

Advent 2 – John 8. 12-20 – The Guiding Light

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.' 13 The Pharisees challenged him, 'Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.' 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. 15 You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.

20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

Opening Prayer- O Come Immanuel – shine your light in our present darkness we pray. AMEN

We live at a time when people are searching and longing for light in a way I've never known in my lifetime. There's something heart warming about the thirst for celebration and Christmas trees going up, about the elaborate food plans and looking for creative ways to meet up with friends and family. But what if there was the possibility of Discovering an eternal Light, that doesn't flicker and die. In today's reading the people were trying to work out if Jesus really was that LIGHT? Not just wise man, a good moral teacher or a miracle worker.....but God in human flesh in which people are invited to "Come and see Jesus."

Jesus made some enormously staggering claims about himself and here he says in verse 12, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus has a metaphor: the light of the world. Jesus has a claim: "I am the light of the world." Jesus has a call: "Follow me, and you'll have the light of life."

The Metaphor – Light of the World

What is the light of the world? it's amazing. On earth The SUN (the light of the world) is the most basic source of all of our *life* and light on earth. If we didn't have the sun we'd freeze and die. When a little child wakes up in the middle of the night screaming, what do we do? We don't make it darker, instead to comfort the child, you turn on a light. *Light is wondrous because it brings life, truth and joy.* We need light spiritually, psychologically, emotionally, morally, even physically for us to live, grow and thrive. – Light is that important and that central that's the scale of the metaphor/comparison Jesus is using.

The Claim – I AM the light of the world

Jesus says, "I am the light of the world." To understand how incredible Jesus' claim is look at verse 20 where John records that somehow people didn't kill him, that's how offensive Jesus claim is. Jesus is making three basic claims. "I am the ultimate source of life, truth and joy."

Firstly *ultimate life*. Jesus is saying "I and I alone can bring you eternal life." When the sun comes up in the spring and starts to get near the earth, things melt and things begin to grow. "When I come near you ... When I stop just being an inspirational example to you, but I actually become your light, the way you know is you begin to change. The life of God comes into you and you begin to change. You begin to sprout, and that life will last forever, and you will live forever with me. I am the source of ultimate life."

Secondly, *ultimate truth* People say, "Where does Jesus Christ say he's God?" HERE When he says, "I am the light of the world," Referring back to John 7.37 in front of the candelabra at the Feast of Tabernacles, on the night in which the lack of the glory of God is most felt recalling God's provision in Exodus, Jesus is saying, I don't just point to God like the prophets, I am the glory of God "I am the only way for you to know who God really is. And for the light of God to *centrally and permanently come into your life*

He is not saying no other prophet, no other philosophy, or nobody else knows anything about God. He's saying, "They are moons, and I am The Sun. They reflect my glory, but I *am* the glory." Of course, you can see a lot in the moonlight. but nothing like what you can see in the sunlight.

If you say, "Wow, that's quite a claim." Well, The founders of the other major religions say "I am the moon." They're pointing you to God, they're not divine; there's the divine. They're all saying, "I am the moon. I'm reflecting, but I am not," but Jesus is saying "I am the sun." - I am the ultimate truth

Thirdly, ultimate joy or beauty. Light is where we get our beauty from. Colors? What are colors? They're nothing but parts of light. Most of us spend quite a bit of money to go to beautiful places, seeking a beautiful body or appearance. We listen to beautiful words. We gaze longingly on beautiful art or beautiful things, but those things will never satisfy the deepest recesses of your soul. Jesus says I am the beauty you've been looking for. They're just the moon; I am The Sun."

But, we do not want merely to see beauty ... We want to be united with the beauty we see, to receive it ourselves, to bathe in it ... *Jesus Christ here in 8:12 does not say, "If you follow me you'll get near the light of life." It says you'll have it.* What are we getting? We're getting the source of life who having lived a perfect life, gave himself up for us on the cross to pay for our sin once and for all, so that we could experience a relationship with God, Jesus says, "Follow Me, and have that life for yourself."

The Call – Follow Me and Have the Light of Life

What does it mean to follow Jesus? With the light of life in us we're not called to hide away in the dark. Your tongue, your bad habits, your tv and internet watching, your sin and brokenness, your fears and preoccupations need to come into His light. Let his light shine so that we live with integrity and shine brightly in the world that desperately needs light in the darkness.

"How do I know if the light of Christ is illuminating my life?". The only way I can get my kids up in the morning ... I go in and pull back the curtains. Why? Because, you see, light is rousing. Light wakes you up. It's impossible to sleep. That's what happens when you're illuminated by the light of Jesus: you're scared by the call or you're filled with love and wonder, but you're not indifferent. you're waking up. Longing to change, longing to grow, longing to discover, longing to serve.

Years ago there was a famous Baptist pastor named Charles Spurgeon. When he was a young man in London in the 1850s he sometimes went to church, but on a very snowy day he had to go to a little church around the corner. He goes in and sits down, along with one other person in the church. The preacher gets up. It turns out the minister couldn't get there, so it was the elder who had never preached a sermon before. The Elder gets up, opens the Bible, and reads his text. Again, again and again - He doesn't know how to preach.

He reads the text out of Isaiah, and he says, "Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth ...". He says again, "Look to me and be saved. Don't you see? You don't have to do anything. You don't have to walk anywhere. You don't have to take even one step. Simply look. You just have to look. You have to see what he's done for you. After he had done that for about 15 minutes, He looks at Spurgeon, points at him, and he says, "Young man, I see you are miserable and you're going to stay miserable until you obey my text." Spurgeon had actually been, for a year, struggling with how to know spiritual reality?" He tried everything.

He tried giving up everything, so he tried moralism. Then he tried mysticism. He tried to fast and pray and tried to have experiences. Yet when this Elder said, "Obey my text," it dawned on him. "Jesus Christ is the light, because the only way I can be saved is just to look. I have to accept what he's done." "Look unto me, and be you saved, all the ends of the earth ..."

Let's pray.

Thank you, Father, for the gift of the Light of the world, that this morning we would turn and look to you and receive your saving grace. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.