

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.’”

In today’s passage Jesus is still in Jerusalem at the temple courts. Jesus boldly declares, “I am the light of the world.” Jesus also promises that those who follow him will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. What a wonderful promise. Let’s accept Jesus’ word and have the true light in our hearts.

First, Jesus said, “I am the light of the world” (12).

Look at verse 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.’” This is a great claim and a broad statement. What does Jesus mean when he says, “I am the light of the world”? Spiritually speaking, light refers to God’s revelation that identifies truth and distinguishes it from falsehood. Light also reveals God’s will and his deeper purposes that are not always obvious to men. Men without God live in the darkness. It is a darkness of deception and hypocrisy that obscures reality. It is destructive. It is also a darkness of ignorance that suppresses the truth.

In the preceding passage, the Pharisees’ hypocrisy was like a cloud of darkness. The Pharisees acted like holy men of God when they pronounced condemnation upon the woman caught in adultery. In reality, they were the same kinds of sinners. Even so, they constantly honored one another. They did not face the true condition of their souls. They used their establishment power to deceive and oppress ordinary people. But Jesus challenged them with words of truth. When they heard Jesus’ words, they had to examine themselves before condemning the woman. Suddenly, they began to go away until they were all gone. They were like cockroaches who disappear before the kitchen light.

Jesus not only exposed their hypocrisy, but he also revealed God’s love and saving grace upon the woman. It was true that the woman was a terrible sinner. But Jesus did not condemn her. Jesus came to save the woman. Jesus forgave her sins and gave her a new beginning. When Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you,” Jesus’ love shone into the woman’s heart like warm sunshine. The constant and unchanging sunshine produces warmth and energy that can raise a beautiful new flower. We have seen this love practiced through Mother Barry. She embraces others with Jesus’ unconditional love and saving grace. One person began to know Jesus, but was still mischievous. This person caused a lot of trouble. Mother Barry did not condone the mischievous behavior, but embraced the person with the love of God until that person deeply repented. Luke called Jesus the rising sun. Jesus reveals God’s love and saving grace upon sinners. We must come to Jesus each day and let him shine his grace and truth into our hearts.

Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is the light for people in Chicago and its suburbs. Jesus has been working at COD. Six tall and handsome suburban boys have made commitments to be shepherds. They don’t want to live a corrupted and easygoing life, but a life of holy mission. They found true meaning in Jesus. Then, from this year, several COD girl students began to accept Jesus’ light. Missionary David Kim is happy, but he also prays a little more. Jesus is the light for the people of the USA. Jesus has been working mightily in Columbus through Dr. Henry Park and his coworkers. Seventy-one persons attended their Christmas worship service; many were OSU students. They accepted Jesus and are growing spiritually.

Jesus is the light of the whole world. In Bulgaria, there is Shepherd Ruslan. He suffered a lot as a small child because his father was violent and greedy. Once, Ruslan’s mother bought a small toy for him. Then his father beat her mercilessly. His life was a nightmare. When he was seven, his parents divorced. When he and his mother began to stabilize, his father appeared again, claiming that he had changed. In fact, he deceived Ruslan with drugs and got him to testify against his mother to avoid paying child support. Ruslan had no peace. So he sought comfort in Buddhism. But Buddha did not reveal God to him. One day, between classes at the University of Sofia, he met Missionary John Jung. They began one-to-one Bible study. Matthew 11:28 says, “Come to me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Jesus visited him and gave him peace. The love of God drove out the darkness from his soul. Now he is not sorrowful or bitter. He sees God’s good purpose in his difficult childhood and has become a shepherd for young Bulgarians. Jesus is the light of the world.

Jesus said in verse 12b, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” To enjoy Jesus’ light, we must make a decision to follow Jesus. We must commit our lives and futures to Jesus and obey his word daily. At the end of this gospel, Jesus foretells that Peter would live a sacrificial shepherd life and even die on a cross like Jesus did. Then Jesus tells Peter, “Follow me.” To follow Jesus is to learn his mind and heart and to become a shepherd like him. Jesus promises that those who follow him will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. This life is the life that Jesus gives. Jesus himself lives in our souls and lights our path. Jesus gives us the absolute meaning of life. Jesus shows us our glorious destination of the kingdom of God. Jesus assures us of eternal life that satisfies our souls completely. Jesus gives us everything. A truly wise man will firmly decide to follow Jesus.

Everyone follows someone or something. In this culture of post-modernism, many people want to follow their feelings. Feelings lead them to follow movie stars, rock stars, and sports stars. But such people lead us astray. This year, the Academy Awards should all be given to the movie, “The Passion of the Christ.” Instead, a movie that glorifies Howard Hughes has received more attention. It is because the world loves the darkness instead of the light. In the past so many wanted to be like Michael Jackson. They bought his albums and practiced the moonwalk in their living rooms. But recent news articles suggest that he has turned out to be a wicked man. Tragically, many young people follow their feelings through internet activity. They are enticed by deceptive predators and fall into destructive traps. Only Jesus tells us the real truth. Only Jesus can save us from sin and death. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Let’s follow Jesus and have life.

Second, Jesus’ testimony is valid (13-20).

Jesus’ message of universal good news was beautiful and life-giving. The religious leaders should have said “amen.” But they were upset that Jesus occupied the temple area and was teaching the people. They wanted to evict Jesus by any means. As shadow follows light, the devil and his agents hung around the work of God. They said that his testimony was not valid. According to Jewish law, valid testimony had to be established on the basis of at least two witnesses (Nu 35:30; Dt 17:6).

Look at 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 Pharisees’ rules of evidence could not apply to Jesus because Jesus came from heaven. No one else has come from heaven, so no one else can witness about Jesus’ origin. Simply speaking, human beings cannot validate or invalidate Jesus’ testimony. We must accept Jesus’ testimony because Jesus is from God and Jesus is God.

Look at verse 15. “You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.” All human beings stand condemned in the sight of God because they are under the power of sin and death (Jn 3:18). There is no one who is sinless. There is no one who does not deserve God’s judgment. Sinful people enjoy passing judgment on others with human standards, such as education, wealth, or even appearance. The Pharisees were very proud of their knowledge of the law and they judged common people as cursed ones (7:49). They even tried to judge Jesus with their rules of evidence. Judging others based on human standards is a deceptive element of darkness. Being a little better than others never saved anyone. Only Jesus’ grace can save us. Still, however, sometimes we judge others, especially that one coworker. But even Jesus did not judge. John 3:17 says, “For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.” Jesus knows everything, but he is only gracious toward sinners. We must acknowledge Jesus’ grace and be gracious toward others.

Jesus knew everything about the religious leaders. If Jesus had passed judgment on them, he would have been right. But Jesus did not do so. Jesus listened to the Father and stood with the Father. The Father’s heart was to rescue the religious leaders from sin and death. With a great shepherd heart, Jesus made one more appeal to them to accept his testimony. Jesus produced two witnesses. One is Jesus himself and the other is the Father. Jesus strongly emphasized that the Father sent him (16,17). Still, the Pharisees did not accept Jesus’ words. Again, Jesus urged them to accept his testimony and be saved.

Third, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man” (21-30).

Though the Jews had been so rebellious and obstinate, Jesus did not give up on them. Jesus tried to help them see themselves as they truly were and receive his grace. Look at verse 21. “Once more Jesus said to them, ‘I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.’” Jesus meant he would return to the Father through his death and resurrection. They would not be able to follow him because they were still in their sin. Jesus’ words were spiritual truth. The Jews could not understand their meaning. Instead of accepting Jesus’ words, they tried to figure out Jesus’ words with human reason. They needed to learn the right attitude toward Jesus’ word. Look at verse 23. “But he continued, ‘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; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.’” Jesus’ word is as far above human reason as heaven is above earth. We must simply accept Jesus’ word and hold on to it as the truth of God. We must honor Jesus’ word as the word of God even when we don’t understand it. We remember the disciples. When Jesus said he would destroy the temple and raise it in three days, they could not understand. But they accepted his word. Later they could understand the gospel. The religious leaders needed this kind of attitude. What Jesus really wanted them to accept was not so complicated. It was very simple. They were sinners who needed salvation. And Jesus is our only Savior.

We must accept Jesus’ words. Jesus is from above and we are from below. Jesus says that we are sinners and he is our only Savior. But the people of our time never want to believe something that does not match with their feelings. There is a person who tries to understand Jesus by projecting his own feelings on Jesus. He cannot know Jesus on the basis of his feelings. Rather, he can develop many mythical gods like the Greeks did. This young man must simply accept Jesus’ words. He must admit that his problem is a sin problem and that only Jesus can solve it. There was a young man who was very selfish. But he did not feel selfish. So he did not think he was selfish. One day his shepherd told him, “You are selfish. Repent.” But he thought, “No, shepherd, you just don’t understand me.” Then his shepherd asked him to look objectively at his behavior. He was eating very regularly while his roommate was often going hungry. He was steadily gaining weight, while his roommate was getting more and more skinny. He saw this with his eyes, but he was still not convinced that he was selfish because he did not feel selfish. However, since his shepherd was so intensely trying to help him, he decided to accept his shepherd’s words by faith for the sake of their relationship. After doing so, his spiritual eyes began to open. He could see clearly that he was a very selfish sinner. It was the beginning of his healing.

It was time for the religious leaders to accept Jesus’ words. But they said to Jesus, “Who are you?” Jesus said, “Just what I have been claiming all along. I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is reliable, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.” The religious leaders had a great privilege of talking with Jesus. They thought they could say whatever they wanted without any consequence. But this was not true. Every rebellious and unbelieving word they spoke to Jesus would be held against them in the future if they did not repent. Jesus really did not want that to happen. Jesus again drew strength from the Father and testified to the grace of God upon sinners.

Look at verse 28. “So Jesus said, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.’” Here Jesus is talking about his death on the cross. It was through his death that he revealed God’s light most clearly. Jesus’ death revealed the seriousness of sin. Sin demanded that the holy Son of God be sacrificed like an animal in our places. It was the only way to satisfy the price of sin. At the same time, Jesus’ death revealed the love of God for sinners. God watched his one and only Son suffer abuse at the hands of cruel men. God watched his one and only Son writhe in agony and finally die on the cross to take the punishment that we deserve. That is how much God loves us. In this way Jesus became the light of the world.

Though the religious leaders had been so rebellious, Jesus believed that they would come to realize that he was the Messiah and be saved. The power of his cross sheds light that penetrates even the darkest of hearts. At the cross, Mr. Nicodemus saw the kingdom of God in Jesus. He boldly identified himself as Jesus disciple and claimed the privilege of burying Jesus’ body. A Roman centurion saw Jesus die and said, “Surely this man was the Son of God!” (Mk 15:39).

Look at verse 29. “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.” Jesus had the love of God in his heart. It was Jesus’ power source to overcome all sufferings and carry out his holy mission joyfully. Jesus maintained his love relationship with God through constant decisions to please God.

Even as Jesus spoke, many put their faith in him. Jesus' word prevailed over all the darkness and led people to salvation. Jesus is the light of the world. We must not follow our feelings or other people. Let's follow Jesus and learn from him through Bible study. Jesus promises that we will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.