

Lesson Three

“I Am the Light of the World”

Jesus and his Word are the only reliable sources of truth about God

John 8:12-21

Worship

Responsive Reading (Psalm 19, selected verses)

A: The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul.

B: The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

A: The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart.

B: The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

A: The fear of the LORD is pure, enduring forever.

B: The ordinances of the LORD are sure and altogether righteous.

Prayer:

O Word of God incarnate,
O Wisdom from on high,
O Truth unchanged, unchanging,
O Light of our dark sky,
We praise you for the radiance
That from the hallowed page,
A lantern to our footsteps,
Shines on from age to age.

Oh, make your Church, dear Savior,
A lamp of burnished gold
To bear before the nations
Your true light, as of old.
Oh, teach your wandering pilgrims
By this their path to trace
Till, clouds and darkness ended,
They see you face to face.
(CW 279:1,3)

Introduction

Which of the following sources of information do you think people trust the most? Which do you trust the most?

- Television

- What you see with your own eyes
- Modern science
- Religious leaders
- The Bible

Jesus is the Light of the World

Jesus has been teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem. It seems that the feast had ended, but Jesus is still debating with the Pharisees. Their discussion revolves around the trustworthiness of what Jesus says, especially in light of the fact that Jesus calls himself the "light of the world."

Read John 8:12.

1. The world is filled with darkness. Look at the following characteristics of darkness. How do they help us understand the spiritual darkness in the world around us?
 - Darkness conceals things.
 - Darkness often exists because dirt and impurities fill the air, cover house windows, or stand between us and the light in other ways.
 - Darkness creates fear, because we don't know if something harmful may be near us.
2. Now think about Jesus' statement in this verse: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness." Consider the nature of light, using the brief descriptions below. How are Jesus and light similar?
 - Light shines. Darkness cannot exist with light.
 - When light shines on an object, it reveals that object for what it is.
 - Light is radiant and bright.
 - Light is a blessing; it helps to sustain life, and it spreads happiness where it is found.
 - Light illuminates our path.

Note: This picture would have been very appropriate at the Feast of Tabernacles. At that feast the Jews lit a huge candelabra with four lamps; it was so large that ladders had to be climbed to reach the lamps. This candelabra symbolized the pillar of fire that led the people

of Israel in the wilderness. The Israelites were following God in that pillar of fire in the Old Testament. Jesus calls us to follow him as the Light of the World.

3. Comment on this statement of Luther: "The world delights to stay in darkness and suffer great unrest. The devil has greater martyrs than Christ has. They work harder to earn hell than Christians do to earn heaven."
4. Would you characterize Jesus' claim in this verse as modest or rather grandiose?
5. Agree or disagree: Having the "light of life" means that we have Jesus' guidance for life.

Jesus' claim to be the Light of the Word is reliable

Read John 8:13-15.

1. To what Jewish courtroom principle are the Pharisees appealing? (See Deuteronomy 17:6 and 19:15.)
2. In a moment Jesus will return to the need for two witnesses. For now he points out that he is uniquely qualified to bear witness to the truth all by himself. What gives him this authority?
3. Read John 7:40-42,52. Where did the Pharisees mistakenly think Jesus came from?
4. In the Greek the phrase "by human standards" is literally "according to the flesh." Why is it a mistake to base our judgment "according to the flesh"?

"Faith humbles itself before God and clings to his Word as the source of wisdom and truth. Reason, on the other hand, in its corruption and pride, always makes the mistake of exalting its very limited experience and equating it with omniscience. . . . The experience of man is always limited to isolated moments in the vast expanse of time and space. Even at their highest reaches the senses can acquire knowledge that is merely fragmentary. Self-evident as this is, men in practice tend to forget it."—Siegbert Becker

Jesus proves his claim to be the Light of the World

Read John 8:16-18.

Jesus claims that his heavenly Father is the second witness God's law required. When or how did the Father bear witness to the truth of Jesus' claims?

Many of the Pharisees rejected the Light

Read John 8:19-21.

1. The Pharisees were still not satisfied. Why not?
2. What are the Pharisees accidentally confessing when they ask Jesus where his Father is?
3. In light of Jesus' reply to the Pharisees, how would you reply to those who say the Jews worship the same God we do, but in a different and somewhat lesser way?
4. Since Jesus has "enlightened us," that is, revealed to us who he really is, what confidence do we have?
5. What is the alternative to following Jesus, the Light of the World, and what is at stake if we do not follow him? (verse 21)
6. Evaluate this statement from Luther: "While our enemies desire to be called peace-loving and humble, we are to be regarded hardened, stiff-necked, and tempestuous pates. And indeed we want to be so too when Christ is concerned. Let no one look for patience and yielding from me when Christ is concerned. . . . Although this attitude disgusts you, we nevertheless intend to be proud and allow ourselves to be called rude and headstrong folk."

Summary

Jesus, the Light of the World, is the one reliable way for us to know about God and believe in him. Now we trust what Jesus has to say more than we trust our own reason and senses. We trust Jesus' witness to himself, and since we know the Father, we believe that he has also borne witness to his Son. The darkness is past; now we walk in the light of God's forgiveness.

For further discussion

1. How would you answer someone who today challenges the validity of Jesus' words and claims?
2. Give examples of how being without the "Light of the World" leads people to contradict other parts of God's truth.
3. In light of what Jesus says about there being only two paths, having the Light of the World or walking in darkness, what might we conclude about attempts to reform society through better laws?
4. List some of the truths the Light of the World has made possible for you to see.