

This morning is the fourth week in the season of Advent, the four weeks before Christmas where we look back at the coming of Jesus and look ahead to His return. During Advent, I am preaching through some of the names given to the Messiah in the Old Testament. The Hebrew word Messiah, which is the Greek name Christos and the English word Christ, referred to the anointed king from David's line who the Israelites believed would restore the nation of Israel to glory. Three weeks ago, we looked at the name Immanuel from Isaiah 7. Two weeks ago, we looked at Isaiah 9 and the names "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Last week we looked at the name "Servant of the Lord" from Isaiah 42, 49, and 53. This morning we will look at a name that is used to describe Jesus in both Isaiah and in John: Light of the world.

***Isaiah 9:1-2** - Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan-- ² **The people walking in darkness** have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.*

Isaiah prophesies that in the darkness, a great light will dawn, and a few verses later he says that this light will be a child who will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. In the darkness, a great light will come. And John reaffirms this in the beginning of his gospel, where he references Jesus as the Word of God:

***John 1:1-14** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. ⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. ⁹ **The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.** ¹⁰ He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. ¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. ¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- ¹³ children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. ¹⁴ The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

What is the significance of this name, Light of the World, for our relationship with God and for the world?

1) Jesus shows us the way to go

Have you ever tried finding your way in pitch blackness? It's hard not to stumble or run into things. And similarly in life, it's hard to know the right way to go. As Thomas Merton put it, "People may spend their whole lives climbing the ladder of success only to find, once they reach the top, that the ladder is leaning against the wrong wall." With so many voices out there claiming that they know the right way to go, how are you to know which voice to listen to?

Jesus claims that He is the light that shows us the right way to go:

John 8:12 - When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus never claims that there are many paths to God. He claims that HE is the light of the world, the one we should follow. In fact, He has this to say about the leading religious teachers of his day:

Matthew 15:12-14 - The disciples came to him and asked, "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this?" ¹³ He replied, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be pulled up by the roots. ¹⁴ Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

They are blind guides. And there are so many blind guides out there. They are guiding you, but they don't even know themselves the right way to go, and so they are guiding you into a pit. Think about what Jesus said:

Luke 9:25 - What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit his very self?

What good is it to follow someone who can make you rich, or maximize your looks, if you lose your soul in the process? You are a blind person following a blind guide. But Jesus is the light of the world, and He gives us spiritual sight:

How does Jesus light the way? By His Word and His Spirit:

Psalm 119:105 - Your word is a lamp to my feet and a **light** for my path.

Psalm 19:7-8 - The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple. ⁸ The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the LORD are radiant, giving **light** to the eyes.

You want to walk in the light? Follow His word, His commands. And follow His Holy Spirit

Ephesians 1:17-19 - I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸ I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

John 16:13-14 - But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. ¹⁴ He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

You want wisdom? You want direction? Follow Jesus.

James 1:5 - If any of you **lacks wisdom**, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

When I came to faith, I began to see things differently. As Paul said in Ephesians 1, we begin to know God, the hope to which he called us, the riches we have in him, and the power that is available to us. As C.S. Lewis said, “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.”

2) **Jesus reveals what is in our hearts**

Light doesn't just lead the way; it also reveals. Like an HD television, Jesus reveals more than we may see on our own

Psalm 90:8 - You have set our iniquities before you, our secret sins in the **light** of your presence.

Not everyone wants to be exposed, because it won't be pretty:

John 3:19-21 - This is the verdict: **Light** has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of **light** because their deeds were evil. ²⁰ Everyone who does evil hates the **light**, and will not come into the **light** for fear that his deeds will be exposed. ²¹ But whoever lives by the truth comes into the **light**, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."

Just as light can help us to see, bright light can also cause people to turn away. And sometimes when Jesus reveals Himself, people shut their eyes, because they do not like what they see.

Jesus is the light of the world, revealing what is truly in us. And the promise is that on the day we stand before Him to be judged for all eternity, His light will reveal what is in our hearts and how we have lived our lives:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 - If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to **light**. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. ¹⁴ If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

1 Corinthians 4:5 - Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to **light** what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

The light reveals. This is why it can be so good to pray this prayer:

Psalms 139:23-24 - Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. ²⁴ See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

Let His Spirit reveal what is in your heart, and repent of any sin He reveals.

3) Jesus gives spiritual life, hope, and joy

Some of you are blind. You do not see the light. Turn to Him and find life!

2 Corinthians 4:4-6 - *The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the **light** of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let **light** shine out of darkness," made his **light** shine in our hearts to give us the **light** of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.*

And some of you are without hope and joy. Turn to Him and let His light give you life!

Psalms 13:1-3 - *How long, O LORD? Will you forget me forever? How long will you hide your face from me? ² How long must I wrestle with my thoughts and every day have sorrow in my heart? How long will my enemy triumph over me? ³ Look on me and answer, O LORD my God. Give **light** to my eyes, or I will sleep in death;*

Light gives life. We can not live without light. Think of the joy and hope that comes when there is light in the darkness, a path when we are lost. In fact, the promise of the Bible is that one day all of the lesser lights of this world will fade away when we are with God forever.

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. ²⁰ 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.*

Revelation 22:5 - *There will be no more night. They will not need the **light** of a lamp or the **light** of the sun, for the Lord God will give them **light**. And they will reign for ever and ever.*

So if you are without joy or hope or life, turn to the Lord!

4) We follow Jesus by walking in His light and reflecting His light

Romans 13:12-14 - *The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of **light**. ¹³ Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. ¹⁴ Rather, clothe*

yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.

Ephesians 5:8-14 - *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light⁹ (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)¹⁰ and find out what pleases the Lord.¹¹ Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.¹² For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret.¹³ But everything exposed by the light becomes visible,¹⁴ for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you."*

Walk in the light, not just in how you behave, but in your openness and honesty with God and with each other.

1 John 1:5-9 - *This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.⁷ 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.⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.*

Walk in the light, and let your light shine before the world

Matthew 5:14-16 - *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden.¹⁵ 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.¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*

Bring light to this dark world by your good deeds, by reflecting Jesus to the world.