

# Week Three: I AM the Light of the World

Wednesday, February 28, 2018

by: Misty Coyle

<sup>12</sup> Jesus once again addressed them: "I am the world's Light. No one who follows me stumbles around in the darkness. I provide plenty of light to live in."

<sup>13</sup> The Pharisees objected, "All we have is your word on this. We need more than this to go on."

<sup>14-18</sup> Jesus replied, "You're right that you only have my word. But you can depend on it being true. I know where I've come from and where I go next. You don't know where I'm from or where I'm headed. You decide according to what you can see and touch. I don't make judgments like that. But even if I did, my judgment would be true because I wouldn't make it out of the narrowness of my experience but in the largeness of the One who sent me, the Father. That fulfills the conditions set down in God's Law: that you can count on the testimony of two witnesses. And that is what you have: You have my word and you have the word of the Father who sent me."

John 8:12-18 (MSG)

There is your choice. Follow the Light (believe what Jesus said) or live in the darkness (don't believe what Jesus said). In the bible, light is used in reference to God or truth. Here Jesus takes the "or" out and says God is truth. Through this conversation (John, chapter 8), Jesus is pointing out to the Pharisees they are missing God in all this. They are only concentrating on what Jesus says and does instead of trying to understand and 'hear' what Jesus telling them as truth. God is the light of the world. Not just for the Jews, but the world. Anyone who wishes to walk in the lighted path are welcomed.

Light provides protection and guidance. Growing up, I was afraid of the dark. There was a night light in my room and it was on ALL the time. At night, when I was supposed to go to bed, I would get down on the floor next to the light and continue reading my book even though I was told to go to bed. Reading was a comfort and would help me to get sleepy. When I jumped back into my bed, the light helped me see around the room, that there was nothing scary in my room and I felt safe enough to fall asleep and get my rest for the next day. God's truth provides us with that same protection and guidance and it's on ALL the time. Not just for me and not just for you; but, for anyone who walks in the light and chooses to follow. Let us be extensions of that light and make sure we don't miss God in all of this. Anyone who comes to us seeking the protection and guidance of God, let's open our arms, let the light shine, and welcome them.

*I Am, Light of the world, guide me and protect me. Let me keep my arms open so that everyone can see your light through me and follow the path you laid for us. Amen, so be it!*

Thursday, March 1, 2018

by: Phil Hornbostel

When Jeremiah finished speaking to all the people all these words of the Lord their God, with which the Lord their God had sent him to them, Azariah, son of Hoshaiah, and Johanan, son of

Kareah and all the other insolent men said to Jeremiah, “You are telling a lie. The Lord our God did *not* send you to say, ‘Do not go to Egypt to settle there’; but Baruch son of Neriah is inciting you against us, to hand us over to the Chaldeans, in order that they may kill us or take us into exile in Babylon.” So Johanan son of Kareah and all the commanders of the forces and all the people did not obey the voice of the Lord, to stay in the land of Judah.--Jeremiah 43: 1-4

Jesus is emboldened to proclaim to the Pharisees, “I am the light of the world!”. And at the same time, he anticipates the rejection of this claim, by those same Pharisees. But the witness of Jesus as light of the world will be proclaimed to all people, everywhere. We are not to anticipate the reception we might receive by witnessing in the face of rejection or, worse, hostility. We are to proclaim Christ crucified throughout the world.

When Jeremiah spoke the word of God to those in Jerusalem during the Babylonian conquest, he did not anticipate rejection. But that is what he received. Yet this did not dissuade Jeremiah from his duty as a prophet of the most high God. He continues to proclaim the message from God to his people. Likewise, we carry the light of Jesus Christ to a world that is often unreceptive. Guess what? We are not to assume responsibility for the acceptance of the word of God to a new audience. This responsibility belongs to the Holy Spirit, and to him belongs the glory. We carry the message; the Spirit calls those who have lived in darkness, into God’s glorious light.

*“Lord God, grant me strength and boldness of speech, to speak up in witness when the opportunity is provided, to invite those in darkness to step into the Light of Christ, to share with me God’s grace and love. Reassure me that rejection of the message is a possibility, but not a reason to stop offering the joy that I have found, to those who need to hear this message. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen”*

**Friday, March 2, 2018**

by: Juel Pierce

I want light when I am looking for something. I’ve looked for things in the dark, and it almost never works. But when I’m hiding something, I want darkness. Even such a small thing as a gift for someone needs to be hidden until the time comes for it to be revealed. That’s why we wrap presents—we create darkness so the gift can’t be seen.

Who loves darkness? (Besides gift givers...) People who are doing something they are ashamed of love darkness. They don’t want to be seen doing what they know is shameful. People who are doing something wrong (whether they are ashamed or not) do not want to be seen. It’s easier to hide in the darkness.

Sometimes we get lost in the dark. If I am staying in a hotel room, and I need to get up in the dark to find a lamp, or the bathroom, it’s easy to get confused, go the wrong direction, or even stub your toe or bark your shin in the dark.

Jesus promises that whoever follows him will never walk in darkness but have the light of life. When we follow Jesus, we know where we are going if we continue to follow. If we try to go off on our own, we usually get lost.

For those who love darkness, who don't want to be seen, there is a warning in Matthew 10:26. "Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known." That is scary, because I **do** have secrets I don't want the rest of you to know. And yet, Jesus as the light of the world promises that the light he brings will not lead to death and shame (as I fear, except perhaps the death of self-love), but he is the light of life.

May we have the courage and hope to follow Jesus always into the light!

*Jesus, light of the world, bring your light into our lives, that we may follow you and share your light with others.*

**Saturday, March 3, 2018**

by: Jeff Langdon

"I AM the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never follow darkness but will have the light of life." John 8:12

Light is important to our living... you can not live in darkness. We can not thrive in darkness. When someone is denied light, it has consequences.

Several years ago British researchers put volunteers in a totally black bunker for 48 hours. The results were shared in a BBC documentary. The subjects reported a litany of effects they experienced. You lose the sense of time. You get intensely bored and out of touch with everything. Food takes on different tastes. You become paranoid with a strong sense of being totally alone. Mental alertness slows down. It was hard to maintain a spatial orientation. It was reported that many felt what was described as a total lack of joy and hope.

One of the volunteers related "When we'd arrived at the bunker before the experiment I thought it was all rather bleak. The exterior was all overgrown and the bunker was an eyesore. But when I left after 48 hours. I noticed how green the grass was, how blue the sky was and hundreds of yellow buttercups. It was staggeringly beautiful. Even washing my hands under the tap was amazing. I made a vow to never not notice and appreciate my surroundings again."

As humans we are created to live in the light. And for us, having been encountered by God, that light we live in is the Light of Christ. The Light of the world.

The Feast of Tabernacles is a Jewish Holiday celebrated on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of the 7<sup>th</sup> month. It was one of the required pilgrimage festivals at the time of Christ. During the Feast of the Tabernacles, God's people were remembering the deliverance when the pillar of fire led the people of Israel through the wilderness. During the Feast they celebrated this remembrance with a torch parade. When Jesus said "I am the Light of the World" this is perhaps what he was referring to. Whenever and wherever the pillar of fire led, the people of Israel followed. We too are to follow Christ in that manner, looking to Him as the Light of the World.

We as followers of the Light are to be recognized as God's Children. We are to be lights in the world too. But we are not The Light. We are only reflections of the Light.

Several years ago when we working with our youth at First Lutheran we did a campfire and night hike at Bluff Woods. David Schmidt brought out his large telescope and we took turns looking at the lights in the heavens and the awesome full moon. That evening we discussed with the kids that we are to be “full moons” to the world, not with lights of our own making but reflecting the Light of Christ. The world suffers consequences when we do not shine.

*“Dear God, Help us to be “full moons” in our lives. Help us to reflect your love for us as we encounter others. Shine in our lives. Lead us to your Light. Be with us as we continue our Lenten journey during these 40 days.*

## **Sunday, March 4, 2018**

by: Pastor Roger Lenander

But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. 1 John 1:7 (NRSV)

What does a church look like? At First Lutheran we are inheritors of a beautiful worship space. We could never afford the stained glass and limestone rock that surround the building. Yet, many people come to this place every week and do not even enter the sanctuary. They come to eat. Children come for activities to grow and learn life skills and self-confidence. Educators come to sharpen the skills as they serve households in poverty. People come for assistance, guidance, and comfort. Recently, one man told me this church was a place of welcome and acceptance. He has never been in the sanctuary. But he has experienced church in a fellowship that is centered on Jesus as the Light of the World. We pray that Jesus will forever lead this church to be a place where all experience the grace of God.

*Jesus, come and light our way. Cleanse us from all sin that keeps us from loving one another in the light of your mercy and grace. Amen.*

## **Monday, March 5, 2018**

by: Brenda Bass

During the long winter days and nights, when the sunshine is short-lived, and the cold penetrates the bones – it’s at these times when I can understand why people of ancient times worshiped the sun! The days WITHOUT sunshine make us appreciate the sun even more, as the sun provides warmth, power, growth – and most importantly, LIGHT!

As people who live in this world, we can become used to the darkness and more accepting of the things that can take place in the hidden world of darkness: unseen by others, acts against one another that are never known or posted on social media. Pretty soon, what used to be acknowledged as immoral, bad, or wrong, can become more “normal” as no one speaks out, no one condemns, no one says, “enough is enough.”

The story that we hear just prior to these words of Jesus is the story of the scribes and Pharisees bringing a woman to Jesus who was caught in the act of adultery. Jesus tells them,

“Whoever is without sin should cast the first stone.” Pretty soon there is no one left in the crowd – they have all left, knowing that their own hearts have condemned them. Jesus shines the light on their self-righteousness and shows them the darkness of their ways, but Jesus also tells the woman, “Go, and sin no more.”

If we are to be the Light of Jesus in this world, we have to first examine our own selves – examine the dark corners of our lives and allow the light to penetrate and cleanse and acknowledge that we are not perfect. But we serve a God who is! We serve the Light of the World! We are people of the light now because of what God has done for us through Jesus!

*Praise the Lord for the mercy and grace we are given each new day that the sun comes up!  
Amen!*

**Tuesday, March 6, 2018**

by: Jim Pierce

[Jesus said] “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

Did you notice where Jesus is heading as he invites us to follow, “never walking in darkness?” He’s headed straight for the cross, for that brief moment when the light of the world is lifted up before it is extinguished and buried in a tomb.

Why would we want to follow the light of the world into that kind of darkness? I don’t know about you, but I experience enough darkness these days as I consider what is going on in the world around me—some things comfortably far away, others too uncomfortably near. Cynicism and despair are easier to find than light. I don’t need to be invited to follow the light of the world into more darkness.

But is that what’s really going on here? The truth is, we really don’t know what light is when it is all around us, as it is this morning, shining in through the windows into an already light room as I sit and type these words. No, we really experience what light is when we are in darkness, when our straining eyes can see nothing until they adjust and we find, in the darkness, light. Where does it come from?

There is one explanation when the darkness is that of my house, deep in the middle of the night when the moon has gone to sleep and I awake. There is another when the darkness is that which I consider in the world around me, and in me. I cannot experience the light which is Jesus, until I awake in that dark night of the soul. There I am met by that at first faint light, that though extinguished on the cross and buried in the tomb, shines again, growing stronger. Into darkness comes the light.

Here is the truth of the soul’s dark night. I didn’t follow Jesus there, he followed me and gradually the eyes of my soul were able to see him.

The opening verses of Genesis proclaim that in the beginning there was nothing but a formless void and deep darkness until God summoned light into being. The heart of the gospel is that in the deep darkness of a world lost, of you lost, me lost, God summons light into being again, the Light of the World, Jesus! This light comes to me and to you, following us into the darkness where we cannot find our way. This light comes to us, finds us, walks with us and the darkness cannot overwhelm. It tried, remember, tried and failed.

When we are swallowed up in darkness we are not there alone. The very light of God comes to find us and does. Look, your light has come.

*Jesus, light of the world, find me in my darkness, and shining through me find others in their darkness, too. Shine, Jesus shine! Amen.*