

Sunday, September 13, 2026

I AM the Light of the World

John 8:12-59

Big Idea

Following Jesus means more than believing things about Him. We make room for His words, let Him set us free, and increasingly become like Him.

Main Scripture

John 8:12

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

OPENING QUESTION

Start with this:

Have you ever walked through your house in the dark because you were too lazy to turn on the light?

What usually happens?

You run into something.

Step on something.

Kick the corner of a couch.

Think you know where you are going...and discover you were wrong.

Then ask:

What does light actually do for us?

Let students answer.

Light does not create what is in the room.

It reveals what is already there.

It helps us see where we are.

It helps us see where we need to go.

And in John 8, Jesus says:

“I am the Light of the world.”

That means Jesus isn't simply saying:

“I can give you some good advice.”

He is saying:

“If you want to see God clearly, look at Me.”

“If you want to see truth clearly, listen to Me.”

“If you want to know how to live, follow Me.”

1. YOU CAN BE CLOSE TO THE LIGHT AND STILL NOT SEE

Read John 8:12

Jesus says:

“I am the light of the world.”

This happens around the Feast of Tabernacles, when light was one of the major images of the celebration.

So Jesus is standing in a place where people are thinking about light and essentially saying:

“All of this points to Me.”

But here is what is crazy:

The Light of the world is standing directly in front of these religious leaders...

...and many of them cannot see who He is.

They know Scripture.

They know the stories.

They know the religious language.

They go to worship.

They believe they understand God.

And yet Jesus is right in front of them and they miss Him.

That should make Christians pay attention.

Because you can:

Go to church.

Go to youth group.

Know Bible stories.

Know Christian songs.

Know the right answers.

And still resist Jesus when He challenges you.

Ask

Why do you think someone could know a lot about God but still not actually follow God?

Let them talk.

Possible answers:

- Pride
- We want God to agree with us
- We don't want to change
- Church can become routine
- Knowing information is easier than obeying

Tell them:

Being around the Light is not the same as following the Light.

2. A DISCIPLE DOESN'T JUST LIKE JESUS — A DISCIPLE FOLLOWS JESUS

Read John 8:31–32

Jesus says:

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

Some translations say:

“If you abide in my word...”

Abide means:

Stay.

Remain.

Live there.

Make your home there.

In Jesus' world, being a disciple wasn't just agreeing with your rabbi.

A disciple wanted to:

Be with the rabbi.

Learn his words.

Practice his way.

Imitate his life.

Become like him.

There is a big difference between a **fan** and a **disciple**.

A fan says:

“I like Jesus.”

A disciple says:

“I am building my life around Jesus.”

A fan knows things about Jesus.

A disciple increasingly becomes like Jesus.

Discussion

Ask:

What is something Jesus teaches that is easy to agree with but much harder to actually do?

Examples if they need help:

Forgive people.

Love your enemies.

Don't retaliate.

Be generous.

Tell the truth.

Serve people.

Don't live for approval.

Trust God.

Then say:

Sometimes we think:

“If I understand what Jesus said, I'm done.”

Jesus says:

“No. Walk in it.”

There are things about following Jesus you understand differently once you actually obey Him.

Forgiveness makes more sense when you have someone difficult to forgive.

Trust becomes real when something is outside your control.

Generosity becomes real when giving actually costs you something.

The way of Jesus proves itself true as we walk in it.

3. JESUS OFFERS FREEDOM — BUT SOMETIMES WE DEFEND OUR CHAINS

Read John 8:33–36

Jesus tells them the truth will set them free.

Their response is basically:

“Free? Who said we aren't already free?”

Jesus says:

“Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

And then:

“If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”

Here is one of the most important ideas in this chapter:

You cannot receive freedom from a slavery you refuse to acknowledge.

You can look completely free on the outside and still be controlled by something.

Ask students:

What are some things that can control people even though nobody can physically see the chains?

Write or repeat their answers.

Possibilities:

- Anger
- Pornography
- Approval
- Relationships
- Fear
- Jealousy
- Popularity
- Social media
- Money
- Bitterness
- Needing everyone to like you
- Needing to always be right

Then say:

Sometimes we get so used to a chain that when Jesus tries to free us...

we defend it.

“I’m just an angry person.”

“That is just how I talk.”

“Everybody watches that.”

“I need people to like me.”

“I’ll forgive them when they apologize.”

Jesus doesn't reveal those things because He wants to embarrass us.

He reveals them because He came to set us free.

4. WHAT VOICE IS FORMING YOU?

Read John 8:42–47

This part of the conversation gets intense.

Jesus starts talking about fathers and family resemblance.

The religious leaders say:

“Abraham is our father.”

Jesus basically says:

“Then why don't you act like Abraham?”

Then they say:

“God is our Father.”

Jesus says:

“Then why don't you love the One He sent?”

Jesus is making this point:

There is a difference between claiming a family name and carrying the family resemblance.

If someone belongs to Jesus, over time they should increasingly look like Jesus.

Not physically.

In the kind of person they are becoming.

Mercy.

Compassion.

Courage.

Forgiveness.

Generosity.

Love.

Truth.

Humility.

Then Jesus says:

“Whoever belongs to God hears what God says.”

So here's the question:

What voice is forming you?

Not just what you hear on Sunday.

What shapes you Monday through Saturday?

TikTok?

YouTube?

Friends?

Sports culture?

Music?

Influencers?

Politics?

Gaming?

Whatever everybody at school thinks?

There are voices everywhere telling you:

What matters.

What makes someone valuable.

Who you should hate.

What success looks like.

What your body should look like.

What relationships should look like.

What will make you happy.

And Jesus says:

“Abide in My word.”

Because the voice you continually listen to eventually becomes visible in the person you become.

Ask

What voice do you think teenagers hear the most right now?

Then:

How can you tell when another voice is shaping you more than Jesus?

5. WHO IS JESUS?

Read John 8:56–59

The argument finally reaches its climax.

They ask Jesus:

“Are you greater than our father Abraham?”

Then Jesus says:

“Before Abraham was born, I AM.”

Not:

“I was.”

Jesus says:

“I AM.”

That language takes us back to Exodus 3.

Moses asks God His name.

God says:

“I AM WHO I AM.”

Jesus is making an enormous claim about who He is.

And the people understand exactly what He is claiming because their response is to pick up stones.

This whole chapter started with:

“I am the Light of the world.”

And now it ends with:

“Before Abraham was, I AM.”

Jesus is not saying:

“I am one possible way to organize your life.”

He is saying:

“I am the One you were created to follow.”

LANDING — FOUR QUESTIONS

Finish by giving students a little quiet space.

Tell them:

I want you to think about four questions.

You don't have to answer these out loud.

1. FOLLOW THE LIGHT

Where do I already know what Jesus says but I'm refusing to follow Him?

Maybe forgiveness.

Purity.

Honesty.

Generosity.

How you treat someone.

2. MAKE ROOM FOR HIS WORD

Can Jesus still tell me I'm wrong?

Or do I only listen to Jesus when He already agrees with me?

3. RECEIVE HIS FREEDOM

Is there something controlling me that Jesus wants to free me from?

Don't defend a chain Jesus is trying to break.

4. CARRY THE FAMILY RESEMBLANCE

If somebody watched my life this week, would anything about me look like Jesus?

Not just:

“Would they know I go to church?”

Would they see:

Mercy?

Love?

Forgiveness?

Courage?

Generosity?

Compassion?

Truth?

FINAL CHALLENGE

Jesus says:

“I am the Light of the world.”

The question isn't simply:

Do you believe Jesus is the Light?

The question is:

Are you following the Light?

Make room for His Word.

Let Him correct you.

Let Him expose what is enslaving you.

Let Him set you free.

And stay close enough to Jesus that over time...

you start looking like the Rabbi you follow.

