, lustful desire is rampant. Many young people, even married people, are living promiscuous or adulterous lives like it is common practice. The darkness consumes them. They want to enjoy temporarily, but it really leads to suffering endlessly. People walking in darkness are without direction. They have no hope. They don’t

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know where they are going. They need Jesus desperately. Without following Jesus, no one can escape this darkness.

On the other hand, if we follow Jesus, we will never walk in darkness. Let's read verse 12b again. **“Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”** Yes, we will have the light of life! Very simply, what happens to the darkness when we turn on the light? It disappears. Jesus, the light of the world, disperses all the elements of darkness from our hearts. No matter what our circumstances are, whether we've experienced pain, suffering, despair, disappointment, addictions, or overwhelming sins, Jesus promises that if we follow him, we will find our way out of the darkness and have the light of life. It means we will not die in our sins, but live eternally with Jesus in the heavenly kingdom. Light is the source of life. A plant of course needs water for nourishment, but if it does not have light it cannot live at all. Likewise, all men need the light of the world Jesus as their source of life. Therefore, we must turn on Jesus, the light, in our lives. With Jesus, we have new life, new joy, and new hope. We can see the truth and have clear direction for our lives. When we follow Jesus the light of the world, we have the light of life, the peace and joy of God, and we'll bear much fruit.

I recently read an autobiography by major league baseball pitcher, R.A. Dickey, which testifies to Jesus the light. It has a unique title: *“Wherever I Wind Up: My Quest for Truth, Authenticity, and the Perfect Knuckleball.”* R.A. before finding success had a very dark past. As a young child, he was molested and raped. To overcome his shame, he turned to Christ as a teenager but could not see the light clearly quite yet. As a rookie, he was offered a major league contract close to a million dollars. But in his final medical exam, doctors noticed he was born without a ligament in his elbow. The general manager immediately pulled the offer off the table. R.A. was angry, but he heard God's voice say, “It's ok.” He spent the next nine years trying to make it in baseball. As a last resort, he tried to learn to throw a knuckleball to sustain his career. A knuckleball is a slower pitch which has no spin where no one knows where it is going or where it will end up. So R.A. completely surrendered this to God as His will. In his knuckleball debut, R.A set a major league record...giving up six home runs in a game. They immediately cut him from the team. Seeing his career failure, and holding on to the shameful memories of his abuse, R.A. tried to attempt suicide through car exhaust fumes.

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But just then he heard God whisper to him, “Do not turn that key. I’ve got something else for you.” R.A. surrendered completely to God one more time. He began to see the light clearly, now recognizing why Jesus died for his sins. He didn’t care about performance, but rather the process and worshiped Christ. For the next six years he continued to pursue baseball resurrection. In 2012, sixteen years after he was told he was not good enough, he won the Cy Young award for baseball’s best pitcher. It was a rare feat at 37 years old, and the first knuckleballer to win in MLB history. R.A. Dickey knows now where he will wind up. He found the Truth, authenticity, and the perfect pitch through the light of the world, Jesus Christ.

I too have experienced both the darkness and the light in my life. Growing up, I was a quiet, clean, and pure boy. My mother even thought I’d become a doctor because I was always washing my hands if they got dirty. I thought the world I lived in was perfect. But I was naive. The darkness entered my life when my parents divorced. Gradually, I found myself stealing and lying a lot. I lived within a dysfunctional household with an alcoholic stepfather. I grew lonely and thirsty for love. After a few heartbreaks over girls, I became depressed. The darkness in my heart intensified. In college, I turned into a rebel where I indulged in drinking, viewing pornography, and eventually sexual immorality. I finally hit rock bottom and became suicidal. It was just at that time, deep in the pit of darkness, that a light appeared. As a graduate student, I was invited to Bible study through Dr. Jim Rabchuk. He taught me about the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Immediately, the light of Christ filled my soul with great joy. I learned that God called me out of the darkness and revealed my true life purpose to serve him. I soon began bearing much fruit. I went out on the campus inviting students to study the Bible, like I was doing. I presided at worship service, and glorified God through music and drama. I gave my future to God and just followed Jesus. His light led me to a stable career, a beautiful and prayerful wife in Colleen, and a home where we can worship Jesus. God also blessed us with a talented daughter Danielle who also now shines as a light as a national baton champion, and prays to share the light of Jesus with her teammates. Mostly, Jesus the light enables me to serve him for his world mission purpose. He’s called me to counsel and befriend many Northwestern students and we’ve sent international students like James to China and Daniel to Kenya as Jesus’ witnesses.

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When we accept Jesus as the light of the world, we too are called to share this good news. Jesus brings his light into our hearts so that we too can shine his light. Jesus preached this in the Sermon on the Mount through Matthew 5:14-16, **“You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.”**

Through this passage we learn that Jesus is the light of the world. He came as the Messiah to solve all our sin problems. Our world, our nation, and the hearts of young people right now are enslaved by the darkness. They need Jesus’ light. Let’s pray we can shine Jesus’ light on our campuses in this new school year. May we accept that Jesus is the light of the world. May we choose to follow him and never walk in darkness, but have the light of life.