



from the desk of ...
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I AM - 2

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 8:12

Okay, let's begin with a few questions to get your minds working as we head into today's message. (X)

Q: How many evolutionists does it take to change a light bulb? ...

A: Just one, but it'll take a million years

Q: How many Baptists does it take to change a light bulb? ...

A: 10, one to change the bulb & 9 to talk about how much better the old one was

Q: How many Calvinists does it take to change a light bulb? ...

A: None, lights go on & off at predestined times

Q: How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb? ...

A: None, Lutherans don't believe in change

Q: How many optometrists does it take to change a light bulb? ...

A: One, or 2? ... One, or 2?

Okay, we're going to talk about light today,
not light bulbs, but light.

In fact, the very 1st words of God, recorded in the Scriptures, are: (X) "Let there be light." (Genesis 1:3)
And immediately light appeared.

So, God & light are connected right from the get-go.

And that thought is repeated toward the end of the Bible. John writes that ... "God is light,
& there is no darkness at all in him." (1 John 1:5)

Darkness in Scripture symbolizes sin & death;
light corresponds to life & holiness & purity.

So, when Jesus talked about light, His listeners would be familiar with the connection of that term to God, which provides the background for our Gospel lesson this morning.

Good News, as recorded by John, to you who have gathered here at C.C.R.M. for worship.

Within your hearing comes the Word of the Lord ...

Jesus spoke to the Pharisees again, "I am the light of the world," he said. "Whoever follows me will have the light of life and will never walk in darkness." (John 8:12)

May the Lord grant that we may engage in contemplating the mysteries of His Heavenly wisdom with really increasing devotion, to His glory and to our edification. Amen

Close your eyes. ... Have you ever wondered what it would be like to be blind? ... Not to be able to see? ...

Okay, please open your eyes.

Ever since June of 2002, when I had my detached retina, & lost sight in my left eye for several days, I've thought about that ... what I would miss seeing. ...

I know I'd miss seeing Kathy's face. I'd miss seeing my grandchildren. I'd miss reading books. I'd miss seeing sunsets & mountains. I'd miss seeing trees. I'd miss seeing some of the paintings we have in our home, that mean a lot to me.

I'd miss watching sports; right now, the Olympics.

What would you miss seeing if you were blind? ... At one point in Jesus' ministry He encounters a man who has been blind since birth. Here's his story ...

VIDEO (#13 ... 1:16:05 - 1:19:35 "I don't know.")

At this point we come to an interlude in the story; here's the Reader's Digest version. The man is taken to the religious leaders who want to know how he was healed. "Well this guy came & put mud on my eyes & I washed it off, & presto ... I could see!"

So, they said, "Well, we'll tell you one thing about Him, He couldn't be from God because He worked on the Sabbath day."

Then they called in the blind man's parents, & tried to squeeze some information out of Mom & Dad. But they didn't want to talk ... because they knew that if they said the wrong thing they might get kicked out of the synagogue.

So, the blind man is brought back in, & is interrogated some more, & finally he says to the religious leaders. "You say He couldn't be from God ... well, all I know is that He healed me. How could He heal me if He didn't have God's power?" (John 9:13-34)

Now here's the end of the story.

VIDEO (#15 ... 1:23:06 - 1:24:15 "This means that you are still guilty.")

The Pharisees were spiritually blind, (Matthew 15:14), & the worst part about it ... because of that blindness ... they failed to see Jesus for who He really was.

(X) We're in the 2nd week of a 7-part series exploring the identity of Jesus by looking at the "I AM" statements that He made in the Gospel of John.

For Jesus to use that term was quite a declaration ... because these were the very words that God used when He identified Himself to Moses.

"God said, 'I am who I am.'" 7 times in John's Gospel Jesus says "I am the I am." (Exodus 3:14)

And to each "I AM" statement He adds a little descriptive phrase. Jesus feeds 5,000+ people, & then He proclaims, "I AM the bread of life." (John 6:35)
 In today's passage He announces, "I AM the light for the world." Then He heals a man who was born blind.

It's like Jesus is using His miracles as a "show-n-tell" to back up His tremendous claims. (John 20:30-31)

In our Gospel lesson this morning, Jesus said ...
 "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will have the light of life & will never walk in darkness."

Light is a key theme in John's Gospel. He uses it 23 times. This morning we're going to look at 4 of those passages. And in them we'll find out what Jesus, "the light of the world", wants to illuminate in our lives.

Here's the 1st one. Jesus wants to reveal the **person of God** to us. That's what light is all about ... to help us see.

Jesus healed that blind man right after He attended the Festival of Shelters. There were 7 major feasts throughout the Jewish year. With this particular one 10's of 1,000's of religious tourists would come to Jerusalem to celebrate God's faithfulness in providing the harvest.

During this festival a big ceremonial bowl of water was poured on the ground to recognize that God was the one who had given the rain for the crops. (The Psalms 65:10)

Then, to acknowledge the sun that God provided, a huge candelabra would be lit in the Temple.

Then each person would take a candle & they would all gather (1,000's of them) on the Temple grounds. It would be like a candlelight vigil we would have today.

With all these lit candles, historians tell us that Jerusalem could be seen for miles. It was at this moment Jesus declared ... "I am the light of the world."

The way I envision it is that when everyone was holding their candle high, Jesus announced ...

"I am the God that we celebrate at this feast for providing the sun. You're looking at that God right now."

And then, later on, during holy week at His final public appearance, Jesus spells this out more clearly. We read, "Jesus said in a loud voice" (This is one of the few times where Jesus spoke in His "outdoor voice.") He wanted everyone to hear.

"Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in him who sent me. Whoever sees me sees also him who sent me. I have come into the world as light, so that everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness." (John 12:44-46)

Jesus is claiming **equality** with God.

"Whoever believes in me believes not only in me but also in him who sent me."

("You believe in me, guess what, you believe in God, because to believe in me is to believe in God.")

"Whoever sees me sees also him who sent me.
When you're looking at me, you're looking at God."

"I have come into the world as light." Actually, the word "light" was kind of a nickname for God in the O.T.

The Psalmist writes ...

"The LORD is my light & my salvation." (The Psalms 27:1)

"How happy are the people ...
who live in the light of your kindness!" (The Psalms 89:15)

"O LORD, my God, how great you are!
You are clothed with majesty & glory;
you cover yourself with light." (The Psalms 104:1-2)

The prophet Isaiah, speaking for God, announced to the people:

"No longer will the sun be your light by day
Or the moon be your light by night;
I, the LORD, will be your eternal light;
The light of my glory will shine on you." (Isaiah 60:19)

Micah writes ... "We are in darkness now,
but the LORD will give us light." (Micah 7:8)

Ezekiel describes his vision of God. (X) "The figure seemed to be shining like bronze in the middle of a fire. It shone all over with a bright light." (Ezekiel 1:27)

God had a firmly established tradition from the O.T. times as being the **light of the world**. Then Jesus arrives & claims the same **distinction** for Himself.

It's a bold proclamation of His deity.

Remember when Jesus took Peter, James, & John up on a high mountain? ... There, He removed a little of the veil & allowed some of His Heavenly glory to be seen.

It's called the transfiguration. (X)

Matthew writes of it ...

"A change came over Jesus: his face was shining like the sun, & his clothes were dazzling white." (Matthew 12:2)

The sun, which burns at 27 million degrees at its' core; the sun which bursts 4 million tons of mass into energy every second ... this is the word picture that describes Jesus ... "his face was shining like the sun."

Then 2^{ndly}, Jesus reveals the path of **eternal life**. "Whoever follows me will have the light of life & will never walk in darkness." Actually, Jesus uses the word "life" a lot in His I AM statements.

Next week, "I am the gate ... I have come in order that you might have life - life it all its fullness." (John 10:7,10) Then, "I am the way, the truth, & the life." (John 14:6) Finally, "I am the resurrection & the life." (John 11:25)

When Jesus refers to life,
He's talking about an **intimate relationship** with God.

At the very beginning of his Gospel John declares ...

“The Word was the source of life, & this life brought light to people. The light shines in the darkness & the darkness has never put it out.” (John 1:4-5)

Only 5 sentences into his Gospel & John's already telling us about this cosmic conflict between light & darkness. We come into this world in spiritual darkness. That's what Scripture teaches.

How many of you have ever been in total physical darkness? ... I remember being in Advanced Infantry Training at Fort Polk, LA. We were out one night, no moon, no stars. We were marching, full packs on our backs, & went into this thick wooded area, & sort of slid down a hill into a ravine. I'm not exaggerating to embellish this story.

I couldn't see my hand in front of my face.

The ground was all wet & mushy, (LA swamps). And the Lt. yelled, “Set up your tents, this is where we're going to spend the night.” (To be honest, I'm glad I couldn't see where I was supposed to be sleeping!)

The darkness, the unknown that night was a scary thing.

Spiritual darkness is frightening too!

But we don't have to remain there.

3^{rdly}, Jesus provides opportunities for us to **see the light**.

"God sent his messenger, a man named John, who came to tell people about the light, so that all should hear the message & believe. He himself was not the light; he came to tell about the light. This was the real light - the light that comes into the world & shines on all people."

(John 1:6-9)

Sadly, the common response to God's efforts has usually been rejection. "The Word was in the world, & though God made the world through him, yet the world did not recognize him. He came to his own country, but his own people did not receive him." (John 1:10-11)

What does spiritual light do?
It reveals the presence of **sin**.

"This is how the judgment works: the light has come into the world, but people love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. Those who do evil things hate the light & will not come to the light, because they do not want their evil deeds to be shown up. But those who do what is true come to the light in order that the light may show that what they did was in obedience to God." (John 3:19-21)

Isn't that interesting! Believers are **drawn** to Jesus' light; nonbelievers **run away** from it.

And the reason they run away is that light exposes their sins to a holy God.

(And that ought to cause them to tremble!) (Hebrews 12:21)

Scripture teaches that every person will someday step into the blazing light of God's **scrutiny**. (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8)

John writes in his letters ... "Now the message that we have heard from his Son & announce is this: God is light, & there is no darkness at all in him. If, then, we say that we have fellowship with him, yet at the same time live in the darkness, we are lying both in our words & in our actions. But if we live in the light - just as he is in the light - then we have fellowship with one another, & the blood of Jesus, his son, purifies us from every sin.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, & there is no truth in us. But if we confess our sins to God, he will keep his promise & do what is right: he will forgive our sins & purify us from all our wrongdoing."

(1 John 1:5-9)

4^{thly}, Jesus reveals the **plan of action**.

At one point we're told that Jesus was in the midst of making a very difficult decision. He had just received news that one of His best friends, Lazarus, was deathly sick. His sisters, Martha & Mary, sent word to Jesus, "our brother needs your help."

Scripture records that Jesus dallied a bit; He didn't go immediately as they requested, because ... He wanted to give Lazarus every opportunity to die. ... Jesus waited for Lazarus to die because His plan was to raise him from the dead. (John 11:15)

But just as Jesus was about to leave for Bethany, His disciples said, "Woe, what a second, Bethany is in Judea where they wanted to stone you. There's a bounty on your head there. We don't want to go. You're going to die there, Jesus." (Sounds like good advice to me.)

What does Jesus do with their words of caution? ... How do we make decisions? ... How do we treat the advice we're given? ... When we come to a fork in the road, how do we know which direction to take? ...

Listen to Jesus' response to His disciples.

"A day has 12 hours, doesn't it? So those who walk in broad daylight do not stumble, for they see the light of this world. But if they walk during the night they stumble, because they have no light." (John 11:9-10)

Jesus is speaking metaphorically here.

When we walk in the daylight we can see where we're going. We're not going to stumble.

God loves to lead, loves to direct our lives, loves to shed light on the appropriate course of action.

In O.T. when the Hebrews were traveling from slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land, during the day God led them by a cloud, & then at night (X) by a pillar of fire. (Exodus 13:21) There was no getting lost when this bright light was shining in front of them, directing which way they should go.

How does God direct us today? The Psalmist writes,
 "Your word is a lamp to guide me & a light for my path."
 (The Psalms 119:105)

Later, in the same Psalm,

"The explanation of your teachings gives light."
 (The Psalms 119:130)

God provides light through the Scriptures.

Let me explain how this is done.

God gives direction to our decisions by making us
 "wise" people over time as we read & study His Word ...
 which brings light.

Driving home the other night there was a car that didn't
 have its' headlights on ... weaving in & out.
 It's was dangerous ... both to the driver,
 & to those of us on the highway with him.

Are you "driving" without your headlights? ... We've
 got the "I AM the light of the world" who desires to
 illuminate our path. Are you letting Him? ... Whether it's
 a purchase, whether it's a life decision, whether it's a
 conflict in a relationship, whether it's a health issue
 ... are you seeking His wisdom? ... (James 1:5)

The "I AM the light of the world" will reveal to you
 the person of God ... because He is **God**.

On Thursday, Billy Graham (X) was called "home"
 to receive his eternal reward.

"Someday you will read or hear that Billy Graham is dead. Don't you believe a word of it! I shall be more alive than I am now. I will just have changed my address. I will have gone into the presence of God."

It's estimated that his lifetime audience, including radio & TV broadcasts, topped $2\frac{1}{2}$ billion. That means that approximately $2\frac{1}{2}$ billion people have heard the Gospel message from Billy Graham's mouth.

That's hard to wrap our mind around, isn't it? ...

Billy Graham shared the Good News with more people than anyone else in history! ...

But do you know who shared the Gospel with him? ...

It's actually a series of events that's been traced over the years, but it started with one volunteer S.S. teacher. This is what a single faithful person can do.

Have you ever heard of Edward Kimball? (X)
Kimball was a S.S. teacher who not only prayed for the hyper boys in his class, but also sought to win each one to the Lord personally. He decided he would be intentional with every single last one of them.

One young man, in particular, didn't seem to understand what the Gospel was about, so Kimball went to the shoe store where he was stocking shelves & confronted him in the stockroom with the importance of having a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

That young man was Dwight L. Moody. (X) In the stockroom on that Saturday morning, he believed the Good News & received Jesus Christ as his Savior. In his lifetime, Moody touched 2 continents for God, with 1,000's professing Christ through his ministry.

One of them was Wilbur Chapman. (X) Chapman, in turn, became a Presbyterian evangelist who also preached to 1,000's. One day, a professional baseball player had a day off & attended one of Chapman's meetings, & thus, Billy Sunday (X) came to faith.

Sunday quit baseball & became part of Chapman's team. Then, when Chapman accepted the pastorate of a large church, Billy Sunday began his own evangelistic crusades.

Another young man, Mordecai Ham, (X) attended one of Sunday's crusades, & came to faith, which led to his public ministry. Mordecai Ham was a scholarly, dignified gentleman, who wasn't above renting a hearse & parading it through the streets advertising his meetings.

When Ham came to Charlotte, NC, a sandy-haired, lanky young man, then in H.S., vowed that he wouldn't go to hear him preach. But Billy Frank, as he was called by his family, did eventually go, & was intrigued by what he heard.

Returning the next night, he responded to the invitation & came to faith.

Billy Frank eventually became known as Billy Graham, (X) the evangelist who preached to more people than any other person who ever lived, including the Apostle Paul.

Think about how far-reaching Christ's message has gone. This fascinating chain of events was triggered by a S.S. teacher's concern for his boys!

We are to be witnesses to the light of the world.
We're to let His light shine in our lives

"before people, so that they will see the good things we do & praise our Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

Maybe you think there's nothing special about you. You're just an insignificant speck in God's great kingdom.

The next time you're tempted to believe you can't make a difference ... remember Edward Kimball, whose persistence & faithfulness was unimaginably honored by the Lord.

The story would have looked very differently if Edward Kimball didn't take his Saturday to seek out young Dwight Moody. The old saying is ...

"Any fool can count the seeds in an apple.
Only God can count all the apples in one seed."

Please, don't hesitate to share Jesus' light in this dark world. Because you, along with The Holy Spirit, can make a difference.

MARANA THA