

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD**John 8:12-20****(Read John 8:12-20)**

INTRO: April 3, 2012 I arrived in Kenya. My transportation which was actually an airport shuttle from Arusha in Tanzania had dropped me off at the Jomo Kenyatta International Airport. This was where my friend Ilam was to meet me and we would take the bus to his home in Western Kenya. We were on Kenya time, so that meant I waited for hours after the appointed meeting time – but I was kind of used to that by then. In the meantime, I stood in the shade of a sign near the entrance to the airport which was also the bus stop. I had a cap in my luggage, but since I was standing in the shade – I didn't think I needed it. It turns out I did. Standing in the shade of anything but a spreading and leafy tree at the equator means the sun is going to get you and it did. My head got FRIED! That terrible sunburned skull, combined with little or no caffeine for several days and a rather harrowing 12 hour car ride to Webuye the next day, meant that I had a thundering headache for my first night with Ilam and Franciscah and their children.

The sun went down as I sat there in their home, with chickens stepping over my feet and my head throbbing. And then it got dark. You see, they had no electric and I soon had an entirely new concept of darkness. The only light I had was a little combination pen flashlight with *Great Lakes Conference* and its motto printed on it. Regional Conference had been hosted by ABC the weekend before I left home in March and Bishop Zuck had made sure that every Annual Meeting attendee had at least one of those pens. Thank God! At least I had that! It was so dark! I missed Kathy sooooo much! My head hurt soooooooo bad! **What had I gotten myself into?!**

Well, the next morning I awoke with the chickens which was hours before my hosts rose. And then there was a gorgeous sunrise. The sky was soon brilliant blue and in the daylight my discomfort and discouragement from the night before had all but diminished. In the daylight my mission was clear – I was there to minister to eager listeners. Light has a way of raising spirits.

Jesus told his hearers in our text, *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”* John 8:12b. In this second of the seven I AM statements of Jesus, our current series, Jesus is again proclaiming the he is the great I AM, which means he's God, and in him is no darkness. That's good news in an increasingly dark world.

As Christ Followers we have inherited that light. In fact Jesus told us, *You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.* Matthew 5:14-16. When we absorb his light we soon find out what he meant when he said . . .

No one who follows me stumbles in the darkness

- That's Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Jesus's words in THE MESSAGE. As I said, all it takes is a moonless night in a remote African town with no electric, or turning out the light in a windowless room to realize how dark the darkness can be. Experiencing something like that is a good lesson in what those without Jesus experience.
- This light was introduced right from the get-go in the Gospel of John, listen, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* John 1:1-5. The Word is Jesus. And Jesus is God. And in God is life. He is the light and darkness cannot snuff the light. When we have the light, we will not stumble in darkness.
- Light is a recurring theme for the apostle John. Listen to what he writes in his first letter, *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.* 1 John 1:5-7. If we persist at walking in the darkness, we will stumble. We'll surely walk into something. (Tell about Beth walking in the darkness).

- Darkness is sin. Light is freedom from the penalty of sin. The light has always been available and it purifies us from all sin. It's a no-brainer to step into the light, but many refuse. The people Jesus was talking to here in John 8 refuse to see the light and they challenge him with, my paraphrase, "*How can you be your own witness?*" The law stated that conviction came with the witness of two people – so, since it was convenient for their point, they confront Jesus with the question. Jesus answers that they are missing the point of his I AM statement which is . . .

You can count on God's word

- What he actually said was, *In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.* John 8:17-18. Or in Peterson's words, *That fulfills the conditions set down in God's Law: that you can count on the testimony of two witnesses. And that is what you have: You have my word and you have the word of the Father who sent me.* John 8:17-18 (The Message). You can count on God's word. The word of Jesus and the word of God are one and the same. God testifies to himself, because God can do that.
- Jesus's point is, in their darkness, they are missing the point. In their tunnel vision they refuse to see the truth. Peterson says, *You don't know where I'm from or where I'm headed. You decide according to what you can see and touch. I don't make judgments like that. But even if I did, my judgment would be true because I wouldn't make it out of the narrowness of my experience but in the largeness of the One who sent me, the Father.* John 8:14b-16 (The Message). Darkness truly makes for a narrow experience. In the sinkhole caves of Mexico, especially in Oaxaca (Wahaka) and Yucatan there is a fish in the tetra species called the Mexican Cave Fish. It is unique in that it has no eyes. It doesn't need them in the total darkness of the deep water lakes which are in the caves. Talk about a narrowness of existence!
- Blind people could also be said to have a narrowness of experience – they are limited in what they can do for sure. One of my favorite hymn writers, Fanny Crosby, was blind from the time she was three years old. Did that darkness limit her? Nope! She wrote thousands of songs. Songs that spoke of vision and light. Words like the second line of the second verse of *BLESSED ASSURANCE*, where she sings *Visions of rapture now burst on my sight*, and the third verse where she revels,

*Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.*

 She may have been in physical darkness, but she was in spiritual splendor. Her songs are full of such imagery because she knew she could count on Jesus's word and that was all that mattered.
- And finally . . .

To know the Father you need to know the Son

- This was Jesus's point when he responded to the Pharisees with, *You do not know me or my Father," Jesus replied. "If you knew me, you would know my Father also."* John 8:19b. Jesus was once again affirming that he is God the Son and he did it with the I AM statement – *I AM the light of the world.* Peterson says, *"You're looking right at me and you don't see me. How do you expect to see the Father? If you knew me, you would at the same time know the Father."* John 8:19b (The Message). Essentially, its, as the heading in the Message says, **YOU'RE MISSING GOD IN ALL THIS!**
- The Pharisees were like so many people we encounter day in and day out. They're missing God and they know what they're up to. You can't find God in any other way but through Jesus. Contrary to what some may think, all roads DO NOT lead to heaven. God's name is not Allah or Buddha or anything other than I AM. And the only way to know him is through the light of the world, Jesus Christ.
- If you don't want to see God you will not find him, but conversely, anyone who makes an honest search for God **will** find him. (Tell story about Gary Barnett)
- Help others make an honest search. Tell them about the Light of the world.

Conclusion: No one who follows the light of the world will stumble. Our way is illumined. And you can count on God's word – it's been corroborated by the Son. And if you want to know God, you need to know the Son. Later in this series we'll study the I Am statement, *I Am the way the truth and the life, no one comes to the*

Father except through me. (John 14:1-14). We never have to fear in the dark, what we know to be true in the light. Today we know he's the Light of the World. Bask in that light. Amen.