I Am the Light of the World

John 8:12-30

Key verse 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 have the light of life."

Today's message is the final in our sermon series on the Great "I Am" passages of John's Gospel.  It is Jesus proclamation that he is the promised messiah as foretold by the prophet Issaiah’ ‘the people walking in darkness and in the shadow of death have seen a great light."  The setting is the Feast of Tabernacles.  At the Temple huge lamps were shining brightly commemorating the fiery pillar which was God leading the children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt.  The Jews had as their greatest principle the great Shema "Hear O Israel; the Lord your God is one." which set them apart in the world as monotheists.  It was here that Jesus announced, "I Am the Light of the world."  setting off this inflammatory and explosive discourse which ends in Jesus declaring himself as the eternal one, the "before Abraham was born I AM." an indisputable claim to be God incarnate, followed by the Jews picking up stones to put him to death for blasphemy.  How each person responds to Jesus announcement determines if we spend eternity where the lamb is the light in the city of gold or cast out into darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.  This passage contains a wonderful promise and a very grave warning.  Let’s open our hearts today to embrace Jesus the Light of the World and discover how to "never walk in darkness."

Part I        I AM the Light of the world

Look at verse 12 "when Jesus spoke again to the people he said "I am the light of the world.  Whoever follows me will never live in darkness but have the light of life."  In their hearing that day "Sukkot was fulfilled."  The fiery pillar was standing there at the feast in person annunciating his identity "I AM the light of the world."  The eternal one who spoke into the void in the beginning declaring "Let there be light."  Jn 1:4-5" In him was life, and that life was the light of men.  The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it."  The word "light" occurs 6 times in the first 9 verses of John's Gospel Jn1:6 "The true light that gives life to everyone was coming into the world."  Without light there can be no life.  The speed of light is a universal constant, 386,000 miles per second, and is even tied to the fabric of time itself.   It is known that all matter in the universe had its genesis and origin as light.    In the bible light represents Good and darkness evil.  The dark can be scarry.   Many children are afraid of the dark and use a night light to sleep comfortably.  One young man always had to look back behind him while climbing the big open staircase in his parents’ house in the dark.  After meeting Jesus and accepting him as the "light of the world" that scarry feeling was gone.  Something fundamental had changed in his soul.  In the bible darkness is ignorance and light is revelation knowledge.  In Luke 1:27-29 says Jesus came "to give the people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the tender mercy of our God by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death..."  When we hear life testimonies of those who met Jesus we see God's tender mercy in giving them the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins and the rising sun Jesus leading each one out of their own personal darkness and we praise God.  Every time we sin or we are victimized by sin, a dark blot appears on our soul.  I heard of a man who was an army machine gunner.  Every time he closed his eyes he saw the memory of massacring hundreds of men each day.  I heard during World War 2 the Japanese stole thousands of women and enslaved them calling them "comfort women" for the troops.  After they couldn't be in the same room as a man without hysteria.  Almost everyone has some form of PTSD which keeps them up at night.   Just think of the traumatic events occurring in Israel now with the terror attacks of Hamas and the subsequent horrors of Israel's revenge on Gaza.  Someone might say "no one understands my inner agony.!"  However, Jesus can lead such people out of their personal darkness, and he can lead you out of yours, no matter what it is.  Those who reject Jesus remain in hatred, guilt darkness and ignorance.  Oh, how we need Jesus the Light of the world.

In the bible darkness is akin to spiritual blindness.  2 Cor.4:4 says, "The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel displayed in the glory of Christ...."  As the hymnwriter says "ye dwellers in darkness with sin blinded eyes, the light of the world is Jesus,  go wash at his bidding and light will arise..."   It is apostle John's great agony that Jesus came, the light of the world, but his own creation did not receive him.  We share this agony when our gospel preaching is rejected.

Jesus has great power as the Creator God. He could have burned up his opponents with lightning from heaven. Instead, he humbly conversed with them to help them understand who he was. May we learn Jesus patient humility in our witness serving students through bible study until their spiritual eyes are opened !

Part II  Solar power, the Light of Life

Jesus said, “I am the Bread of life” to those who are hungry; “I am the Good Shepherd” to those who are vulnerable and lonely; “I am the Way” to those who are lost; “I am the Resurrection and the Life” to those who suffer under the power of death. In a word, he is everything to everyone. Now he says “I am the light of the world” to those walking in darkness (12). This light reflects the power, beauty and mystery of God. In fact, the Bible refers to God as light. 1 John 1:5 declares, “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” Psalm 104:2a says, “The Lord wraps himself in light as with a garment....” 1 Timothy 6:16 says that God lives in “unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see.”  Jesus said, “I am the light of the world,” it means he is the Creator who made all these lights. Light is energy. Light produces tremendous power. Light gives life. In the spring season, all kinds of plants, flowers, trees and so on come alive through the power of sunlight. Light provides warmth and beauty. Light dispels darkness and reveals reality. Without light there is only darkness. Look at verse 12b .... whoever follows me will never live in darkness but will have the light of life."   If we we meet Jesus, the light of the world, it means we are reconciled and reconnected, and become solar powered.  This connection becomes our source of strength.  If we become dim and weak spiritually, we need to find out what is hindering the connection.  Sin cuts off the flow of spiritual power.  We are like spiritual electricians following Jesus to help reconcile and re-connect spiritually dead people to the solar power source.  A light bulb which has never been turned on does not know its purpose.  Once energized it can fulfill its intended and created purpose.  Jesus said, "You are the light of the world."   following Jesus we find the meaning of our existence !  In last weeks wonderful message Gideon had a meeting with God personally.  He acknowledged God, made a generous sacrifice, turned his back on his father’s empty idolatry in his practical walk and the Spirit of the Lord came upon him and he blew the trumpet calling Israel to battle against the Amalakite oppressors.  His weakness as a fearful man, least amongst his clan and family was turned to strength and he became powerful in battle with mission purpose and the light of life burning in his heart.

Inevitably along our life's journey we may find ourselves wandering into darkness.  We may get depressed thinking of our poor human situation and lag behind Jesus in the way.  We easily become a complaining Invalid making excuses why its too hard to follow Jesus wholeheartedly.  I started a new job a month ago but on the second day I fell off a 12-foot platform after dangling in the air until I couldn't hold on anymore and hit my butt hard on a ladder when I dropped down.  Even before I have been experiencing constant hip pain getting worse and worse.  I kept working but after several weeks I lost my job, not able to keep up.  I lay in my bed for a week partly very sore and partly very dark and gloomy thinking I was embarrassed and how could I ask my job references again in future applications.  Then when I realized I have the best eternal job following Jesus, my heart filled up with heavenly sunlight.  The future is as bright as the promises of God and the retirement benefits are excellent, I hear.  On thanksgiving we had a wonderful message.  King David praised the Lord from his inmost being despite difficulties.  When we start to feel sad, we should not ever dwell in darkness but immediately say "praise the Lord" ten times from our inmost heart.   Then instantly we walk back into the light of the world, Jesus.

There is another reason we may wander in our walk.  Look at John 3:19 "this is the verdict; light has come into the world but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil."  Our sinful nature loves to hide in the dark and do secret evil things.  This tendency makes it hard to follow Jesus. Jesus promised, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” What does it mean to follow Jesus? Simply, it is to believe and obey Jesus and to live in fellowship with him. The problem is that sin and evil break this fellowship. If we claim to have fellowship with Jesus and yet remain in our sins, we lie. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness (1Jn 1:7-9). Then we can have fellowship with him. This is the meaning of following him. When we follow Jesus, he protects us from darkness and enables us to live in the light of God’s presence, which gives us joy and peace, hope and vision. Our lives become meaningful, dynamic, and fruitful.

Part III   When you have lifted the son of Man you will know

Look at verse 13 "The Pharisees challenged him, "here you are appearing as your own witness, your testimony is not valid."  Make no mistake.  These guys were the religious police.  In the KJV they are often called lawyers.  They firmly rejected Jesus testimony on the grounds he needed 2 witnesses.  saying "Objection"!  They are saying "Hey, you are not doing religion properly."  They utterly missed the point and got caught up in their own fixed idea of what it meant to be Godly and Holy.  Likewise when we simply try to follow Jesus, living by his teachings it appears radical and controversial.  Jesus was and is, radical.  Is your walk radical.  Does your life bear witness to the stark contrast like night and day from the world?  How did Jesus answer them?   14-16 "Jesus answered "even if I testify on my own behalf my testimony is valid, for I know where I come from and where I am going.  You judge by human standards.  I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge my decisions are right because I am not alone, I stand with the father who sent me."   Jesus made 2 points.  First, he was qualified to bear testimony while the pharisees were not.  Second, he knew both his origin and his destination while they knew neither.  They were worldly, like Nicodemus who couldn’t grasp being born again and the samaritan woman who at first couldn’t grasp what Jesus meant by "living water" they had human thinking about Jesus and his testimony.  Human thinking is worldly common knowledge like "death is the end of everything”, and "you have to look out for number 1" Human standards teach us that everybody is trying to manipulate or take advantage of us for their own selfish or diabolical purposes.  All unregenerate hearts are guided by this cynicism and sarcasm.  As it is written "to the pure all things are pure but to the impure, and unbelieving nothing is pure." In contrast, when we walk with Jesus we see the world from Gods point of view.  We have the revelation knowledge of Jesus the light of the world and are certain that if we but have Jesus we have all things if only we follow hard after him.   Look at verse 21- "Once more Jesus said to them, I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin, where I go you cannot come."  This made the Jews ask, will he kill himself?  Is that why he says, "where I go you cannot come?" But he continued, "you are from below; I am from above .  You are of this world I am not of this world.  I told you that you would die in your sins if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be you will indeed die in your sins."  They did not know who Jesus really was; they did not see God in Jesus. They were spiritually blind due to their pride. If they had humbly accepted Jesus’ signs and words, they would have known that he is the Messiah who was sent by God. If they knew Jesus, they would know the Father also (19c), because Jesus is the image of the invisible God (Col 1:15a). Jesus and the Father are one (10:30). Though Jesus made this bold claim in the temple courts, no one seized him, for his hour had not yet come (20). Though Jesus was risking his life to converse with the Pharisees, he did not shrink back, but spoke to them once more with strong words of warning. He said, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come” (21). The Jews ignored Jesus’ warning and assumed he might commit suicide (22). But Jesus clearly explained what he meant, saying, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (23). Jesus would soon return to his heavenly origin, the kingdom of God, a place they knew nothing about and would not enter. The only way to enter the kingdom of God is to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus repeated his warning: “I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins” (24). Jesus repeated the phrase “you will die in your sins” three times. Why is this such a serious warning? To die in one’s sins is to be separated from God eternally. There is no hope of restoration, and it is eternal condemnation. Though we may fail in something, if there is a second chance, we can have hope. But in this matter, there is no second chance and no hope. If you are going to do one thing right in life, it better be your walk with Jesus.  Faith in Jesus is the only thing that will keep us from dying in our sins. Faith in Jesus is the only way to go to the kingdom of God. In truth, having faith in Jesus is most important for every human being.  I am amazed how many people take their eternal destiny for granted while going their own way seemingly oblivious to the terrible peril.  (I am haunted by the thought..)

As followers of Jesus we must be like an air raid siren warning the world of impending disaster and shaking people from their slumber.  We need to take Jesus’ warning seriously. The Pharisees once again ignored Jesus’ warning and asked, “Who are you?” Jesus had been telling them who he was from the beginning, but they would not accept it (25). Jesus could have judged them harshly and even condemned them. But the purpose of his coming was not to judge them. He just trusted God and continued to testify to the truth (26). Jesus really wanted the Pharisees to know who God is so that they may know the Messiah and accept him. But they could not understand what he was talking about (27). Jesus spoke of heavenly things, but they had no understanding because they were slaves of their sins and bound by earthly things.  Jesus did not abandon them. He said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me” (28). In John’s gospel the phrase “lifted up” appears in three places (3:14; 8:28; 12:32,34).  It refers to his crucifixion, in which his body was lifted up on the cross. The words “lifted up” also mean exalted, and imply his resurrection and ascension, entering his glory. The religious leaders thought that if they crucified Jesus, it would be the end of him. However, they carried out God’s purpose in making him the sacrifice of atonement for our sins. In fact, Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). He died in our places to bear our sins. Peter said, “He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed” (1Pe 2:24). When we look at the cross, we know that Jesus is the Messiah sent by God to be the Savior of the world. When we look at the cross, our spiritual eyes are opened, and we can understand that Jesus’ words are God’s words. Though the religious leaders rejected Jesus, God the Father never abandoned him. Jesus said, “The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him” (29). Jesus was greatly comforted and strengthened by God himself. This enabled Jesus to speak the truth and carry out God’s mission. His effort bore fruit. Even as he spoke, many believed in him (30). How about you?  Do you believe in this Jesus, or are you judging Jesus by human standards?    Perhaps you have tried in your own strength to follow but with lingering doubts or simply want to fit in and please your parents or fellow co workers.  I do not Judge, but there is one who does Judge.  Let’s pray now for a new revelation of Jesus who said "I Am the light of the world."  Its up to us to do our best to prevent a world in darkness from dying in sin.  Follow, and Jesus promises when we do, that we will never walk in darkness but have the light of life.  We will see the miracle of lives changed from darkness into light! In Jesus, you are the light of the world.