



Walking in the Light

Kicking It Off:

If you could instantly learn any skill that would help you bring more "light" to others' lives, what would it be and how would you use it?

Read:

John 8:12

Summary

Elder Giff's sermon, centered on John 8:12, explores the significance of Jesus' statement "I am the Light of the world." The sermon begins by examining the historical context of this statement, highlighting how it challenged the authority of the Pharisees and asserted Jesus' divinity. This sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the light vs. darkness theme throughout the Bible and its relevance to modern life. The sermon emphasizes the universal appeal of light and darkness as metaphors, discussing their intrinsic and metaphorical meanings across cultures. Elder Giff connects this to the human condition, our choices between good and evil, and the struggle between opposing moral values.

A central theme is God's love for humanity and His desire for relationship. The sermon outlines the blessings bestowed upon believers, referencing Ephesians 1-3, to illustrate the depth of God's love and the transformation that occurs when one chooses to follow Christ. There is a human tendency to choose darkness over light, referencing John 3:19-20 and Romans 1:18. He contrasts this with the invitation to follow Jesus and experience the "light of life."

The believer's role is to be "the light of the world" as referenced in Matthew 5:14-16. Elder Giff emphasizes that this isn't about personal glory but about reflecting Christ's light to others. He encourages believers to engage in good works as a natural outcome of their faith, providing practical examples of how to shine God's light in various aspects of life.

The overarching message is a call to action for Christians to live out their faith actively, serving others and glorifying God through their actions, all while remembering that the ultimate focus is on Christ, not themselves.

Discussion Questions

1. Jesus' declaration of being "the Light of the world" was a bold statement that challenged religious authorities of His time. This claim has profound implications for how we understand Christ's role and message. In what ways does Jesus being "the Light of the world" challenge or comfort you personally? How might this understanding of Christ impact our daily lives and interactions with others?
2. The concepts of light and darkness are universal metaphors found in many cultures, often representing choices between good and evil, or conflicting moral values. Can you share an experience where you felt you were choosing between "light" and "darkness" in your life? What guided your decision, and how did your faith influence your choice?
3. Scripture, particularly in Ephesians, speaks about the blessings and benefits of following Christ and being in relationship with God. How has your understanding of God's love and the benefits of following Christ changed over time? Can you share a specific blessing or promise from Scripture that has been particularly meaningful in your spiritual journey?
4. The Bible often speaks about humanity's tendency to choose darkness over light, even when presented with truth and goodness. Why do you think people sometimes resist or reject what is good and true? How can we, as believers, compassionately address this tendency in ourselves and in our interactions with others?
5. Christians are called to be "the light of the world," reflecting Christ's light to others through their actions and way of life. In what specific area of your life do you feel challenged to shine Christ's light more brightly? What practical steps could you take this week to be a source of light in your family, workplace, or community?

Sermon Notes

John 8:12

12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Good morning brothers and sisters. As Craig read for us, our passage for today is John 8:12, and...I speak briefly on this section of scripture to then men a couple of months ago as it has always been very encouraging to me, it just lifts up my spirits when I read it. And I decided that there was so much being said here, that I wanted to go a little deeper, as we have a little more time than we do at men's breakfast, so that's why it's our scripture for today. It's short, so I'll read it again, John 8:12 reads Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

Light and darkness are common themes in the bible, and Jesus speaks about both light and darkness frequently. The words that Jesus used in our scripture for today will certainly have a metaphorical impact on individuals. However, it needs to be stated that there is much more than just metaphor going on here; Jesus has just publicly declared that He is the light of the world, and that all who follow him will have the light of life, and this is much more than just metaphor. The reality of this public declaration is actually very powerful, it's counter cultural and it challenges the beliefs and the authority of the one of the most prominent Jewish religious groups of the time, the Pharisees. As a reminder, the Pharisees were one of the leading religious sects in Judaism, and there were two sources of knowledge that they held a strict belief and adherence to. The first was the Torah, which is the first 5 books of the Old Testament. And the second was their oral traditions, which was held in the same light and esteem as the Torah. The Pharisees believed both of these sources to be equally authoritative and binding for their religious beliefs. So, when Jesus proclaimed to be the Light of the world, this greatly challenged and contradicted their belief system for several reasons:

- By proclaiming to be the light of the world, Jesus was implying that He possesses personal divinity. In Jewish tradition, light is very often associated with God. And by referring to Himself as "the light of the world," Jesus is making a profound claim about His identity and His relationship with God, implying personal divinity.
- By proclaiming to be the light of the world, Jesus was challenging their authority. The Pharisees were religious leaders who held significant authority

in interpreting the Law and guiding Jewish religious life. Jesus' statement challenged their authority by presenting Himself as the ultimate source of spiritual enlightenment and guidance.

· By proclaiming to be the light of the world, Jesus was stating that He fulfilled some messianic prophecy. Isaiah 9:2 is traditionally considered a such a prophecy, and it reads The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone. By claiming to be the light of the world, Jesus is implicitly presenting Himself as the fulfillment of this prophecy.

And finally, the timing of when Jesus made this statement also had some impact on the Pharisees as Jesus made this declaration during the Feast of Tabernacles, which is a Jewish festival that included a lamp-lighting ceremony symbolizing God's guidance and presence. Considering the timing of when He stated that He was the light of the world, Jesus was declaring that He is the true light that guides and reveals God's presence.

So, you can see how Jesus's statement that He is "the Light of the World", would be upsetting to the Pharisees. I found this historical context fascinating, and it gives us insight into the challenges that He was facing during His earthly ministry, and it also gives us a better understanding of His unwavering faith and courage. And in light of the historical context and meaning of Christ's declaration, how is His message of being the light of the world received by modern society, how is it received by us today?

As I mentioned previously, this passage lifts my spirit, it bolsters my hope. I have always loved when the bible uses language such as light and darkness as it provides amazing clarity through its contrast. The concept of light vs. darkness has a universal and timeless appeal to mankind; we were built by our creator in such a way, and we exist in such an environment, so that both light and darkness have a significant intrinsic meaning to us. Light has a wonderful effect on humanity; it's a biological necessity, giving us vitamin D. Our vision relies on light, and when light is present, it allows us to navigate in life. There is safety and security in light, there is psychological comfort in life, referring to how the increased light reduces the impact of Seasonal Affective Disorder. Darkness doesn't have any of the benefits of light, darkness isn't the presence of something, darkness is the absence of something, and in this case, darkness is the absence of light. I had a thought this morning, I added this at 7:13AM. In the gospel of Matthew, Jesus uses the term outer darkness to describe a place of exclusion, in 8:12, 22:13, 25:30. And this place is described as outer darkness as it doesn't have the presence of God, there is no light that shines within it. The phrase outer darkness is always followed by 'there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' What if the weeping is the sorrow, regret and anguish felt for not stepping into the

light of Jesus while there was still time, and what if the gnashing of teeth is the physical and emotional distress that you must feel because you choose condemnation over salvation? It was an interesting yet chilling thought for this morning.

But, in addition to their intrinsic meaning, light and darkness also have a very powerful and significant metaphorical meanings as well. Light vs. darkness represents most of the choices that mankind will ever have to make; In my life do I step into the light or do I remain in darkness. Light vs. darkness represents the conflict between opposing concepts or moral values, and there is friction that occurs when these opposites interact. When these opposing concepts, these opposing forces come in close contact with each other, there will be friction, turmoil and discord. Vice doesn't want to interact with virtue, holiness doesn't want to interact with sin.

And as this struggle is relatable to us as individuals, many, if not all cultures use their language and understanding to make sense of the contrast between light and darkness. For us, some common metaphorical interpretations are:

- Order vs. Chaos
- Innocence vs. Corruption
- Knowledge vs. Ignorance
- Life vs. Death
- Truth vs Deception
- Hope vs. Despair
- And finally one we'll all recognize, Good vs. Evil

None of these examples need any additional explanation, the meaning is self-evident to mankind. And for the most part, these contrasting concepts are understood by all. These concepts can also be very personal for us, as in our lives we've faced or engaged in some or all of these contrasting concepts, and these moments we've had to make a choice, do I remain in darkness, or do I step into the light? And the reach of this overarching concept of light vs. darkness extends beyond the church; secular culture is well aware of the impact, resonance, and appeal that the eternal struggle between light and darkness has on humanity, and they're constantly using this theme in all of its mediums of expression and communication;

- In the art world - Caravaggio used the dramatic contrast between light and dark, to highlight the human condition and moral conflicts. Van Gogh's "Starry Night" contained vibrant stars contrasting with the dark night sky, symbolizing hope and beauty amidst darkness.
- In Literature, Harry Potter was a seven book story that told of the ongoing conflict between Harry, who represented light, and He who shall not be named, who represented darkness.
- In Music – Linkin Park's "In the End" depicts a struggle against darkness and despair, with moments of light representing hope and determination. Metallica's "Fade to Black" explores themes of darkness and depression, with moments of reflection, hope and light. I read some of the comments on both of these songs and they were full of men that found the hope to continue when they were at their lowest, it was powerful.
- In Movies – Star Wars: is an ongoing conflict between the Light Side and the Dark Side of the Force.

The reason the metaphor of light vs. darkness is so commonly used is because it has universal recognition and appeal to all of us. And it does so because for all of us individuals, this conflict is real, the conflict is one that we all have experienced, it's present in our lives. In all of our lives there will be opportunity for us to step out of darkness and into the light. Before salvation, our lives were full of such choices; how we live our lives, what are the values that guide our lives, who is the person I'm trying to become, how do I conduct myself...All of these decisions have components of light and darkness. And while thinking about this, it really made my heart ache for the lost of this world, for those that haven't yet put their faith in the Jesus Christ. We all face difficulties and struggles within this life, and I can only imagine how difficult the struggles must be without knowing Jesus, and without the guidance of the Holy Spirit. While this scenario is a reality for some, it isn't what God intended for mankind, this isn't an outcome that God wants or desires.

God truly loves mankind, and He desires to be in relationship with mankind, so much so that He sent His son Jesus to save mankind. We all know John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. Romans 5:8 confirms God's love for mankind, and it reads But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. God sent Jesus Christ into the world, as the Light of the world, to provide opportunity for all to choose to follow Him, for all to choose to step into the light. This is directly from today's scripture, where it says he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life. And thinking about how deeply God loves the world made me think of Ephesians, specifically chapters 1

through 3 that details the love that God wants to lavish upon those that choose to follow Jesus Christ; This is the love that God wants to pour out on those that choose Him...

- Believers are adopted as sons and daughters of God through Jesus Christ. Eph 1:5
- Believers receive the grace of God, being accepted in the Beloved (Jesus). Eph 1:6
- Believers have redemption through Jesus' blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of God's grace. Eph 1:7
- Believers are given the knowledge of the mystery of God's will, as it's intended in Christ. Eph 1:9
- They have obtained an inheritance. Eph 1:11
- They are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the guarantee of their inheritance. Eph 1:13
- Believers are given hope in their calling and the riches of God's glorious inheritance. Eph 1:18
- Believers have access to the exceeding greatness of God's power, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Eph 1:19-20
- Believers are made alive together with Christ. Eph 2:5
- Believers are raised up and seated with Christ in the heavenly places. Eph 2:6
- Believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand.
- Believers are brought near by the blood of Christ. They are reconciled to God and to one another. Eph 2:13-16
- Believers have access to the Father by one Spirit. Eph 2:18
- Believers are fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household. Eph 2:21-22
- Believers receive the revelation of the mystery of Christ, that Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Eph 3:3-6

- Believers have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Christ. Eph 3:12
- Believers are strengthened with power through the Spirit in their inner being. Eph 3:16
- Christ dwells in the hearts of believers through faith. Eph 3:17
- Believers are given the ability to comprehend the breadth, length, height, and depth of Christ's love, which surpasses knowledge. Eph 3:18-19
- Believers are filled with all the fullness of God. Eph 3:19

That's a long list, and this is just chapters 1 through 3 of Ephesians. I share all of these examples of God's love for a couple of reasons, first as a reminder of God's love to those that profess faith in Jesus. If you have placed your faith in Christ, this is how much God the Father loves you, and it also is who you now are in Jesus Christ. When Paul begins Ephesians 4:1 with I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, this list is what he is referring to, we're to walk in a manner worthy of who we are in Christ.

The second reason for the details of God's love is for those that reject Christ or haven't made a decision for Christ yet. I want to pass on the knowledge of who you will be in Jesus. This is how God wants to love you, and these are the blessings that God wants to bestow upon you, you just need to step into the light. This is why God sent Jesus Christ into the world, to be the Light of the World, to give the Light of life to those that believe.

Unfortunately, the difficulty comes when mankind is given a choice, when mankind is given freedom to choose within and under God's sovereignty, mankind tends to choose poorly, and the bible is very clear about this. The gospel of John, in verses 3:19-20 tells us that men love the darkness more than the light, and the scripture reads "This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. (20) "For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. This is truth, God's word tells us that men prefer the darkness over the light. To those of us that have experienced the light, this doesn't make sense. But we've all encountered these unfortunate individuals, we've met those that reject Christ out of hand, those that have no interest in what Jesus has to offer to humanity. Romans tells us that man goes even further than just choosing to remain in darkness, unsaved man actively labors against God and His good workings for mankind. These individuals try to hold back, they try to restrain and hinder God's truth, trying to cover and conceal it in unrighteousness, so that it's unrecognizable.

Romans 1:18 reads For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness. These are individuals that have made their choice, they've rejected the light, they've chosen to stay and dwell in darkness. And as a loving God, to those that choose to reject Him and His offer of reconciliation, God honors their choice, He honors the decision they made with their free will. He will allow them to pursue their unrighteousness, and experience the consequences of their actions, which is being removed from His presence. Romans 1:24-25 says Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. (25) For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

And while there will be some that reject God, there will be those that choose to follow Jesus, and step into the light. The invitation is in our scripture for today, Jesus states that "he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life". The invitation is there, the opportunity is there, this is an invitation to be in relationship with the Lord. All one has to do is follow Him. The Greek for follow has a little more depth of meaning than the English word does, it means to follow one who precedes, to join him as his attendant, to accompany him, and at a deeper level, it means to join one as a disciple, to become or to be his disciple. There is more here there just following someone, there is dedication and commitment to the leader and his cause, there is submission to the leader's path when it differs from your own. When an individual chooses to follow Jesus, they have placed their faith solely in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. When you follow Christ, you will no longer walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life. Following Jesus means that you've received eternal life, and that you're reconciled with God the Father, through the blood of Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

And an incredible reality of salvation is that Jesus uses His faithful to continue the mission that He started when He came into this world. For those that believe, the light of Jesus shines through them to a world struggling within darkness, those that believe are to be the light of the world in the present day. The Lord makes this very clear near the beginning of the sermon on the mount, and though everyone present can hear His words, this section of scripture is directed to His disciples. I'm referring to Matthew 5:14-16 where Jesus says "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; (15) nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, it gives light to all who are in the house. (16) "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Jesus is telling those that follow him that they will also function as the light of the world, and that they should continue to live within the good works of Christ. Think about this exchange upon salvation, we go from being held captive by our own sin to getting to participate in the good works of our Father in heaven. We

also need to ask, what does Jesus mean when He says Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven, and what is meant by good works? First of all, what matters most in letting your light shine before men, is that you realize why you're doing it, and whom you're doing it for. It is of vital importance to realize that this isn't about us, it's about those that are currently in darkness, and it's about Christ. We're to live our lives amongst those in darkness and live our lives in such a way that honors Jesus, and directs everyone towards Him. Once we're clear on that, why we should be doing good works is pretty straight forward for several reasons.

- The first reason is that we should follow Jesus's example, in John 13 Jesus washes the feet of the disciples, and in 13:15 He states John 13:15 For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.
- The second reason is our obedience to the Lord. If you love the Lord, you will obey his commandments. John 14:15, 1 John 2:3-5
- The third reason is our love for others. Jesus summed up all of the commandments in Mark 12:30-31 where Jesus states And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' (31) The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these."
- Another reason to do good works is a response of gratitude for the salvation and grace that you have received. Titus 3:8.
- Finally, when you're in true relationship with Jesus, when you have a genuine saving faith in the Lord, you will be compelled to do good works, good works come after genuine faith, and confirm genuine faith. James makes this very clear in his Epistle, in verse 2:17 So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

It's our joy to do good works, it's our joy to shine in this dark world. Doing such increases our faith, it strengthens and matures us in the Lord. As children of God, we are supposed to be the light bearers for God in this dark world. We've been called to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. We've been adopted into the family of God, there are so many ways to do good works in this world, and we just need to do them. Find what God has made your passion and pursue it. We can...

- Helping those in need - Providing food, clothing, and shelter to those in need. Volunteering at soup kitchens, food banks, or homeless shelters.

- Caring for the Sick - Visiting and praying for those in hospitals or nursing homes. Offering support and companionship to the elderly or chronically ill.
- Supporting the Vulnerable – Assisting single parents, widows, and orphans. Advocating for the rights and protection of children and the marginalized.
- Practice hospitality – Inviting friends, neighbors, and strangers into your home for meals and fellowship. Being encouraging, being willing to listen and offering emotional support to those in distress.
- Share the Gospel and participate in Discipleship – Practicing evangelism, Sharing the message of Jesus Christ with others through words and actions. Living a life that reflects Christ's teachings, making others curious about the source of your hope and joy.
- Discipleship – Mentoring and teaching new believers, helping them grow in their faith. Participating in and leading Bible studies, prayer groups, and church activities. Supporting the Church and Community
- Serving in the Church – Using your gifts and talents to serve in various church ministries (e.g., teaching Sunday school, leading worship, organizing events). Supporting the church financially and through prayer.
- Community Involvement – Engaging in local community projects, such as neighborhood clean-ups, community gardens, and outreach programs.
- Being a loving and responsible spouse, parent, or family member. Modeling Christ-like behavior in your home and family life.
- Pursuing Personal Spiritual Growth through prayer and devotion. Maintaining a strong personal relationship with God through regular prayer, Bible reading, and worship.

If you're Christian, if you've chosen to walk in the light and follow Christ, praise God for this. If you don't know Jesus Christ as savior, I invite you to step into the light of Jesus. If you have questions or are not exactly sure how to walk in the light, please see me or any of the pastors and elders after the service as we would love to discuss this with you further. As Christians, it's our duty, our privilege, and our joy to walk in the light, and do our good works before men, and we do it all for God's glory. And we need to always remember that this isn't about us, it's about Him, it's about Christ, our savior. Our lives, our testimonies, our efforts should all point to Jesus. He lived the life we couldn't live, He died the death we should have died, and He rose from the dead so that we could be reconciled with God, all for God's glory. Let's pray.