

The Light of Life

John 7:53-8:30

KV 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.'"

Light is essential for life. Without sunlight, no life could exist on the earth. All living things love the sunlight. The busiest time of year in Hawaii is during winter, because that's when everyone from the US goes there on vacation to soak up the sun and sit on the beach. A certain husband bought his wife some flowers for her birthday, and one of them did not bloom. It was droopy, facing down toward the table. But the next day, when the sun came out, the flower bloomed and lifted up its face toward the sun, basking in its light. Jesus is like light – he is essential for life. In fact, Jesus says he is the **light of life**. Through this passage, we will learn how Jesus can make such a claim, and what that means for us.

Part I: Jesus Gives the Light of Life

The Feast of Tabernacles has ended, and the 7-day celebration has come to a close. Each person went to his own home, but Jesus had no place to stay in Jerusalem. Instead, he went to the Mount of Olives, where he stayed for the night. *At dawn, he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them (v.2)*. This was one of Jesus' greatest passions and joy – to teach people about spiritual things, to teach them about the kingdom of God and about God himself. He brought to light the hidden things of God, and explained great truths found in Scripture.

While Jesus was teaching, he was rudely interrupted by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. They brought in a woman they had caught in an act of adultery and placed her in front of everyone. First of all, I wonder how or why so many people were involved in catching this woman – but it wasn't this woman's condemnation they were interested in. They were interested in trying to *trap* Jesus in order to *accuse* him. They asked him, *"In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?(v.5)"* They hated Jesus with a passion because they were evil and corrupt. Jesus pointed out their hypocrisy, clearing the temple which they had turned into a market, and rebuking them when they opposed his healing on the Sabbath.

They were trying to figure out some way to get Jesus, and they seemed to have come up with the perfect plan. In the Law, those who were caught in adultery were to be put to death. *Leviticus 20:10* says, *"If a man commits adultery with another man's wife – with the wife of his neighbor – both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death."* But notice the subtle twisting of the law. First of all, *both* offenders must be put to death – but they only brought in the woman. Second, the Law did not say specifically to stone them, but to put them to death. However, to the Pharisees, Jesus just could not win. If he said "Yes, stone her," he would be accused of breaking the Roman law, where only the Roman government had the power to pronounce life or death. If he said, "No, do not stone her," he would be accused of breaking Moses' law. And if he did not say anything, he would be accused of accepting sinful practices. He already had a reputation for being a "friend of sinners" and his ministry would be discredited.

After they had questioned Jesus, Jesus did not say a word. Instead, he bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. Though he did not say much with his lips, his action spoke volumes. First of all, this shows that Jesus was *not quick to judge*. He was *not quick to point* out the flaws in the Pharisee's understanding of the law, he was *not quick to defend* himself, and he was *not quick to condemn* the woman. Jesus was not interested in pronouncing judgment.

The Pharisees, however, were relentless. They continued to question Jesus, "What do you say? What do you say? What do you say?" They are like children in a car on a long road trip asking "Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Are we there yet?" Finally, Jesus straightened up, and here came the moment of truth. What would he say so that the Pharisees could finally get him? And so Jesus said, perhaps with the grace of an angel, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her,*" and simply returned to the ground and started writing again (v.7-8). I could see the Pharisees' jaws drop! That's not what they expected! But Jesus didn't stand there and stare at them, or they might want to respond. Instead he went back down to the ground, giving them an opportunity to look within themselves.

In this way, Jesus revealed their sins. By casting that question, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first.." he put the spotlight onto the Pharisees and teachers of the law, and their sins were exposed. One by one, beginning with the oldest one, they were conscience stricken and left.

When they all were gone, *when no one was left except the woman and Jesus, he finally straightened up again and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin. (v.10-11).*" Imagine how the woman felt when she heard those words, "Then neither do I condemn you." A light must have burst forth in her heart – she must have felt so free, unburdened, unshackled. It was a dark and gloomy moment, when she stood with the cloud of death hovering over her head, but Jesus gave her the light of life by silencing her accusers and giving her his full pardon. Life must have tasted even sweeter to her after that moment.

However, just because he did not condemn the woman does not mean he accepted her sin. Just as important, and maybe more so, is his follow-up command: *Go now and leave your life of sin*. Remember, the woman had committed sin, and was deserving of death along with the other man. She was not forgiven to return to those sins, she was forgiven so that she could *leave* her life of sin. When we are forgiven, we must leave our old life of sin.

Now contrast for a moment the Pharisees and the woman. When the spotlight hit the Pharisees, they snuck away, one by one, leaving the light and crawling back into the darkness. The woman on the other hand, remained under the light and was offered a full pardon. When Jesus' light reveals what you have done – how will you respond? I heard a short riddle that asks, "If you're in a field, what would be your reaction if a helicopter light found you?" It almost depends on your heart. If you're guilty, you'll feel fear. If you want to be saved, you'll feel joy. As for all of us, Jesus' light will reveal our sins. But if the light finds you then praise God! That is your chance to be forgiven and saved.

Part II: Jesus *Is* the Light of Life

Jesus does not only give the light of life; he is the very *source*. Jesus *IS* the light of life. Let's please read v.12 together: "*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."*" Jesus spoke these words while teaching in the temple area where the offerings were put (v. 20). This area was called the Court of the Women, because this was as far as women could go within the temple grounds. However, this was the place where a lot of the worship and teaching activities took place in the temple. In this place stood four 50-foot candelabras which were lit on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It was said that these candles lit up all of the rooftops in Jerusalem. Jesus spoke these words the 8th day after the Feast, so these candles might have been burnt out – but imagine being here, as Jesus said "*I am the light of the world,*" in the midst of these giant lights.

In the world there are two kinds of lights: natural light and artificial light. Artificial light is anything that is not sunlight (like fire, electric, fluorescent, etc.). I've seen plants grown by artificial lights, but they don't seem nearly as happy as those plants out in the sun. In the dark of the *deep* ocean, some fish have deceptive lights that attract other fish as bait, and when the unsuspecting fish comes to the light, it gets eaten. Likewise, spiritually, there is the true light, that is Jesus, and false light, which is everything else. We might try to light up our lives with false light. Some people devote their lives to dancing. Others become skilled masters Tae Kwon Do. Still others escape to music, movies or video games. Beware of the false lights. These at best can only offer temporary happiness some might devour you, but Jesus offers eternal joy, because he is the *true light*.

Jesus said, "*I am the light of the world...*" *but the Pharisees challenged him and said, "Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid (v.12-13)."* Basically they're saying "You are false because no one else can verify your statements." The problem is, they are denying the only one who has been to heaven and the only one who has come from heaven. Jesus' witness (his testimony) is valid because he was there. Jesus knows exactly where he came from, and where he is going. If that is the truth, it doesn't matter what people think – that is the truth. Jason Du can tell me he's from China, because he is. Whether I believe that or not does not make it less true, because he is from China. He's been there, and he might go there again someday. Jesus is from heaven.

Jesus offered more evidence to his statements. Although his own witness was valid, he does provide another witness; and that is God the Father, who sent him (v.18). God himself testified publicly when Jesus was baptized, saying, "*This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17).*" A booming voice thundered from heaven, and many people witnessed it. The Pharisees might have even been there when God spoke, but here they are asking Jesus again, "*Where is your father? (v.19)*" They have heard Jesus speak many times about his Father who is in heaven, but they stubbornly *refuse to accept* that fact.

They did not understand that God was Jesus' Father. You could also say that they had *no light*. No understanding, no knowledge. Jesus said to them, "*You do not know me or my Father. (v.19)*" Wow – the Pharisees, the religious leaders of God's chosen people *did not know God!* –

and this is why: Jesus said, “*If you knew me, you would know my Father also. (v.19)*” Here Jesus gives the link and the key to knowing God: *it is through knowing Jesus.* Because they rejected Jesus, they rejected God. You cannot love the father, but hate his son. If I had a son, and somebody hated him, I would see that as an offence against myself. If you claim to love God, you must love Jesus, who is his Son.

In v.24 Jesus tells them, “*I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins.*” This is a very solemn and stern warning not only to the Pharisees, but to us as well. Jesus finds this statement worth repeating: “*You will die in your sins,*” so let us pay close attention to that. What causes death? We see in nature that the absence of light causes death. Plants require light – that’s where they get their energy from, and without light you get a weaker, anemic type of plant that will not survive long. Our sins separate us from God, who is the source of our life. It is our sins which cause us to die. Romans 6:23 says, “*For the wages of sin is death...*”

Your sins cause you to die, but there is hope. Let’s all read v.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.’*” Jesus is referring to his death, by which he would be crucified. This was the reason why he was sent – to die on the cross for you and me! Romans 6:23 says, “*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*” No other man died for you to save you. No other false god came to die for you. Those things cannot save you.

What can wash away my sin?
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus!
 O precious is the flow,
 That makes me white as snow,
 No other Fount I know,
 Nothing but the blood of Jesus!

Like the adulterous woman in the temple courts, I was condemned to death, but Christ died for me, and pleaded for my forgiveness to His Father in Heaven!

It is because of Jesus and what he has done that restores our union with God, who is our source of light and life. He gives us hope in eternal life: and how can I be sure? Because on the 3rd day after he died, *he rose again!* Death no longer has victory, death no longer has a hold on me! *Where, O death is your victory? Where, O death is your sting? Thanks be to God! He gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor 15:55-57).* His death. His resurrection. That is why He is the **true light**, and that is why He is the **light of life**.

Part III: Walking in the Light

My dear friends, it is not enough to simply *know* that Jesus is the light of life – but there must also be a *walking* in the light. Jesus said to the woman, “*Go now and leave your life of sin.*” If you accept the forgiveness and pardon for your sins, then you must not go back to that lifestyle any longer. Jesus died for those sins: there should be an overwhelming feeling of love

for what he has done. If you return to your sins, how can you prove that you love Jesus who loved you?

In our key verse (v.12), there is another aspect of walking in the light. Jesus says, “*Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness.*” After we go and leave our lives of sin, Jesus doesn’t just leave us to ourselves. No, he calls us to follow him. How shall we follow him? *Luke 9:23 says, “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.”* Practically, it means to *imitate* him. Jesus went to care for the poor, the sick, the helpless, the needy. Jesus came to serve and not to be served. He humbled himself, taking the nature of a servant, and making himself nothing. He prayed to God frequently each day.

Following Jesus allows us to walk in the light – and we grow more and more into his image. Otherwise, when we don’t follow Jesus, we walk in the darkness. Before we met Jesus, all of us walked in darkness. We are blind, and cannot see the truth – just as the Pharisees could not see the plain truth of Jesus. When we walk in the darkness, we cannot see the things that make us stumble, and we will get lost and confused. Only by following Jesus does he promise that we will never walk in the darkness. *Proverbs 3:5-6 says, “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight.”*

Finally, see v.29-30, “*The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.*’ *Even as he spoke, many put their faith in him.*” Walking in the light requires **FAITH**. Hebrews 11:6a says, “*And without faith it is impossible to please God...*” Jesus always did what pleased His Father. In order to please God, we must have *faith* in Him. We must have *faith* in Jesus Christ, and his promises. Abraham was tested once to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac. He knew that God promised a to bring a great nation through Isaac’s children, so even though Isaac was not married yet, Abraham reasoned that God HAD to keep his word. If he killed his son Isaac, God would *have to* bring him back to life. This was the simple *faith* Abraham had. God has promised salvation, heaven and eternal life to those who believe in His Son, and by faith we should be able to taste it now.

Faith perhaps might be the most difficult part about walking in the light, but it is *the most important*. When we become Christians and put our faith in Jesus Christ, usually good things will happen, but usually some bad things happen too. But we must trust in God that they are for our ultimate good. The reason bad things happen may be because God wants to humble us or teach us something valuable – he does not allow us to suffer for no reason, his ultimate goal is to turn us away from this world and put our trust in heaven. My faith is challenged every day ... some weeks I get *hard* but very *valuable* comments on my first draft of the message, but they have happened so that I can produce better messages. Even while working on this message, I got an alert from the computer systems in the middle of the night for work that I had to quickly resolve. Sometimes, though *very rare*, I may get into an argument with my wife that seems to have no resolution, except that I humble myself and repent of my *desire* to be right. But over the past few months I have learned to take comfort that *God is working for the good of those who love him*, and I actually *cannot* count 1 difficulty that I have not overcome by his grace. Praise God for that. Jesus is the **light of life**, for this life and the next.