

**Jesus is The Light of the World**  
**John 9:1-7 and John 8:12**  
**January 30, 2022**

Prayer

Brently asked a question last week that has followed me for days. He asked, "How well do I listen to and wrestle with what Jesus has said?" Do I listen? Do I take the time to really hear what He said? Do I take the time to place His words in their historical context so I can begin to hear it as He intended it to be heard? And then, once I listen, do I take the time to wrestle with what it means and how I will respond?

Truth be told, I can easily spend more time thinking about my next vacation, my retirement or even the storyline to some TV show than I do thinking about what Jesus said. God's Spirit planted that little question in my heart and it has followed me all week. I wonder what the Lord is planting in your heart during this series.

Today we will listen to Jesus express another self-revelatory statement and consider what that means for us. Let's turn to our starting point in John 9:1-7.

As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man who had been blind from birth.<sup>1</sup>  
<sup>2</sup>"Rabbi," his disciples asked him, "why was this man born blind? Was it because of his own sins or his parents' sins?"

In Jesus' day there was a debate over what caused illness or disability in a child. Some misunderstood the passages in Exodus and Deuteronomy (Ex 20:5; 34:7; Dt 5:9) and so believed the malady was because God was judging one of the parent's sins. Others embraced God's clarification through Ezekiel when He said

The person who sins is the one who will die. The child will not be punished for the parent's sins, and the parent will not be punished for the child's sins. (Ez 18:20).

Those who held this view concluded that the child must have sinned while in the womb. The disciples saw this well-known beggar and thought this was a good time to get the Lord's answer on this perplexing question. So we read,

<sup>3</sup>"It was not because of his sins or his parents' sins," Jesus answered. "This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. <sup>4</sup>We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. <sup>5</sup>But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world."

Think of the contrast here. The man has spent his life in darkness and Jesus, the light of the world, is about to emphasize the truth of this claim by bringing light into this man's life.

<sup>6</sup> Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread the mud over the blind man's eyes.

[Instead of just speaking the healing, Jesus chose to make mud and to place it on the man's eyes. This is considered work and this day was a Sabbath day when no one was supposed to work. As it was when Jesus told the man in John 5 to pick up his mat and walk, Jesus got the attention of the religious leaders again not by telling someone to work, but by working Himself.]

<sup>7</sup> He told him, "Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam" (Siloam means "sent"). So the man went and washed and came back seeing!

The rest of this chapter is a marvelous story of how the man was miraculously enabled to see the light. Not only could he see the light of day, but he could also see the light of Christ. He understood who Jesus is and worshipped Him while those who claimed they could see proved that they were blind because they could not see the light coming from Jesus.<sup>ii</sup>

This is not the first time Jesus made this claim. The first time was in front of a great crowd during the Feast of Tabernacles. On the same day He said that the Holy Spirit would be given to anyone who came to Him, John tells us in John 8:12.

"Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, "I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life."

A few verses later John tells us that Jesus "made these statements while he was teaching in the section of the temple known as the Treasury" (8:20). That little detail tells us something very interesting.

At the Feast of Tabernacles God's people thanked their Lord for His blessing in the past when they wandered in the wilderness, for His blessing in the present as they brought in the harvest, and for His promised blessing in the future when he would one day give his Spirit to all people (that's the living water part of chapter 7) and how one day, He himself, would be their light.

In Zechariah 14:6, 7 we read that the day the Lord comes and reigns will be, "a unique day, without daytime or nighttime—a day known to the Lord. When evening comes, there will be light."

And Isaiah 60:19, 20, "The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun will never set again, and your moon will wane no more; the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of sorrow will end."

In these passages God makes the promise that—just like in the wilderness when He was their pillar of fire at night—when He comes to reign, He will be their light.

To symbolize this promise of light, four massive candlesticks were placed in the court of women, right next to the Treasury.<sup>iii</sup> Every night of the feast these candles were lit to remind the people of God's promise to be their light. The Mishnah states that the strength of that light was so great that every courtyard in Jerusalem was illumined by the light from the great candlesticks (Sukk. 5:3).

What a memorable moment that must have been! Can you imagine what it would be like in the city while the candles burned—to walk without a lamp, to see all the way down the road, to not trip or stumble? What was it like to see the city from a distance, glowing on a hill? Nothing throughout the year could compare with that moment or compare with the message it conveyed. "What a thrilling day it will be when God himself comes to push back our darkness and be our light!"

So on the last day of the feast, Jesus stood next to the candles and declared, "I am the light of the world." This was an outrageous claim! How could he say it? Was Jesus claiming to be the fulfillment of God's promise? What right did He have to say such a thing?<sup>iv</sup>

"I am." It is emphatic and points to the way God revealed himself to Moses while at the burning bush.<sup>v</sup>

I am "the light of the world." As was His pattern, Jesus was using a physical reality everyone knew to point to a spiritual truth everyone needed to know. John knows this and so in 1:4-9 he writes this about Jesus:

In him was life, and that life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it. There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world."

Jesus is the light of the world. He is not *a* light of the world. He is *the* light of the world. That means that those who have Jesus have light and life; those who do not have Jesus have darkness and death. Life is connection with God's life; death is separation from God's life. Jesus and the scriptures do not leave any room for middle ground. As the light of the world, Jesus pushes back the darkness to reveal the truth, all truth, about who He is and about who we are.

Some years ago, I helped train Chinese pastors in spiritual formation practices that they could then use in their congregations. On the first morning I arrived early to set things up. The room was without windows with a can't-see-your-hand-in-front-of-your-face sort of darkness. Thinking that every culture puts light switches where mine does I dove into the darkness to find the light switch.

For five minutes I stumbled along, my right hand sliding along the wall with my left hand sweeping in front of me trying to find the hidden obstacles before they'd cause me to stumble. I even tried using the light from my flip phone but that hardly got the job done. It wasn't until another person arrived that I got the answer. The switches were outside the room on the other side of the hall.

When the lights came on, I saw the truth about where I was and everything suddenly made sense. Oh, that's what was in my way! Oh, that's how the room is set up! Oh that is the intent! Like the blind man in John 9, without Jesus we spend our lives trying to make sense of what we experience, groping our way along. But when Jesus enters our life, the light turns on and we begin to see and understand truths we could never grasp on our own.

C.S. Lewis said it this way in *The Weight of Glory*. "I believe in Christianity as I believe that the Sun has risen, not only because I see it but because by it, I see everything else."

Jesus said, "I am the light of the world." After making this outrageous claim, He then made an unbelievable promise. "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

The Bible reveals that there were crowds that gathered around Jesus whenever He came to town, they'd change that day's schedule to see what Jesus might be up to. There were also some who traveled with Him. They were groupies, changing their schedules for several days to go with Him from place-to-place waiting for the next exciting thing they might see or receive. And then there were those who followed Jesus.

To follow Jesus is to put one's whole trust in the truth of His words and to imitate Him by obeying His teaching within our own context. Jesus said, "Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

Many have speculated as to what this means but if I were to take a swing at it, I think Jesus is saying that those who follow Him will carry within them the light of life. They will carry within them His Spirit, God Himself dwelling within the temple of the human heart.

The life Jesus offers is a life that does not stop; it is an eternal life spent in relationship with the Giver of Life; it is a life that is different from the one we now know in both quantity and in quality.<sup>vi</sup>

Jesus' statements, teaching and miracles divided the people. Some thought He was a great man while others considered Him a great prophet. And though religious leaders tried to stop this by threatening to throw people out of community, many were beginning to believe that Jesus was the long-awaited Messiah.

When they asked "Who is He?" different groups came up with different answers. But what I find very interesting is that the answer we land on to the question, "Who is Jesus?" actually sheds light on another question. "Who am I?"

Chapter 9 has four different responses to Jesus. Those in the crowd who stood on the fence and were unable to make a decision were **confused** and so they whispered among themselves, always questioning but never coming to a conclusion.

While the crowds were confused the religious leaders were in **conflict**. They had made decisions, but their decisions were not the same. Some said a godly man would not break the Sabbath law—so Jesus must be a sinner. Others said a holy God would not work miracles through a sinful person—so Jesus must be approved of God. Rather than act on their conclusions, they argued among themselves.

While the crowd was confused and the Pharisees were in conflict, the parents found themselves **cornered**. They saw what had happened to their son but knew they would be thrown out of the synagogue if they said the wrong thing about Jesus. Fearful of something bad happening to them, they passed the buck. "Ask our son. He's an adult now."

Then there was the healed man himself. We can watch the light of understanding grow within him as the story unfolds. When he was first asked who had done this for him he said, "the *man* they call Jesus." Later as the light of this new day grew brighter thus revealing more of what was once hidden, he told the Pharisees "He is a *prophet*."

When they called him in a second time the man had seen enough, made a decision and so stood his ground. "Do you want to become His disciples too?" he asked the religious leaders. As a result, he was cast out of the synagogue and seemed to lose it all. But not from his view. For like Paul in Philippians 3 he counted all they had to offer as garbage next to what he had found in Christ.

"One thing I do know, I was blind but now I see, and the only difference...is Him."

When this light broke into the world there were four responses. The people were confused and never made a decision. The Pharisees were in conflict and argued instead of acted. The parents felt cornered, fearful of what may happen to them if they professed a trust in Jesus.

But the one who entered the light, he grew in confidence. He did not waiver in his belief no matter how much pressure was applied. That confidence was later confirmed as in verse 38 the man acknowledged Jesus as Lord and worshiped him.

Our answer to the question, "Who is Jesus" actually gives us insight to the question "Who am I?" Confused, conflicted, cornered, or confident. In a gathering of this size all four groups can be found. Which response represents you today? If you are on the fence about this Jesus for any reason, what is it that keeps you there?

Jesus said, we either feel our way through the darkness or walk in ever-increasing light. Those who follow me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life. How well do we listen to and wrestle with the things Jesus has said?

What seed might God be planting in your heart these days? Let's help one another waters those seeds and then watch what happens.

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, at this feast you said that if we come to you that living water will flow from within us. You said that when we follow you we will possess the light of life. Scripture clearly teaches that the change you want to make in us is from the inside out.

And so today, Lord, we express our innermost desire to follow you, to orient our entire lives to your light, to trust what you tell us and live by what you reveal. We express our faith that, when we fail, your grace remains and your mercies are new every morning. Resting on the confidence of your love for us, secure in the truth of your relentless work in us, help us Lord to see your light, take the time and do the listening so we can experience what your light reveals, turn toward the truth we know, abide more fully in you and so act in ways that affirm that truth in our lives.

Who else could love us like this and transform us from the inside out like this? Who else? Only you, our holy God, in whose name we pray.

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<sup>i</sup> Remember, the details are included for a reason. This man has been blind from the start and so this is like the healing of the man in John 5 who had been paralyzed for 38 years. It is a big deal.

<sup>ii</sup> The amount of space John gives to this miracle, the details he includes and the number of times it is referenced in the chapters that follow tell us that this miracle is a significant sign that confirms Jesus is the light of the world (Consider how unique it is. "No one has ever heard of opening the eyes of a man born blind." 9:32. Consider how many times it is referred to later. 10:21, in response to Jesus' teaching on being the gate and the good shepherd. 11:37 at the tomb of Lazarus. "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" There is a lot here that I will leave to your own reading. Our purpose is to focus on Jesus' self-revelation as the light of the world.

<sup>iii</sup> Each candle was topped with a golden bowl. The bowls, which had to be reached by ladders, contained oil and wicks made from clothing worn by priests.

<sup>iv</sup> This is why the Pharisees jumped on him about the validity of his testimony. They were trying to discredit his words and show that they had no substance because they did not meet the legal requirement for authenticity.

<sup>v</sup> You may remember the story. When Moses said, "If they ask me your name, what shall I tell them?" God replied, "I AM that I AM. Tell them I AM has sent me to you." Jesus is clearly pointing to this moment and to this name.

<sup>vi</sup> Colossians 1:13, 14, "For [God] has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves [i.e., the kingdom of light], in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."