

PP I Am: The Light of the World

Text John 8:12

10/1-2/2016

Do you recall what the first recorded words that God said are in the entire Bible?

PP You may have guessed the answer: ***“And God said, ‘Let there be light’”*** **Genesis 1:3**

The first thing God did in creation was to separate light from darkness

Isaiah, foretelling the coming Messiah, said, ***“Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the***

PP ***glory of the LORD has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and His glory will be seen upon you. And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.”*** **Isaiah 60:1-3**

Since this isn't referring to physical darkness, what does ***‘thick darkness’*** mean?

We say when we are unaware of an event we were in the dark, or to learn is to be enlightened

But spiritually, thick darkness is the sin-darkened heart that wants nothing to do with God

It is the sin-darkened world that intentionally obscures the glory of God in all things

It is the astrophysicist looking through a telescope concluding natural causes created our galaxy

It is the botanist looking through a microscope in awe of micro-evolution in plant species

The humanist gazing at a work of art on a museum wall in wonder at the capability of humanity

This spiritual darkness has settled over the whole earth affecting every person

PP Paul wrote of it: ***“For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For His invisible attributes, namely, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.”*** **Romans 1:19-21**

If people are to be saved out of this darkness, then God must light the way, and He has...

PP ***“For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*** **2 Cor. 4:6**

The emphasis of John in his gospel is that Jesus is the light and He has come into our world

PP 1-Jesus is ‘the Light’

“Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world.’” **John 8:12**

Recall from the first sermon in this series that there are 7 times in John's gospel that Jesus combines the phrase ***‘I am’*** with a metaphor

Each time He reveals a different facet of His nature, and His work as the Savior of the world

Last week PTV taught on the first these, ***“I am the bread of life”***

PP ***‘I am’*** is the Old Testament name Yahweh, the name above all names, the eternal, personal, faithful-to-redeem-and-save God

It is the God of the present tense Who never changes, not *I was*, or *I will be*, but *I am*...

Here, Jesus reveals that He is the light of the world in every age and to every nation

But what is significant about this metaphor and why does He reveal Himself to us in this way?

Think with me a moment about what Jesus, the Light does in a person's heart

PP a-The Light exposes the darkness

If you are a hunter, then you surely know what it is like to out in the woods early in the morning while it is still dark, and as dawn approaches, you observe everything that was hidden and indistinguishable slowly beginning to become visible

In a different thought, parents can usually identify with the horror of opening your teen's bedroom door and turning on the light suddenly seeing the chaos and mess

You wonder why you even looked...the light exposed what in this case might be better hidden

I have told this story before of my three roommates and I living in an apartment complex in Lynchburg, Va, and we were not always the cleanest bunch of guys

That all changed when in the middle of the night, I walked into the kitchen to get a drink of water, and turned on the light

There on the floor, on the countertops, scurrying under the stove and fridge, was an armada, flock, herd, gaggle, whatever you call it, of roaches

Cleaning commenced immediately!

But this is what light does, it exposes, and what it exposes in the hearts of men and women often makes them recoil

The darkness within us is sin, and when the Light of the World shines on a sinful heart, the person can finally see the truth, and it is not a pretty picture

But sin is much deeper than merely wrong behaviors, it is selfishness and rebellion

It is the internal motivation for the gratification of self at the expense of God and others

A sinful heart is a heart at war with God, one in full rebellion with the Lord of the universe

This is why Jesus, the light of the world was not often welcomed, because He exposed what was in the hearts of people, and the hearts of people burned in conviction

PP b-*The Light condemns the darkness*

The *light this world* produces tells us our problems are outside us and the solution is inside us

Therefore, you need but unlock your own potential and connect to your resources and energies

But the gospel reverses that and explains that the problem is inside us and the solution outside

PP *"your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear...Therefore justice is far from us, and righteousness does not overtake us; we hope for light, and behold, darkness, and for brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind; we grope like those who have no eyes; we stumble at noon as in the twilight, among those in full vigor we are like dead men."* **Isaiah 59:2, 9-10**

The darkness was caused by sin as it separated us from God causing Him to hide His face

And one of clearest, most terrible connections that the bible makes between darkness and sin was seen on the cross of Jesus Christ

It was at noon on the cross where the Son of God was nailed, that the Father poured out on Him the sins of all those who would believe in Him

PP *"there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour."* **Mark 15:33**

The light of the world exposes darkness in us and in the world, but even more, it condemns us, rendering us without excuse

We all know the tendency to try and excuse our faults, or rationalize our mistakes

But sin cannot be excused, nor can it be explained away and no one can squirm out from underneath the weight of its guilt

We stand before God utterly guilty, without excuse, without the ability to blame anyone else, not our parents, not our spouse, not this society, or our neighbor
 We have nothing with which to barter God with, and everything we thought was good about us, the light exposes as filthy rags
 This realization produces in self-righteous people, anger, ***“So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple.” John 8:59***

PP c-The Light opposes the darkness

Recall the 10 plagues God brought upon Egypt when they would not let the Israelites leave
 The ninth plague was darkness and we might be tempted to think, what’s the big deal about dark
PP ***“Then the LORD said to Moses, “Stretch out your hand toward heaven, that there may be darkness over the land of Egypt, a darkness to be felt.” So Moses stretched out his hand toward heaven, and there was pitch darkness in all the land of Egypt three days. They did not see one another, nor did anyone rise from his place for three days, but all the people of Israel had light where they lived.” Exodus 10:21-23***

If you have ever taken a tour into a cave system, and experienced the moment when the tour guide turns off the light for a brief time, then you understand that darkness can be felt
 Darkness is not merely a default condition when there is no light

PP It is a created thing... ***“I form light and create darkness...” Isaiah 45:7***

But the light is in opposition to the darkness and we see this from the Apostle Paul

PP ***“you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.” 1 Thessalonians 5:5***

A person is either of the light or of the darkness

PP ***“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” John 1:5***

‘the Light of the World’ does than just oppose the darkness, He overcomes it

Imagine in that cave system with the tour, feeling that thick darkness oppressing your senses
 The tour guide flips the switch, and a battle between light and darkness begins, one trying to gain the upper hand over the other, the outcome still in doubt

But that is not reality...for light immediately overcomes darkness without a struggle, such is the power of Jesus, ***‘the Light of the World’***

The moment a sinner puts his or her trust in Jesus Christ, light floods the soul illuminating the mind and filling the heart with the light of hope

And in that moment, we are brought into the great mission of Jesus Christ, which we see next

PP 2-Jesus is the *‘Light of the World’*****

John 8:12 is spoken by Jesus in the Court of Women of the Temple in Jerusalem

The 8-day *Festival of Tabernacles*, Israel’s most joyful feast, had just drawn to a close

A celebration unique to this Festival was the ceremony of lights, when the 4 great lamps in the Court of Women were lit

These were 73 feet tall, each with 4 branches or bowls at the top filled with pure olive oil
 16 lamps in all, and the wicks for each made from the worn out linen robes of the priests

In their light the Priests and Pharisees would pick up torches and dance and juggle and the people would celebrate throughout the night while the musicians played in celebration

It was written that *“He who has not beheld this celebration has never seen joy in his life.”*
 The ceremony symbolized God’s leading of Israel through the wilderness for 40 years in a pillar of fire, and also His glorious presence that filled the tabernacle and Solomon’s temple

But another symbolic meaning was God’s mission for Israel to be a light to the Gentiles
 As the 8-day festival would come to a close, one of the lamps was left unlit, symbolizing the Jewish peoples’ hope that one day the Messiah would come
 It was the Messiah lamp

The connection to the Ceremony of Lights and the Messiah candle couldn’t be more clear
 Jesus is the ***‘Light of the world’***, not just to the Jewish people, but the Gentiles as well
 Yet no matter how often the Old Testament declared this, Israel seemed to miss it

PP *“I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”* Isaiah 49:6

Unlike those stationary great candles in the Court of Women, the Light of the World never goes out, and never stays still

‘Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness’

Jesus is in perpetual motion, and those who believe in Him follow where He goes
 And where He goes is into the world, opening blind eyes so people can believe and be saved
 Spiritual darkness is something that every person is born with, but Jesus opens blind eyes
 He perfectly demonstrates this in the physical healing of a man born blind in the next chapter
 There He said, ***“We must work the works of Him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”***

John 9:4-5

To follow Jesus then is to do the work of God, bringing His light to the darkness of this world

PP ***“You are the light of the world...let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*** Matthew 5:14-16

Let me quickly tell you that this is why we have invested more than \$250,000 in our Restoring Hope Ministries in Dungu, DRC

Jim Funari and Geoff Graham are there right now, leading a team that is making bricks and clearing a part of our 2,000 acres to build the Hope Center where we will partner with the local churches to restore, train and sustain the community there

One of our guiding principles was to take the hope of the gospel to one of the darkest places on earth and God has led us to Dungu, confirming this in spectacular, undeniable ways
 Where the Light of the World goes, His people follow, and the ***‘light of life’*** is the result

PP 3-Jesus gives His followers ‘the light of life.’

PP John explained earlier, ***“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”*** John 1:4
 In the bible, light leads to life, and darkness leads to death

PP Jesus said that the unbeliever will be ***“cast...into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*** Matthew 25:30

PP But for the believer, ***“night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”*** Revelation 22:5

In the heavenly city of Jerusalem will be eternal light but outside it will be outer, utter darkness

We shall all, each one of us, spend eternity either in the light or in the darkness
 Yet eternal life for the believer has already begun and there are incredible effects happening in us
 Returning one final time to the Ceremony of Lights in the Feast of Tabernacles, it was said, once
 lit, *“There was no courtyard that was not illuminated from the light.”*

Brother and sister, we are in the light rather than the darkness, but there are shadows still that we
 encounter, shadows of struggles with sin, shadows of doubt and fear, and times where we
 are not faithful

PP But there is great assurance in **Proverbs 4:18**, *“But the path of the righteous is like the light
 of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day.”*

Do not give into despair as you struggle in your walk with Christ

Continue to follow Him, knowing Him as He has revealed Himself through His Word, and His
 light in you will shine brighter and brighter until the Day He returns or brings you home

I'll end by telling you that in **John 8:12**, we see a picture of the good news of Jesus Christ

PP We have shown you that the gospel can be explained with 4 words: **Creation, Fall,
Redemption and Restoration**

In the beginning there was light, but sin brought separation from God and spiritual darkness
 But the light of the world gives life, and we who trust in Him join His mission to bring hope to
 those living in darkness, as God works to restore all things to Him

If you are still in the darkness of your sin, you can know for certain that you will one day live in
 eternity with Jesus, the Light of the world...trust in Him to forgive you your sins

If you have already done that, then your purpose, mine as well, is to be the light to those living in
 darkness, telling them of Jesus, shining with our good works so Jesus is glorified

Amen?

Pray