

## 2 - “I Am the Light of the World” // John 8 // “I Am” series #1<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Happy March Madness weekend, everybody. I know some of our football and soccer fans won’t agree, but I feel like this is the greatest sports weekend of the year. I know some of you agree with me. ... And just to be clear, if you didn’t already pray for your team during the 21 Days of Prayer and Fasting, it doesn’t count if you start now.

**John 8, if you have your Bibles this weekend.** We are looking at the seven “I AM” claims of Jesus—seven times in the Gospel of John where Jesus takes the loftiest name of God in the Old Testament—I AM, or in Hebrew “Yahweh,” or Latin, “Jehovah”—and claims it for himself—and then attaches it to one of our greatest areas of brokenness or need.

Last week, we looked at the first one: “I AM the bread of life.” This week, **John 8:12: “And ... Jesus said, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’”**

Light is, of course, essential for our lives—as much as, and perhaps even more than, bread. Being scared of the dark is one of our most primal fears. I’m going to tell you a story that to my knowledge I’ve

never told here before—it’s a story that many of you will not believe, but I promise you that every word of it is true.

I worked at a Christian camp for a few summers when I was a teenager. And I’m not even going to tell you the name of the camp, because it’s a great camp, and they are so embarrassed by what I’m about to tell you, and this story does not represent who they are now—and look, this story took place more than 30 years ago. George Bush the 1st was president. But this stands as one of the greatest cases of misjudgment I’ve ever experienced. This one particular week of high school camp, our theme was “American Holidays,” and each morning at breakfast the camp director would announce a different holiday theme for that day, and then they’d do games and skits in line with that holiday. It was a lot of fun. And you never knew what the holiday was going to be for the day until they announced it that morning. So, that week we’d already done Christmas, and Thanksgiving, and July 4, and nobody knew what the last day was going to be. Well, about 2:30 that morning, camp officials came and got everyone out of bed—about 500 high school students—and marched us all to the chapel, which was basically an old wooden indoor amphitheater. So, you had several hundred teenagers, roused out of their sleep, herded into this building with no explanation at all. No one knew what was going on, not even the counseling staff—I happened to know what was going on (not because I was in charge—that’s an important detail); I was one of like four people, because my best friend and I had been working maintenance late that evening and we stumbled onto some of the guys setting this thing up. They made us promise not to tell anyone, and on we went. So, when we all finally got into this indoor amphitheater, the camp director, who was a very intense man, was pacing back and forth on the stage, talking nervously into a walkie-talkie. When we were all assembled,

<sup>1</sup> Works consulted: Tim Keller, “I Am the Light,” November 22, 1998, Redeemer Presbyterian; Craig Groeschel, “I Am the Light of the World,” posted to YouTube 2020, Life Church; “I Am the Light of the World,” January 15, 2023, Bridgetown Church; John Piper, *What Jesus Demands from the World*; sermons and other illustrations from PreachingToday.com.

he announced that earlier that evening he'd gotten word that some prisoners had escaped from a local prison, and he then said they'd discovered an unidentified boat on one of the camp beaches. So, he said, no reason to be afraid, but given that these escaped prisoners had been serving life sentences, they had just wanted to do a sweep of the camp to make sure everything was copacetic. So, we all sat there for about 10 minutes. And you have to get the picture. It's the middle of the night, and no one knew what was going on. It was weird. And then suddenly, the doors by the front of the stage burst open, and five guys with ski masks rushed in carrying shotguns. One ran up on stage and fired his shotgun (which had blanks in it, of course) at the director; you saw him go down, and then a second ski-masked guy aimed his gun at the light fixture in the ceiling, and when he fired, the lights went out and the whole room went completely dark. I mean, pitch black. And then these five guys just unloaded their shotguns at the crowd, each firing four to five 12-gauge blanks into the crowd. Then, after about 45 seconds of this foolishness, someone flipped back on the lights and the camp director was standing there with a big grin on his face and he said, "April Fools'! The holiday theme for today is April Fools'. You can all go back to your cabins."

Except he wasn't talking to anyone. I was at the back; when they flipped the lights back on, you couldn't see a single head. 500 people on the ground, under the benches. I kid you not—high school boys had passed out; some had wet themselves; you could hear people audibly weeping. Like I said, it was one of the worst cases of misjudgment I've ever experienced. That camp got sued out of its gourd. Again, it's a great camp now, and that was 30 years ago—and you know what, the rules were different in the 80s and 90s, can I get a witness on that? But still, when I talk to people who currently work at

that camp, I'll say, "*Did you ever hear about ...?*" and they'll say, "*You were there for that disaster?*"

**The most awful part of the whole experience was the darkness.** The middle of the night, the pitch-dark blackness when they supposedly had shot the lights out. Darkness is synonymous with chaos and confusion.

There were two things I needed growing up to feel safe at night: The first was the soft glow of a night-light somewhere; and second was for the closet door to be shut. I don't know what it was about that closet, but it just seemed like the pit of darkness, and I just knew there were demons in that dark hole staring out at me. Veronica and I prefer it dark in our room now—no night-lights—but we still want that closet door shut.

**We associate light with honesty and integrity.** When some financial wrongdoing is uncovered, we say it is being "brought to light."

**Light brings beauty.** Every kid in 5th grade science learns that all the beauty we see around us, all the colors, are the result of reflected light. Color is, literally, light.

And of course, we now know that **light is literally essential for life.** Without light, major parts of our food chain would be disrupted and life as we know it on earth would cease to exist.

And one more thing that I think is especially interesting: We now know that light is somehow fundamental to existence itself. Albert Einstein's famous theory of relativity—which, by the way, is SO complex that only Albert Einstein, myself, and a handful of other

physicists really understand it—was premised on the constancy of light. His famous formula,  $E=mc^2$ : “E” is energy, “m” is mass, and “c” stands for constant, which is the speed of light, because it never changes. Energy and mass are variable, Einstein said, and speed and time are relative—but light never changes. It’s “constant.” It’s literally what undergirds existence.

**All that to say, it’s hard to imagine a more audacious claim for Jesus to make than “I am the light of the world.”** “I’m the color. I’m the life. I’m the constant that holds it all together. I’m the safety. I’m the beauty.”

## The Context

Well, just as with Jesus’ claim to be “the bread of life,” to understand the fullness of his meaning, you have to look at what’s happening around this statement, how John sets it up.

So first, let’s consider the setting. In [John 7:37,<sup>2</sup>](#) John tells us that this claim occurred on the last night of the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles was a seven-day feast, sometimes referred to as “The Feast of Booths” (“Sukkot” in Hebrew). There were three primary rituals associated with this feast:

- **First, everybody in Israel came to Jerusalem and they lived in little tents** (*or booths, or tabernacles—those words all mean the same thing*). They did this to commemorate that long season during the Exodus when they lived in tents as God led them out of Egypt to the Promised Land. Think of it like a Jewish Woodstock,

without all the drugs and immorality. Or what they do over at Krzyzewskiville for a couple of months before the UNC game, without the bitter disappointment at the end.

- **Second, every night they poured out water on the ground** to remind themselves of how God provided water for them in the desert when Moses struck the rock and it gushed water.
- **Third, they lit an enormous candelabra with a bunch of huge lamps on it.** This giant candelabra was right there at the front of the temple, and it was so big that when it was lit, light flooded the city. The temple orchestra would play, and the people danced before the Lord. (Think of it like one of those gigantic bonfires at Texas A&M or the Burning Man Festival, just, I’m not sure those people are dancing to the Lord!) But, they lit this gigantic lamp to commemorate how God led them through the wilderness by a pillar of cloud and fire. That pillar of light was God’s presence with them; it lit their way in the darkness, split the Red Sea in two, and it shielded them from the pursuing Egyptians. And then, when God gave them the Law at Mount Sinai, that cloud covered the mountain in thunder and flame, and when Israel built the tabernacle to house the Ark of the Covenant, that cloud hovered over it. It was always there, following the Ark. And years later, when Solomon built the actual temple, that same cloud of light and fire descended from heaven and settled onto the Holy of Holies.

So, to commemorate that part of the Exodus, every night of the festival they lit this giant candelabra, except on the last night—because everyone on that night was packing up to go home the next morning.

<sup>2</sup> [37] “On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out...”

Scholars say this last night of the feast was always eerie because you had this big, cold, dark, dead lamp in front of the temple (since they hadn't taken it down yet), and it served as an almost unintentional reminder that the actual cloud of God's glory had not been seen in the Jewish temple for centuries.

**You say, "Where had it gone?"** Great question: Let me tell you that story. Ezekiel 10: The prophet Ezekiel proclaimed that because Israel had sinned and sinned and turned from God so many times, that if they didn't turn back to God, God's presence and glory would depart from them permanently. Israel didn't listen to Ezekiel, so Ezekiel says (ch. 10) that he saw God's glory lift up from its place in the temple and move toward the door of the temple; it stopped at the temple threshold and hesitated for a moment, almost as if overcome with sadness at what it was about to do—think of it like a spouse being driven out of a home, who stops at the threshold and looks back as if to say, "I don't want to leave"—and then, the glory cloud of God's presence went out of the East Gate of Jerusalem, and Ezekiel saw it move up the Mount of Olives and disappear into the sky forever.<sup>3</sup>

From that point onward, the glory was gone. The Israelites had a term for it: *I-kabod*; *Ichabod*—which literally means "no (I) glory (kabod)." The glory is gone.

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<sup>3</sup> "Then the glory of the Lord went out from the threshold of the house, and stood over the cherubim. And the cherubim lifted up their wings and mounted up from the earth before my eyes as they went out, with the wheels beside them. And they stood at the entrance of the east gate of the house of the Lord, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. ... Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. And the glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is on the east side of the city" (Ezekiel 10:18–19; 11:22–23).

And so every year in Israel, on the last night of the feast, when that candelabra was extinguished, a quiet despair was felt in Israel and they wondered, "When will the light of God's glory return to us?"

And now on the last night of the feast, Jesus stands in the temple, **in front of that giant, dark candelabra**, and says, "I am the Light of the World." God's presence, his protection, his beauty, his glory—is back, and he's standing at the mouth of the temple.

So with that backdrop, let's consider first the presumption of his claim, and then the promise/problem of his claim.

### 1. The Presumption of His Claim

I mentioned this last week, but there is a convenient myth among modern people that the true Jesus, the real Jesus, the one who actually wandered around Jerusalem, was likely just an itinerant moral teacher—a good one; a societal revolutionary; MAYBE even a messenger with a special connection to divinity—similar to the Buddha, Abraham, or Mohammad—but he didn't think of himself as God. That claim, they like to say, was a kind of legend imposed on Jesus later. And some Christian cults, like the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses, say that Jesus never claimed to be God.

But that's not true. Jesus' claim to be God was CENTRAL to his teaching in the book of John. It's the core of what he's saying in moments like this. And not just by using the name "I AM," which is significant in itself, but in the whole imagery behind it. He was saying, "I am the cloud of God's presence that led you through the wilderness; I am the glory that dwelled in the Holy of Holies. All those

manifestations that your forefathers called ‘God,’ that voice speaking in the burning bush—that was me!”

They knew exactly what he was saying. Verse 20 says they tried to arrest him. They weren’t trying to arrest him because he was an unusually insightful teacher, but because he was claiming to be God. In fact, just a few minutes later in this discussion, the Pharisees say that Jesus shouldn’t be claiming all this authority for himself, and he says: [56] “Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” [57] So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” [58] Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.” (Not, “Before Abraham was, I was,” but “Before Abraham was, I AM.”) [59] So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. Why were they picking up stones? Not because he was using bad grammar, but because in saying that, he claimed to be God.

The other variation of this myth is that these kinds of bold claims to Jesus’ deity only occur in John. And the reasoning goes that John was written later than the other Gospels, and in the earlier Gospels, Mark, Matthew, and Luke, that’s where we find “Jesus, the hippie moral revolutionary.” Only John, some will say, puts in all the big God stuff, and that’s years and years later.

But that’s not true either. **For two reasons.** First, John wasn’t written that much later than the other Gospels. True, it was the last Gospel written, but it was still within the first generation of Christian followers. But second, and more importantly, the other Gospels most certainly put forward Jesus’ divinity—they do it a little more subtly, because, as Jesus himself said, he preferred to let people discover he was God through the works that he did, rather than just through

outright claims. Anybody could just claim to be God; Jesus wanted to demonstrate it and let people arrive at that conclusion on their own. But it’s there:

- In Matthew and Mark, for example, Jesus says, “Tear down this temple ... and I will raise it up in three days.” And Matthew and Mark both note that in saying that, Jesus was talking about himself.<sup>4</sup> He’s the new Temple. For the Jews, the temple was the place where God dwelt, and Jesus said, “I am that place.” That’s a pretty strong claim to divinity.
- Or how about this: In all three of the other Gospels, Jesus forgave sins,<sup>5</sup> and when the Pharisees object, saying, “But only God can do that,” Jesus doesn’t dispute their reasoning. Instead, he backs up his claim by making a lame man walk, and then he says, “If I’ve got the power to make a lame man walk, which we know only God could do, then maybe you should believe me when I say I can forgive sins also.”
- Matthew and Luke both record five different times, mostly toward the end of Jesus’ life, when the disciples worshiped Jesus, something Jews believed was reserved for God only.

So, yes, the other Gospel writers put forward Jesus’ deity. They develop it differently, but it’s there. (And lastly, Paul’s letters predate the Gospels, and they are crystal clear about Jesus’ deity.)

All that means that the convenient myth—that Jesus was one of history’s great lights, who had perhaps a special connection to deity like many others—is just not true.

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 26:61; Mark 14:58

<sup>5</sup> Matthew 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26

**Ironically, one of the greatest assessments of this in modern times** comes from the mouth of **U2's Bono**. He said in an interview with his biographer Michka Assayas:

*The secular response to the Christ story always goes like this: "He was a great prophet, obviously a very interesting guy, had a lot to say along the lines of other great prophets, be they Elijah, Muhammad, Buddha, or Confucius."*

*But actually Christ says, "No. I'm not saying I'm a teacher, don't call me teacher. I'm not saying I'm a prophet. I'm saying ... 'I am God incarnate.'"*

*And people say: "No, no, please, just be a prophet. A prophet we can take. You're a bit eccentric; but we've had John the Baptist eating locusts and wild honey; we can handle that. But (not God)! Not the Messiah! Because, you know, we're gonna have to crucify you if you say that."*

*And he goes: "No, no, I ... actually am the Messiah." At this point, everyone starts staring at their shoes, and says: "Oh, my God; he's gonna keep saying this."*

*So what you're left with is either Christ was who he said he was – God incarnate, the Messiah – or a complete nutcase. I mean, we're talking nutcase on the level of Charles Manson. ... I'm not joking here. The idea that the entire course of civilization for over half of the globe could have its fate changed and turned upside-down by a nutcase, for me that's far-fetched...*

Not bad, Bono ... seems like he might have found what he's looking for. Jesus claimed to be light, the very radiance of God's glory. So, that's the **presumption** of his claim. So we turn to:

## **2. The Promise/Problem of His Claim**

As I explained, Jesus not only claims to be the great I AM in the Gospel of John; he attaches that name to our greatest areas of brokenness and need.

**So, what is the need met by this claim? How does Jesus as "the light of the world" benefit me personally?** John answers that by sandwiching this claim between two stories. (We had a miracle sandwich last week; we've got another one this week.)

The first is **John 8:1–11**. (Now, I must add: Many scholars say this story was most likely not in the original manuscripts—though most agree that the story is consistent with the teachings of Jesus. And there's no question that this story was passed around in the early church. Plus, this story is so incredibly consistent with how John talks about Jesus being the light of the world in his first letter to the church, 1 John. So even if it wasn't in the original manuscript, I think you can still use it here.)

The story goes like this; you've probably heard it: A woman is brought to Jesus who had been caught "in the very act of adultery." (Strangely, there's no mention of the man; he seems to have been let go.) But bottom line—there she stands, guilty, and in Israel this is a stone-able offense. So the Pharisees ask Jesus what they should do. This is not a sincere question, as you probably know—they just wanted to get Jesus on record either ordering a woman's death or denying the Law.

It's a trap. So instead of answering them, Jesus kneels down and starts to draw in the dirt. (We don't know exactly what he drew; some say it was probably an emblem of the Ten Commandments based on what he said next, because after he was done, he stood up and said, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone.") Realizing that is not a boast they wanted to make, each of the Pharisees dropped his rock and they all went home, until all that is left is just him and her. And he says, "Ma'am, where are your accusers?" And she says, "None remain, Lord," to which he responds with those beautiful words, "And neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

**Here's the thing about light: It exposes.** Like this woman is exposed in her sin. Like Jesus just exposed the Pharisees. Listen, when something isn't pretty, you prefer to keep it in the dark. I've told you before that the older I get, the less I like looking into well-lit mirrors. I'm like, "Whoa, my face looks like that?" I told you at Christmas that a problem in our marriage is that my wife is aging like a fine wine and I'm aging like a gallon of milk: Every year I get whiter and chunkier. Tim Keller tells the story how when he was a teen he had terrible acne and he could only stand looking at his face in a mirror with a soft, dim light. His dad, however, worked in a department store, and Tim said he hated going there because it had bright lights and pillars with mirrors on all four sides, and he couldn't avoid seeing what he really looked like. He hated it.

When we see ourselves in the true light of God's glory, can you imagine morally what we look like? So, here's a woman standing with the most morally pure being in the universe, completely exposed in all of her ugly shame. And the story presents an important question about light: What's it like to stand completely exposed in all your sin in the presence of Jesus? And the surprising answer: "It's safe." In

fact, it's the safest place in all the universe! And that's because Jesus' light is not just a revealing light, you see; it's a healing light.

In the book of 1 John, John says it this way: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light ... the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7, 9). In other words, if we will bring our sin and our shame to Jesus, like this woman did, he will forgive and cleanse us. The irony of the gospel is that if you expose and confess your sins to Jesus, he will cover them. But if you cover them from him, Jesus will one day expose and judge them. I know you're afraid to bring your guilt and weakness and failure and shame to Jesus, but I've got good news for you, friend—it's safe. *There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel's veins! And sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stain!*

**So, that's on the front side of Jesus' claim. On the other side is Jesus' healing of a man born blind.** And to make sure we connect this miracle to his claim to be the light of the world, Jesus repeats the claim, "I am the light of the world" (9:5).

And then he heals a man in the city whom everyone knew had been blind from birth. There's irony here, too! Typically, you see, if you're in the presence of an intensely bright light, that light won't help you; a really bright light will blind you.

**In July of 2010**, a scientist at the University of Sheffield in England discovered a star they say (get this!) is *ten million* times brighter than the sun. Can you even get your mind around that? Ten MILLION times brighter than our sun. They gave this star the creative name of R136A1.<sup>6</sup> We can't even look directly at our sun without it doing

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.preachingtoday.com/sermons/sermons/2010/october/godwhoshineslikesun.html>



damage to our eyes. Can you imagine looking at something 10 million times brighter than our sun? You'd go blind even if you didn't look directly at it. And all these stars, Paul says, were created as dim reflections of God's true glory. God's glory, Paul says, is the truly unapproachable light.

**So, slow down—get this:** Here in John 9 we have the brightest of all lights, brighter even than R136A1, but instead of causing blindness, he healed it. Instead of judging and shaming sin, he forgave and covered it.

I know you may feel like you're too dirty, too damaged, too deceptive, too disqualified for Jesus, but listen to me: His light is sight-giving, not blinding. It's cleansing, not debilitating. Over the years, I've sat with countless people who found the healing and delivering power of exposing their sin to Jesus. Cover your sin and he'll expose it in judgment one day; expose it to him now and he'll forgive and cleanse it. And he'll create in you a new heart. He'll replace blind eyes with seeing ones. He changes your passions. He gives you a new heart. "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation! The old has passed, the new has come."

Oh, the irony of the most brilliant light in the universe is that it not only reveals defilement, it heals it; it doesn't cause blindness, it cures it.

**And that's because, at the center of this light is a cross.** A point of great darkness. Remember I told you how, Ezekiel 10, Ezekiel saw the light of God's presence leave the temple, hesitate at the threshold, depart from Jerusalem by way of the East Gate, and then ascend up the Mount of Olives and into heaven for seemingly forever? Well,

when Jesus makes his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, he takes the most unusual route. Matthew tells us Jesus first ascended the Mount of Olives, then rode a donkey down into Jerusalem where he entered by the EAST GATE. And guess where the first place he went was? The temple. The light had returned.

But that week did not end with the light of the world enthroned in the Holy of Holies; it ended with him hung in shame and darkness on a cross. The Gospel writers tell us that when Jesus died on the cross, an unusual darkness settled over the land in the middle of the day. The curse of our sin and death had seemingly extinguished the light of the world. And then, the light of the world was placed into the cold, dark confines of a grave and sealed up forever.

But death could not hold him—darkness could not overcome him—and so at dawn on the third day, just as the sun began to illuminate the day, the light of the world walked out of the grave. And that's why it's a healing light, a forgiving light—because the light of the world first absorbed our darkness. The gospel message is simply, *"Look to Jesus. Look to the light of the world! And be saved."*

Charles Spurgeon, **the great British pastor of the nineteenth century, described his conversion in these terms.** I love this story—it's one of my favorites—let me just read his account of it. Spurgeon said to his congregation one day:

*I sometimes think I might still be in darkness today had it not been for the goodness of God in sending a snowstorm one Sunday morning when I was a teenager while I was trying to get to a certain place of worship.*



*(But the snow came fast and hard, and I couldn't get to the respectable church I was trying to get to) so I turned down a side street, and came to a little Primitive Methodist Chapel. In that chapel there were no more than a dozen or fifteen people. I had heard of the Primitive Methodists, how they sang so loudly that they made people's heads ache; but that did not matter to me. I wanted to know how I might be saved, and if those Primitive Methodists could tell me that, I did not care how much they made my head ache.*

*But the minister did not come that morning; he had been snowed in, I suppose. And so, in his place, a very thin-looking man, a shoemaker, or tailor, got up into the pulpit to preach.*

*Now, it is well that preachers should be instructed; but this man was really stupid. He stuck really closely to his text that morning, for the simple reason that he had little else to say. The text was, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."*

*He did not even pronounce the words correctly, but that did not matter. Because there was, I thought, a glimpse of hope for me in that text. And so, after reading the text, the simple preacher began thus—*

*"My dear friends, this is a very simple text indeed. It says, 'Look.' Well, a man needn't go to College to learn to look. Anyone can look; even a child can look.*

*But the text also says, 'Look unto Me.' Ay!" said he in a broad Essex accent (I guess that's the English version of a redneck accent; think Keely from *Ted Lasso* or Ron from *Harry Potter*), "Many of you are lookin' to yourselves, but it's no use lookin'*

*there. You'll never find any comfort in yourselves. ... The text says, 'Look unto ME.'*

*"Then the good man got on a roll," Spurgeon said:*

*Look unto Me; I am sweatin' great drops of blood.*

*Look unto Me; I am hangin' on the cross.*

*Look unto Me; I am dead and buried.*

*Look unto Me; I rise again.*

*Look unto Me; I ascend to Heaven.*

*Look unto Me; I am sittin' at the Father's right hand.*

*O poor sinner, look unto ME! LOOK unto Me!*

*Then the preacher spied me under the balcony, and he must have recognized I was new to the church. He said,*

*"Young man, you look very miserable."*

*Well, it was true; I did; but I was not accustomed to having remarks made from the pulpit about my personal appearance. However, it was a good blow—it struck me deeply. He continued,*

*"And you always will be miserable, young man—miserable in life, and miserable in death,—if you don't look to Jesus. Obey now, and this moment you will be saved."*

*(This story always gets me; the greatest preacher of the English-speaking world brought to Christ by an uneducated layman asked to fill the pulpit at the last minute.)*

*Then, lifting up his hands, he shouted, as only a Primitive Methodist could do,*

*"Young man, look to Jesus Christ. Look! Look! Look! You have nothin' to do but to look and live."*

*And I saw at once the way of salvation. I know not what else he said, I was so possessed with that one thought. Like as when the brazen serpent was lifted up, the people only looked and were healed, so it was with me.*

*Oh! I looked and I looked until I could almost have looked my eyes away. There and then the cloud was gone, the darkness had rolled away, and at that moment I saw the sun.*

*I could have risen that instant, and sung with the most enthusiastic of them, of the precious blood of Christ, and the simple faith which looks alone to him: 'Ever since by faith I saw the stream Thy flowing wounds supply, Redeeming love has been my theme, and shall be till I die.' Oh, that somebody had just told me this before, "Look to Christ, and you shall be saved." Look to Jesus, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth.*

So let me end with a question for you who are not-yet-Christians and a challenge for those of you who are Christians:

**For the not-yet-convinced:** Maybe you've been visiting this church for a while. You've been attending a small group, something like that. I want you to consider whether or not you are encountering light and how you are responding to it. Listen: Being exposed to light can feel uncomfortable. The way I get my kids up in the morning sometimes is by opening the blinds. They're not always excited about it. They don't sit up and say, "Thank you, Father. This is the day that the Lord has

made; I will rejoice and be glad in it!" No, they cover their heads and say, "Get out, Dad!" When Jesus begins illuminating you, you might start to feel uncomfortable, or scared, or even mad. Maybe this idea that Jesus is God and that he demands absolute lordship over your life angers you. You're like, "How dare he?" "How dare he try to suggest who I can or can't sleep with?" "How dare he tell me that who he thinks I am is more important than who I think I am, or to demand absolute authority over my life?"

I actually think that anger is a good thing. It means the light is coming in, and it's hurting your eyes.

Or maybe you are scared ... the idea that he knows all about you, he sees all that you've ever done—you don't know whether to run toward him or to run away. That fear is a good sign. The light is hurting your eyes. You are starting to realize what a mess your life is! This is a good thing. The light reveals, and then it heals. "'Tis grace that taught my heart to fear, then grace my fear relieved."

Honestly, it's when you're unmoved by Jesus that I'm most worried about you. Because that means you are totally asleep, your eyes are shut, you haven't even begun to open your eyes.<sup>7</sup> My admonition for you is, "Press through the discomfort. Keep coming. The light you're encountering is not just a revealing light, it's a healing one."

**And to you who are Christians:** Jesus said ([John 8:12](#)) that those who follow him will not walk in darkness, which means that our lives will radiate with his light. Again, you might ask: "What does that mean, to live with the light of Jesus? Putting a Jesus fish on my car? A WWJD bracelet on my wrist? A bumper sticker that says, 'In case of rapture,

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<sup>7</sup> I owe this line of reasoning to Tim Keller.

this car will be unmanned?” No. It means you live in a way that glows with the knowledge that you belong to Jesus and Jesus belongs to you. **Tim Keller says that means four things:**

**(What It Means to Walk in the Light)**

- It means you live with **integrity**, because you know that one day you'll answer to God, and on that day, everything will be exposed. Every financial transaction. Every text message. Every convo. And that will make you different, which leads to the second thing:
- You live with **courage**: Most people assume that as long as they don't get caught doing wrong, all is ok. But when you refuse to do what's wrong, even when no one is looking, that convicts them and makes them mad. To live with light is to live with courage. **Think of a clerk** whose hard work, because she does it as unto the Lord, and not just when the boss is watching, exposes that a lot of her coworkers are lazy. **Or a waiter** who declares his tips to the IRS and makes his coworkers look like cheats; or an **honest cop** who gets threatened by colleagues for not taking bribes; or a **white Christian couple** who welcome a black couple into their neighborhood and infuriate some of their white neighbors in the process. You're going to need courage to live this way.
- Thirdly, it means living with **grace**: As a Christian, you know your life was defined by an extraordinary act of grace, and that means life for you is not about getting all you can, but loving others like you have been loved, and giving yourselves away for others like Jesus gave himself away for you. The prophet Daniel says that those who live this way “shine like the stars forever and ever.”
- Lastly, **hope**: You have a joy and a constancy that confuses people. No matter what bad things happen: When you are in pain, when the health diagnosis is not good, when money is tight, your life still glows with the knowledge that you belong to Jesus and he

belongs to you and that's something death cannot take away. The Psalms say those who look to God are radiant! They glow with hope.

In that way, Summit, we're supposed to be like the moon! The moon has no light in itself, but when the sun is hidden from us, on the other side of the world, the moon reflects its light and serves as a promise that we'll see the sun again. Jesus, the light of the world, is not physically here, but our lives should glow with the constant assurance that they'll see the Son again.

Psalm 67