

Jesus - the Light of the World

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 April 2022

Preacher: Chris Thornton

[0 : 00] Just pray for us as we come to get into God's word together. Father, we just come before you knowing that our world is in a place of darkness.

This city is in so much darkness. Our own lives have so much darkness, and yet you are the one who brings us light. Yet you are the one who is our great hope. That you are the one who promises that your light will overcome the darkness.

And so I pray, Father, even as we hear your word, and wherever people are this morning, Father, as they, we're just in our own homes, Lord. And I know, Father, that you are the one who wants to bring light into our souls and our hearts and our minds, even this morning.

And so I pray that you would shine your light on us. I pray that you would speak to us. I pray that you'd change us. I pray that you'd open our hearts to see as you see. And open our eyes to see the people around us that you see.

And Lord, we pray in this city that you have us here for such a time as this, Lord, that you would truly work in our lives. So that we might shine and reflect your glory to the people around us.

[1 : 12] Because you are good. Because you are faithful. Because you are kind. And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Great. Welcome. Again, if you don't know me, my name is Chris.

I'm one of the leaders here at Watermark. It's just really exciting to be going on this journey in the I Am series that we have been looking through. And it's great for me to think of the hope that we have of being able to meet back physically.

So we're looking forward expectantly to be able to do that. But as we come up to Easter and we come up to really celebrate the resurrection, the death and the resurrection of Christ, we're just continuing with two more of these I Am sayings that we've been talking about all this series.

So it was the year 1999. And it's the only time I have ever experienced this in my entire life. It was about 2 p.m. in the afternoon.

It's bright, sunny, clear blue sky. And then suddenly everything went dark. The birds stopped singing. Everything just went eerily quiet for at least five minutes.

[2 : 23] It was like a shadow of death had passed over the whole campsite where I was staying. It was, as you can see, a solar eclipse that came.

And as I thought about that time and I realized in a way that I'd never really realized before that actually our entire existence depends on light.

You know, in page one of the Bible, the world is dark and chaotic. And then God, with one word, speaks into the darkness and says, let there be light.

And suddenly order and beauty and life starts bursting forth from the planet. And we know that the sun, in one sense, is very much the source of all life for our planet.

It brings light and heat for plants through photosynthesis. It brings the right temperature so that water melts, so that life and the whole ecosystems can grow.

[3 : 24] Our human bodies can survive. The sun and light is essential for us. In fact, I'm from the UK and we believe in the sun.

We don't see it very often. But there's actually a condition which is called SAD, which is a sunlight deficiency syndrome, which is where people get depressed because of the lack of sunlight.

Because in winter, you can go months without seeing the sun. And the first day of spring, when the sun actually begins to shine, you walk out and you see people just look different.

Like there is this lightness in their step. The birds have started singing in their souls. There is this smile on people's faces. It's as if everything has changed. People start taking off their clothes.

I mean, not everything. But it is like there is just a lightness and a joy and a life and a vibrancy because that's what light does for us.

[4 : 23] Light ultimately brings life. It brings blessing and it brings joy. And that's what all of us are looking for.

That's what the light of life is for each one of us. And the Bible's contention is that God's presence is our son.

We are the earth, just as that scripture from Revelation we heard earlier, that God will be our son. And we revolve around him, not the other way around. You know, in Jesus' day, every year, Jews would take a pilgrimage up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles.

And this seven-day festival was a celebration of God's delivering and rescuing the people out of slavery in Egypt and passing through the wilderness to the promised land.

And as night fell, just like, you know, with the Olympic opening ceremony, torch would be lit. In fact, four burning flames would be lit.

[5 : 32] And they would flood the courtyards of the temple. And their light would blaze out across the city and all the surrounding areas. And then singing and dancing would erupt with joy as people celebrated how God's presence had led the people to the promised land in a pillar of cloud and fire.

And as a reminder that in their current darkness of being under Roman occupation, that God's presence and blessing, his light would come and would shine.

That's what they were looking for. They were looking for the joy and salvation of their son to shine again. And right in the midst of this celebration, Jesus stands up and he tells us the passage that we're going to read today.

It's a short passage. It's one verse. John 8, verse 12. He says this. I am the light of the world.

Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

You see, Jesus is saying, I am the son of the world. I am the source of God's presence, God's blessing of all abundant life and joy.

[6 : 52] I am God himself, who is the source of the life that you seek and every one of us is looking for in our lives. Now, if you think about it, that's actually a pretty big claim.

It's a huge claim in terms of what Jesus has been saying all along, because actually Jesus continues to say, not just, hey, look at me. I'm a great teacher. I just want to inspire you.

Every one of these I am sayings have been showing us that Jesus is making a claim on our lives.

You know, we've seen him say, I am, which is I am God. I'm the divine.

I am. We've seen him say, I'm the vine and the branches. I'm the one who brings fruitful, satisfying, successful life. He said, I am the way, the truth and the life.

I'm the only way to come home to be with God. He said, I am the good shepherd. I'm your ultimate leader and guide into green pastures. He said, I am the bread of life.

[7 : 50] I'm the ultimate provision and satisfaction for your souls. And today he says, I am the light of the world. I am Yahweh, the God who is the source of your life and salvation from your darkness.

So I want to just unpack this verse over the next little while and to show us a few things about what Jesus is actually saying. And so let's start by looking.

He says, I am the light of the world. Now, what does he mean by that? Well, the world in John has a number of meanings. It could mean the physical world. But here, John is talking about humanity as a whole.

He is talking about lost humanity, which is in darkness, exiled away from the presence of God in a solar eclipse.

It's a people who are walking in darkness. People who, John says, the world does not know the light, but instead it is blind, it is lost, and it is dying.

[9 : 01] So let's just think about those three things. He says that the world is actually blind. You know, remember in Acts 17, Paul, he's in Athens, the intellectual capital of the world, and he finds an altar amongst all these incredibly intelligent people, an altar to an unknown God.

And people who are cut off from God, though they think they see clearly and are highly intelligent, but actually we're blind to who God is.

And we don't see the reality of our lives, of our actions, and of our circumstances clearly. You know, there's a verse in Isaiah, which says this.

It says, and God is speaking to the people of Israel. He says, your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you.

We hope for light and behold darkness and brightness, but we walk in gloom. We grope for the wall like the blind. We grope like those who have no eyes.

[10:12] Now, I know Sebastian could probably tell us a lot more about the experience of being blind. But a few years ago, I did a blind simulation, and I was blindfolded, and I didn't realize how dark pitch black actually is.

I mean, it's actually frightening, because you can't see anything in front of you. And I know you can learn coping mechanisms and these things, but I was kind of groping around trying to find my way. And at one point, my hand just felt something soft.

And then I heard someone next to me say, hey, that's me. And suddenly I realized that I had my hand on a grown man's thigh. Now, let me just dispel the rumors here.

If the lights are on, okay, I would never do that in a million years. But, you know, you do things in the darkness when you can't see what you're doing that you would never do in the light of the day because you're blind to them.

You know, the war in Ukraine and the massacres in Butcher that we've seen, will that haunt those soldiers for the rest of their lives? We've seen Will Smith at the Oscars, a moment of insanity.

[11:23] But don't all of us do things and say things in anger, even to those we love the dearest, which we think, oh, we would never do if we were thinking and seeing clearly.

You know, there are websites we go on that we would never go on if we saw the ugly reality behind the porn industry. There are so many dysfunctional marriages, exploitative workplaces where everyone thinks they're the righteous one and everyone else is to blame for the situation because we're all blind to the truth that God wants to shine on us.

We're blind to reality. We're blind to our unskillfulness. And John, actually, in his gospel, he says that even when our darkness gets kind of temporarily exposed to the light, we can be like cockroaches who hide under the fridge if the lights get turned on.

We cover up and we stay in darkness. Our sin leads to spin. He says it like this. He says, people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come into the light, lest his work should be exposed.

You see, what we do when we're exposed is like, I mean, who likes to be have your failings and your faults brought into public view? None of us do. And so just like whether it's in Putin in Ukraine or Britain in the slave trade or all the different things that we do, we spin a narrative to justify our actions.

[12:52] We say, I didn't mean that. I was only joking. Hey, you made me do it. It's your fault. I'm doing what's right because we prefer to turn a blind eye to our darkness, live with fake news, stay private with the realities and keep others in the dark.

And so we think, but we think we're in the light and everyone else is in the dark. We're blind. The world is blind. But secondly, the world is not just blind.

It's also lost. You know, Jesus says. The one who walks in darkness does not know where he's going. The one who walks in darkness doesn't know where he's going.

I don't know if you've ever been living like in a driven round somewhere trying to find an address on a dark night and you don't have Google Maps and there's no streetlights. I don't know if you experienced that.

I have. And you're just kind of going round and round and round desperately trying to find the place. But you're lost. And you don't know where to go. And you want to give up. You know, last year, I was in my flat and I heard a scream and a thud.

[14:04] And I went downstairs to see there was a body. That's the darkness of hopelessness, of loneliness, of lostness that grips so many people in our city.

And maybe that's an extreme end of the spectrum. But that's real. And maybe for some of us, it isn't to that extent. But actually, some of us are stuck in dark or challenging relationships or jobs where you feel like nothing's changing and you feel lost.

Or maybe you feel like, hey, I feel purposeless. I don't know where I'm going in life. Where's the light? Where's hope? Where's direction? Where's the future? And so for all of us, all of us, we need light.

And Isaiah tells us, Isaiah 50 tells us that we have a choice with this light. He says, those who walk in darkness and have no light have a choice.

He says, they can trust in the name of the Lord. Or you can be all those who kindle a fire yourselves. You equip yourselves with burning torches and you walk by the light of your own fire, your own light.

[15 : 18] You self-generate light. You see, maybe we don't create fire, but we create our own little desk lamps because we need the truth and we need the direction.

So what do we do? We look to politics. We look to inspirational leaders. We look to bosses. We look to career opportunities. We look to life coaches, self-help books. We look to master's degree. Or we escape into shopping or comfort eating or staycations.

And we look to ourselves to be the solutions to be our light, to just fix our issues. And we stay private about our darkness, our lostness, our helplessness.

So others don't truly know what's going on. And sometimes, often, we don't even know. Because the world is not just blind. The world is also lost. It's lost trying to create its own light.

But thirdly, the world is also dying. You see, those who walk in darkness will stay there.

[16 : 21] And, you know, artificial light is great for occasional use, right? We need it. But if you always stay shut up in your own home with no sunlight, just for the light of a lamp or your computer or your phone, you will, over time, shrivel, become pale, and ultimately, you will waste away and die because you were made to live in the sunlight.

The sunlight of God's presence. You see, desk lamps are not your ultimate source of life. Sooner or later, every desk lamp, the bulb will break.

The power will be cut. And Jesus tells us the ultimate darkness is the ultimate judgment of death for those who love darkness and hide from light.

And that's the darkness of being cast by God into outer darkness, away eternally from the presence of God. And the call of the passage, the call of Jesus, when he says, I'm the light, he says, see that there, in our city, I mean, do we realize that in the city of Hong Kong, we are people who are walking in darkness and who need to see a great light?

And Jesus comes and he says, in his generation, but he comes and says it to our generation too, to a blind, a lost, a dying world, which is trying to create its own light.

[17 : 44] He says, I am the light of Hong Kong. I am the light of your family. I am the light of your workplace. I am the light of your marriage. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

Every other light bulb will go out, but the sun of God's presence will always be there. And so the verse calls us to a response.

He says, follow me, whoever follows me. And if you're not a Christian, the choice for you is, do you believe who Jesus says he is?

And will you make Jesus the sun around which the whole of your life revolves? Will you follow him?

And you need to weigh his claims and find out, does he match up to what he says he is?

And we would love to go on a journey with you. So we'd love to read the Bible with you. So please stay on, please put your contact details in a connect card on the screen later, or just contact one of us at the emails that we show you, hello at watermarkchurch.hk.

[18 : 51] We'd love to get in touch with you. But if you are a Christian, do you also have a choice? We also have a choice. Do we believe Jesus is who he says he is today?

Will we make him the sun around which our life revolves today? Will we follow him today? There's a choice of obedience. So what does it, what does Jesus want to do?

How does Jesus want to help us to follow him? So that we don't walk in darkness, but we have the light of life. Well, I have four things that I think Jesus' light wants to do for those who follow him.

Here's the first thing. Jesus' light wants to enlighten us with his truth, the truth of who God truly is.

And that's what Paul calls the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

You know, in a lost world which is searching for truth and light, Jesus reveals the heart of a God who longs for us to know him.

[19 : 58] You know, one of the reasons why we often don't come into his light is because we think that God responds to us the way we respond to others.

You know, when we see somebody's dark and ugly side, what do we do? We retreat, we gossip, we judge, we condemn, we attack in all kinds of ways because a dark world responds to darkness with further darkness and then it justifies it.

Anyone do that? Well, we think God is like us too. But Jesus here in this passage, he says, whoever follows me will have the light of life.

Did you get that? He says, whoever, not whoever except the really bad ones. He says, not whoever except the really ones who disappointed me or who've let me down or who are guilty. No, he says,

whoever. That means there is no one too far gone.

There is no sin too great. There is no one too lost. No one whose heart is too hard. There is no one in too deep darkness for me to come and bring light to you. For God, John tells us in John 3, 16, so loved the world, the dark, blind, lost, dying world that he kind of withdrew and just went, hey, I can't be bothered with him.

[21 : 19] No, he moved towards us. He gave his son. He gave his son for whoever believes in him shall not perish in the darkness but have eternal light of life.

You see, Jesus doesn't withdraw from us. He doesn't gossip. He doesn't stand in harsh judgment. He doesn't turn his nose up at us. Our darkness gives him a greater longing to move towards us with his light.

That's why he came to earth. That's why he died on the cross. We're going to celebrate this week. That's why he rose again. It's to bring us life. And it's for you.

And it's also for those that you right now are judging. You are right now in your heart, your eyes cold because you see their darkness and you think they suck. Even to them, even to you, to your friends and to your family, God's deepest heart, his most passionate longing, when he's daydreaming his mind about what he would love to do when he thinks about you, is to bring the warmth of his smiling presence, to melt the glaciers of our hearts so that your heart may bloom again with the flowers of his joy.

Jesus didn't die just to forgive you. He died to draw you to himself so you might sunbathe in his marvelous light. And it's that love.

[22 : 45] That love provides the security to come into his light and allow him to do the second thing. Which is expose us for who we really are.

You see, God's got to open our eyes to expose us. You know, Fiona and I, for a couple of weeks, we've been sneezing all the time. And whenever we go into our bedroom and we clean up, our bedrooms clean regularly.

But then suddenly we realized that actually there's an area under our bed that we'd never opened up and cleaned. And as I moved our bed out, suddenly there was the horror of just like layers of dust underneath.

Everywhere. You know, some of us have respectable areas of our lives that we've opened up for God's light to shine on us. But there's others that actually are hidden under the bed.

Where the light, you don't want them to be exposed. Maybe it's the way you use your money. Maybe it's sexual fantasies. Maybe it's because you've experienced darkness from others, their selfishness, their deceitfulness.

[23 : 59] And your heart has frozen solid. Maybe it's polite on the outside, but resentful on the inside. And you don't want Jesus to shine his light and to clean that area because you think it's their problem.

It's not yours. But the longer you hide under the fridge, away from the light, under the bed, the more you walk in darkness. And the more blind and lost and dying you'll be.

I heard of someone who'd been cheating on his wife. And finally he got caught. And he confessed what he'd been doing. And he was asked, how do you feel now?

Is it shameful? Well, there's obviously shame. But he said, I've lived for years afraid if anyone knew what was really going on. But now it's in the light.

I feel this tremendous relief. Because I don't have to hide any longer. Because as I'm coming to terms with what I've done and who I am, I've experienced the gospel of Jesus' love for sinners.

[25 : 03] In a way that I never thought was possible. Because you see, God wants to expose you today with his light in every area of your life to heal you, to clean you.

And so which areas are you saying to Jesus, You can shine here, but please don't shine here. You know, every evening before I go to bed, I pray this prayer from Psalm 139.

I pray, search my heart, O God, and see if there is any grievous way in me. Because I need, we need, every day for Jesus' light to shine on our hearts so that we walk in his light and not in darkness.

Jesus wants to enlighten us. He wants to expose us. And he wants to save us and heal us. You know, Jesus says, You will not walk in darkness, But you will have the light of life if you follow him. You see, he doesn't actually say, You will not feel the darkness. He says, You won't walk in it. You know, there's this scene from the Lord of the Rings, It's where the good guys, the dwarves, the

hobbits, And if you've seen it, you know what I'm talking about.

[26 : 22] They're walking through the dark mines of Moria. And they're chased by the evil orcs who are about to get them. And they're lost. They can't see. They don't know where they're going. And then suddenly Gandalf the wizard appears with a staff with him that just blazes with light.

And he leads them through the mines to safety. And as long as they're with him, The darkness can be all around, But the light of his light overcomes the darkness, Because that's the nature of light. You see, it's leading you. And Jesus' presence, just like with the Israelites in the wilderness, He leads us through wilderness. But his presence is there with us.

Because light always dispels darkness. The warmth of the sun can heal many of the pains of the night. And Jesus says, When he says, You will not walk in darkness, He's what he means. He's saying, For some of us who feel lost, For some of us who feel purposeless, Or feel the darkness, Or the darkness in our own hearts, You are never alone. You have a source of light, Which is not dependent on whether your circumstances are light or dark.

[27 : 37] Your light will not go out. You always have hope. Because Jesus says, Everyone who seeks him, Even if sometimes it feels like the sun is hidden behind the clouds, The sun is always there.

And it will always come out. He will never leave us, Never forsake us. And we have to just allow him to walk into his light, And let him be our light in the darkness.

Not go to any other desk lamps, But run to him. You know, We, A few months ago, We had a new cleaner, In the Watermark Community Center, Called Asta.

And, When we first met her, She, Was, In just a really difficult family situation. Really struggling. She was lost. She was confused. She wanted to just walk away, From everything that was going on. It was so hard. And other people around her, Just encouraging her to do so. And she brought her struggles, Into the light, And shared with some of the staff.

[28 : 45] And I know, Like Kristen, And Karen, And Abigail, Share the gospel with her. And they walked with her. And they just loved her, And prayed for her, And read the Bible with her.

And just, A few months ago, She came to see Jesus as her light. She came to faith. It's just awesome. And you, And you see, What God has done in her. You see the light shine out of her. Because, That part of that process was, She saw some of her own darkness exposed. And she experienced the forgiveness of God, For her.

And she's walking to learn how to forgive, Those who've hurt her. And, Her whole demeanour has changed, From hopelessness, To hopefulness.

And, Her family situation is still dark. She's still longing for family members to change. But she's gone from wanting just to run away, And to hide, And to escape from everything. To having courage, And strength, And joy in the midst of it.

[29 : 43] In fact, Last week, I just, I met her, I just bumped into her, And, And she'd just finished work, And she was about to read her Bible. And she said, You know, Sometimes the situation just feels overwhelming at times.

It feels dark. But actually, And I wonder how long, How long it's going to go on for. But, When I come to God's word, When I come to think about Jesus, When you guys just encourage me, To come back to Jesus, Oh, It changes my entire perspective.

I now have a joy. And it's okay. I can walk through this. Because I see things differently. You see, She sees somebody who knows the smile of God's presence, And warmth, And strength.

And that light dispelling the darkness in her soul. Because when you turn on a light, The darkness always has to flee. Jesus is the light that wants to save us.

Save us right now. And he will ultimately save us right to the end, As we see him in the new creation. He is our light. The light of a dark world. The light of our lives.

[30 : 50] He wants to enlighten us. He wants to expose us. He wants to save us. And finally, He wants to shine through us. As the light, Shone out from Jerusalem.

At the feast of tabernacles. It reflected out to all of the surrounding areas, Which were in darkness. And that is what light always does.

You see, As we walk in the light, Letting God open our eyes to see him and his love again.

Opening, Letting him expose our hearts, To see some of the darkness, And bringing it into the light, For him to deal with and clean.

As we lead him to save us, And to work in the deep areas of our lives, Bringing hope into our hearts. So Jesus then says, That he wants us to then take that light, And to shine it into our city, And the people around us.

Remember, Jesus says, You are the light of the world. He's the light of the world, But actually now in his light, We become light. And he says, Let your light shine. Or in Isaiah, It says, Arise, Shine, For your light has come.

[32 : 10] I don't know, Have you ever been, Ever seen someone, Who's just been in the sun? And they come out, And they've got this bronzed glow about them, Except if you're British, And then you're kind of pale like I am, Just red.

But normally you see it, And you go, Hey, Have you been in the sun? That's what God's call for us is, As a church in this season. COVID is one of those things, That can often lead us to retreat into ourselves.

To just see the darkness around us, And that's what captures our eyes. But actually what God wants to do, Is rather than the darkness blinding us to ourselves, And blinding us to the people who are around us, God wants to open our eyes, So that we see people like Asta around us.

So that we begin to see that in this amazing city, There is such darkness, In the very people you're rubbing shoulders with, Day by day. And we have the very light, That our neighbors, That our colleagues, That our family needs.

And so as a church, As CGs, We're called not just to make our lives comfortable, In our own little light, But we're called to be those who shine.

[33 : 21] So here's the final challenge, Do you know who you're called to? Do you know who you're praying for? That God's light would break through into their lives.

And if you don't start by praying, God, Show me people in darkness around me, And show me how I can be a light to them with your light. And let me tell you, God's going to answer that prayer if you die.

He will. And as a church, As we bask in the light of his light, Then he will lead us to bring light into other people's lives, And we will be amazed, And we will see, That the warmth of the sun is not just for us, But is able to melt people, Who you right now have even lost hope for.

So let us pray. Let us pray, That the light of the world, Would come. And just like with Aster, Would lead us right now, To experience some of that light of life, So that we do not walk in darkness, But we shine out his light, To our world around us.

Let me pray. In fact, Maybe you just want to take a minute, To even think about, Some of those areas of your heart.

[34 : 45] Are there areas where you know, That there is darkness in your own life? Are there areas where you know, That you need, His light to shine on you? Are there areas where you've lost hope?

Are there areas where you are looking to other lights, To be your salvation, To be what is going to give you, The light of life? Are you willing to see that those are just artificial desk labs?

To come into his marvelous light? Today. Do you see the people around you, Do you see the people around you, Who need his light?

Just take a minute, And I'd love you just to pray, And respond to him, Either in repentance, Maybe just in thanksgiving for his light. Maybe you need to respond, Just in prayer for God to help you, To see the people around you.

Just take this minute, To respond to him, To respond to whoever follows me. That call to follow him today. That call to follow him today. That call to follow him today.

[36 : 15] Father, we just thank you.

That when we were far off, You came and drew us near to you. Thank you, That you have called us out of darkness, Into your marvelous light, That we may proclaim the excellence, Of him who has done this.

Father, I pray that in our hearts, You would shine. You would shine in those, Who are despairing right now. You would shine in those, Who have lost hope for change, In their own lives, Or in other people's lives.

You would shine truth, Where there are lies, Which are just covering us up, And keeping us bound Lord. But we pray that when there is fear, Of just opening up about issues, In our hearts Lord, To others around us Lord, I pray break that fear now.

And I pray for courage, And the new boldness, Because Jesus, You are the light of the world.
Whoever walks in darkness, Will never, Whoever follows me, Will not walk in darkness, But will
have the light of life.

[37 : 27] Thank you for that promise. Love you. In Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.