

ARE YOU FOLLOWING THE LIGHT?

How many of you have ever been in a place of complete and total darkness—so dark that you literally **could not see** your hand in front of your face? My wife and I—along with our 3 daughters, if my memory serves me right—had that experience when we visited Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico, in 2001.

How scary was it? It really wasn't scary at all! **Why?** Because we knew the darkness was **temporary!** It was only going to last a minute or two—if that—and then the Park Ranger would turn on his or her flashlight and the darkness would disappear!

But **what if** the light **didn't come on** when the Ranger hit the switch? What if he or she said, "We have no light—and are going to have to make our way out of here in **total** darkness!" Would that be terrifying? Imagine being in that scenario with a group of 20 people that you first met less than an hour ago. I can't help but think some people would be "freaking out!"

And then the Park Ranger says, "**I know** the cave well—and I know **the way out** of here! You need to think of me as **your light**—and follow me! I will lead you to safety, but you must do what I say—and stick together!" I tend to think **most** of us—hopefully **all of us**—would gladly follow the Park Ranger! And as we were following him or her, I think we would be preoccupied with one thought: "I can't wait to see light!"

As you already know from your outline, this morning we are going to be looking at Jesus **as the light** that brings us out of darkness. Why look at Jesus as the light during the Christmas season? Because Christmas is **all about lights**, right?

No; Christmas is not all about lights—it's about **God coming to earth** as a man! And one of the reasons He came was to be the **true light**. We see that truth taught in John 1; please turn there and follow along as I read verses 6-14.

So in what sense is Jesus the true light? He is obviously **not a flashlight** that we can turn off and on when we find ourselves in the dark! Jesus is a light in the **spiritual** sense because the darkness He leads us out of is **spiritual**. And we see here, in verse 11, that not everyone receives Him as the light.

My challenge for us this morning is this: *Have you found your way out of the darkness by following the Light?*

1. The prophecies of a coming Light

There are a number of prophecies—proclamations, not predictions—that God made through His prophets promising that He would send light. I want to share a few of them with you to show that God's people **should have understood** that **Jesus** was the Light.

Isaiah 9:2 "The people that walked in darkness have **seen a great light**: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath **the light shined**."

Darkness here does not refer to the **absence of physical light** because of something like the power going out. It refers to a **place of despair** and hopelessness because death has cast its shadow on it. It is the picture of the nation of Israel in Isaiah's day—and of Galilee in Jesus' day.

God through Isaiah expands on where that light would come from. Notice what it says in **Isaiah 42:6-7** "I the Lord have called **thee** in righteousness, and will hold **thine** hand, and will keep **thee**, and **give thee** for a covenant of the people, for a **light of the Gentiles**; ⁷To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

Here we see that the light is a **servant** of God's, that God gives to mankind, that will free them from blindness and captivity.

God gives us even **more details** of this servant in **Isaiah 49:6** “And He said, It is a light thing that thou shouldest be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also **give thee for a light** to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be **my salvation** unto the end of the earth.”

Here we see that God would send a servant that would once again be for His people—the tribes of Jacob—but also be a light to the Gentiles. That’s not all, though. This coming One would not just be a light: He would be **my** (God’s) salvation “unto the end of the earth”—meaning available to all the world!

And then we have a prophecy in **the New Testament** where a priest named Zacharias—while praising God for the birth of his son, John the Baptist, exclaims this about Christ in **Luke 1:78b-79**: “...whereby the dayspring [meaning, sunrising] from on high hath visited us, **To give light** to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Not only does Zacharias quote Isaiah 9:2, but he also proclaims that **Christ is the One** who brings light! Back to John 1. In vs 6, we see that God sends John to bear witness of the Light. He himself was not the light—it plainly says that in vs 8. **Who** was the Light? **Jesus was!** We know that from Zacharias, John’s father, from the verses we just looked at in Luke.

But we also have that truth taught here in John 1 where we have...

2. The Person of Light

It is impossible to miss the fact that Jesus Christ—God in the flesh—is the true Light that the Apostle John refers to in verse 9!

--In vs 1, we see that the Word was God.

--In vs 3, we see that the Word was the Creator.

--In vs 10, we see that the true Light was in the world—and that the world was made by Him.

--In vs 14, we see that the Word—God the Creator and the True Light—was made flesh and dwelt on earth.

And then—as if to **make sure** we are sure of what we should already **be sure of**, John spells it out in verse 17 “For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by **Jesus Christ.**”

To recap, God said He would be sending a light. Zacharias, John the Baptist’s father, said Jesus was the light. John the Baptist said Jesus was the Light—and so did the Apostle John. And if that is not enough evidence that Jesus is the light, Jesus Himself proclaimed that He was the Light!

That brings us to...**3. The proclamations from Jesus that He was the Light**

Did Jesus **claim** to be the light of the world? Yes, He did—and way more than once! A number of Jesus’ proclamations occur here in the book of John. Since we are sticking in the same book (for now), I’m going to have you turn to them.

The first couple we are going to look at are **implied**. In other words, what Jesus says shows that He is **implying** that He is the Light without specifically **saying** He is the Light.

--One place He does that is in John 3. Please turn there.

--John 3:16 and 17 remind us of the **positive aspects** of God sending His Son—that through Him we can have **everlasting life and be saved**.

--In John 3:18, we see the flip side of **not believing** on Christ. What about those who **choose not to** believe Christ? They are condemned already!

So in verses 16, 17, and 18, Jesus talks about the coming of Himself as the **Son of God**. But in vs 19...and 20....and 21, Jesus doesn’t refer to **the Son** at all!

Instead, He switches gears and talks about **the light**.

--In John 3:19, Jesus says that “light is come into the world.”

--In John 3:20, Jesus says that those that do evil **don’t want to come** to the light.

--But in John 3:21, Jesus says that there are those that **do come to** the light. Do you see the correlation here?

--Just as Christ came into the world, light came into the world.

--And just as belief in Christ rescues you from being condemned, coming to the light shows that your works are brought about by God.

--On the other hand, those that **do** evil **remain** evil because they refuse to come to the light. So if you are condemned for **rejecting Christ**—and are condemned for **rejecting the light**—it means that Christ is the Light!

Please turn now to John 12 where we have another instance of Jesus **implying** that He is the light without **explicitly saying** it.

--Look at John 12:32-33. Those hearing these words from Jesus would have understood that He was talking about being crucified.

--Now John 12:34. Here we see the people are confused as to how Christ can live forever—and yet be killed!

--Now John 12:35. Here again we see Jesus “switching gears” and instead of referring to Himself, He begins to talk about **the light**.

--How long was Jesus going to be with them? Only for a little while longer.

--How long was the light going to be around? Only for a little while longer.

So Jesus is once again indirectly referring to Himself as the light!

Lastly, we need to consider... **4. The purpose Jesus came as the Light**

What was the **purpose** of Jesus being the light? What did Jesus coming as a light **accomplish**? What are the **benefits to us** if we follow Jesus as the light? I’m sure there are more, but I want us to consider **three**.

A. To lead us out of darkness

Look again at verse 35 and imagine the cave scene I started the sermon with. If the park ranger’s flashlight all of the sudden started working, no one would want to “take a break,” would they?

You would want to “walk while you had light” because if you didn’t, darkness could very well “come upon you” once again!

And if the flashlight **stopped working** again, you would then be back to “walking in the darkness”—and not knowing where you were going!

Jesus came as a light to lead us out of the darkness...and the danger...and the despair of being lost. Are people confused about how to avoid hell—and gain heaven! Many are, but they don’t have to be! Confusion can be cleared up by the light of truth from Jesus Himself! Doesn’t it make sense that the One whose name is **Truth** would know how to lead you the right way?

B. To show us how to become children of light

We see that in vs 36; notice what it says. In context, Jesus is saying that His time is short and they should take advantage of the opportunity to believe on Him while He was with them. For us, it is somewhat different. We do not have the **temporary, physical presence** of Jesus with us. But the truth has not changed—we still need to **believe on Him** in order to become children of light—meaning children of God!

And we don’t know **how much time we** have left to do that! Not because Jesus is being taken away from us, but because we don’t have control over when our last breath will be!

--Notice now John 12:44-45. Twice in these two verses Jesus says that God had sent Him. Doesn’t it make sense that the One who came **from God** knows how to get us **to God**?

--Now John 12:46. Here again we see Jesus declaring that He **came** into the world to be a light—the bearer and revealer of truth! But He didn’t come to just **show us** the way out of darkness—He came to be our **Savior from darkness**! We see that in the end of verse 47: “...for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.” That’s why—in verse 46—Jesus says “whosoever believeth in me should not abide” [dwell in; remain in] darkness.

We also know from verse 50 that Jesus is talking about “life everlasting”—meaning **salvation from the punishment for our sins**.

But we also see here that **not everyone believes** what Jesus says! Notice again the beginning of verse 47: “And if any man hear my words, and **believe not**...”

What happens to those who refuse to believe what Jesus says? Jesus Himself gives us the answer in verse 48. They remain in darkness—and **will be judged** in the last day. What will those who reject Christ be judged by?

The words that Jesus spoke! **What words?**

--Words like **John 3:3** "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he **cannot see** the kingdom of God."

--Or like what Jesus said in **John 5:40** "And ye **will not come** to me, that ye might have life."

--Or what Jesus said in **John 14:6**, "...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, **but by me.**"

What about you? You have **heard** Christ's words—but do you **believe** them? If you **believe** them, you will **act** upon them—and **come to Jesus** for salvation. If you don't believe Him and don't come to Him, you are **rejecting** Him.

Those are Jesus' words, not mine! And if you **reject Jesus** as your Savior, you will spend **all eternity in darkness**—separated forever from **God** and all that is **good!** Not only that, but I believe you will be haunted by the memory that you **could have received** Christ but instead **chose to reject** Him!

Lastly, as the Light, Jesus came.... C. To show us how to live like children of light

We're in John 12; notice what it says in John 13:12-17. In a nutshell, Jesus is to be our example, right?

Jesus said in **Mt 10:24-25b** "The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that **he be as his master**, and **the servant as his lord.**" Again, Jesus is saying that we are to be like Him!

I want us to turn now to Matthew 5. Notice what it says in Mt 5:14.

--Is Jesus confused about who the "light of the world" is? Obviously not!

So in what sense are we the "light of the world"? Here are **two ways**.

1) We can be **sharers** of the truth! If you are a child of God, you have "*come from the darkness to the light*"—and should want to show others how to do the same!

2) Along the same lines, Jesus wants us to be "**shiners**" for the truth! What does that mean? Jesus tells us in verse 16; notice what it says (read).

Jesus expects our lives to be characterized by good **works**—as well as good **attitudes** and good **behavior**—so that people will glorify God because of what He has done in us! In other words, we are **not to hide the truth** that we are a child of God (if we are)—we are to make it known—and "give light" to all that are around us!

God through Paul makes a similar statement in **Philippians 2:14-16a** "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: ¹⁵ That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom **ye shine as lights in the world;**¹⁶ **Holding forth the word of life...**"

Paul is writing to **all believers**—not just preachers! **All of God's children** are to be different from the world—not murmuring or disputing, but instead blameless and harmless and without rebuke—so that we can **shine as lights** in the world—and **share with the world** the word of life!

What about you? Is your light shining? Do people see an impossible-to-miss difference in your life that causes them to praise God because of His work in you?

So what would God have us do based on what we've heard this morning?

God sent Jesus to be the Light of the world. Is Jesus **your** light?

--If you believe Jesus is the light, you will believe that He is the One who will **show you the way** out of spiritual darkness! If you are looking for truth elsewhere, Jesus is not your light!

--And if you believe Jesus is the light, you will do what He says to get out of spiritual darkness! How do we get out of spiritual darkness? We need to see our need for Christ—and in humility and faith receive Christ. He is God's gift to us—but will not become **our gift** until we receive Him as a gift (John 1:12).

John 1:12 (quote)

--And if you believe Jesus is the light—and are a child of the light—you will want to **share** that news with others and **shine** as a light for Him!