

**The Sermon on the Mount
The Power of Your Influence (Part 2)**

Matthew 5:13-16

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Well I invite you to turn with me again to Matthew chapter 5 and to our continuing study of Jesus' most famous sermon, The Sermon on the Mount. We've finished the beatitudes and have begun to look at that next section, in which we are described as salt and light. I began last time by reminding you that when God created the moral universe, He created laws that accompanied that moral universe, as well as there are physical laws that govern the physical universe. One of those laws is the law of influence. God determined that others would be able to influence us in various ways, and that we, in turn, would be able to have the power of influence on the lives of others. In Matthew 5, Jesus uses two familiar images, images that are present in every home, in every age, and that is the images of salt and light in order to describe the power of our influence as Christians. Let me read this text for you again. Matthew 5 beginning in verse 13. Jesus says:

"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

Jesus' point in that brief paragraph is to simply say to us: if you belong to My spiritual kingdom, if you are a true follower of Jesus Christ, then God has given you a powerful influence in the world around you. Jesus provides two illustrations of the power of that influence, both of which are taken from everyday life. Last week we looked at the first illustration in verse 13. He tells us that we are the salt of the earth. As we discovered last week, the primary use of salt in the ancient world was as a preservative. It kept meat from rotting and decaying. Jesus calls us, as His followers, salt to show the power of the preserving influence we have in the world. We combat the moral and spiritual decay all around us, simply by being in the world, and by being who we are in Christ in the world. If we live out the character of a believer as described in the beatitudes, and if we live out the commands in the rest of the sermon--whether we like it or not, we'll be salt. Because it will be completely contrary to the world around us.

Today we come to the second illustration Jesus uses in verses 14 to 16. And here Jesus tells us that we are the light of the world. Now this morning, as we prepare for the Lord's table, I really don't want us to look at the text itself, but I want us, instead, to look at the background that lies behind this second illustration. Because to fully appreciate our Lord's meaning for us in verses 14 to 16, we first have to grasp the theological backdrop of His words. The Old Testament described the world of humanity (not the physical planet on which we live, although it's been affected by sin as well) but the world of humanity, the world of people, as a world of darkness. And into that dark world, in the Old Testament God promised that He would send a special servant. And that servant would both be light and bring light into the dark world in which we live, for His own people. We saw that, didn't we, just before Christmastime. We looked at the prophecy of Isaiah in Isaiah 9. And He said to Galilee, "The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; and those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them." That was God promising that on the nation Israel, the Messiah would bring light.

But much more than that, the Messiah came to bring light for the nations of the world. In Isaiah 49:6, God says of the Messiah, "I will also make you a light of the nations, so that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." The Messiah came into a world characterized by, shrouded in, covered in complete and total darkness. And He came to bring the light of God to His own people that He'd chosen through Abraham, as well as to all the nations of the world. The light's coming, that was God's promise. And to make sure that the people never forgot that the light was coming, God provided an unforgettable picture in an annual ceremony that was at one of the required feasts of Israel. At the Feast of Tabernacles, as it's sometimes called, or the Feast of Booths, as it occurs in our New American Standard translation--the Feast of Tabernacles, or the Feast of Booths. It was the third of the three great annual feasts God required every Hebrew man to attend in Jerusalem. It was in October, just five days after Yom Kippur, the day of atonement. It lasted for seven days. And the Feast of Tabernacles was two things really. It was a celebration of the harvest. By that time in October, all of the harvesting had been done by the people of Israel in that land. There was a celebration of that reality. But it was also a commemoration of something in their history. It was a commemoration of God's care during the wilderness wandering, after the Exodus. To remind the people of the journey from Egypt to the promised land, God demanded that during the feast of tabernacles (and this is why it was called this, or booths) they were required to actually build little booths, little huts if you will, made out of the limbs of living trees. And for that week, for those seven days, they were required to live in those booths or in those lean-tos. It was sort of a national campout if you will. I'm glad I wasn't there for that actually. Sheila and I have often said we want our children to have the camping experience, and we're still looking for someone to give it to them.

It was during that feast that this unique ceremony took place. Jesus experienced it. From the time Jesus was twelve years old and first attended the feast, until He preached this sermon early in His ministry, Jesus would have gone to that October required Feast of Tabernacles, and there

He would have witnessed annually this ceremony for almost 20 years of His life. It would have been seared in His own memory, as well as in the memory of all those who listened to this sermon. Because if you had seen this ceremony at Herod's temple, witnesses tell us you would never have forgotten it.

Herod's temple alone was magnificent and hard to forget. By the time of Jesus' ministry, they had been working on it for nearly 50 years. Herod had created a huge raised platform for the entire temple area. Josephus describes this platform that you see as about 400 yards long. Four footballs fields long by 330 yards wide, or almost three and a half football fields wide. It was massive. It was an area of about 35 acres on the top of this temple mount area. Huge areas for the people of Israel to gather, these courtyards surrounded by beautiful arched balustrades. But the focal point, in the center of that massive platform was the temple proper—a building. At the front of that building, if you looked at just the front of that temple building itself that was in the middle of that huge platform, the front of it was 150 feet high by 150 feet wide. That's 50 yards wide, 50 yards high. It was massive. If you had walked inside the front door of the temple itself, you would have entered into what was called the holy place where the priests ministered daily. At the back of that room called the holy place, you would have seen a massive curtain, they tell us was four inches thick. It took some two to three hundred priests to handle. Through that curtain was a small room that was a perfect cube, thirty feet by thirty feet by thirty feet. That was the Holy of Holies. That represented the throne room of God. It was accessible by only one man once a year, the high priest, on the Day of Atonement. But if you'd gone back out of the holy place to the porch there and looked out over the rest of the temple area, you would have seen, leading down from the porch of the temple itself, twelve steps. They led down to a bronze altar surrounded by the Court of the Priests, where only the priests of Israel could go. On that same level, and surrounding the court of the priests, was what was called the Court of Israel. That's where Jewish men could go and were allowed to enter. There was an 18 inch high stone wall, on the same level, separating the men of Israel from the Court of the Priests where they were not allowed to go. But they were on the same level. From the Court of Israel, you passed through this magnificent gate called the Gate of Nicanor. And as you passed through that gate, you would begin to step down fifteen more steps to reach what was called the Court of the Women. This was a huge square where Jewish women were allowed to worship.

Standing inside the Court of the Women, there were four massive candelabra. Each of those four candelabra stood 86 feet high, some 30 yards high. At the top of them, each had a bowl that Josephus tells us held 17 gallons of oil. Projecting out of that oil were massive wicks. These wicks were typically made by the old clothes of the priests twisted and soaked in oil. It's likely that these four great candelabra were lighted every evening as part of the normal routine of the temple service. But there was one very special celebration once a year that included them. It happened during the Feast of Tabernacles, the Feast of Booths. We know this special ceremony happened on the first night of the Feast of Tabernacles, and a reliable Jewish source tells us it

happened every night—all six nights. You see, on the face of each of those four candelabra was a ladder that spanned the entire height of 86 feet. And in the evening as dark approached, young healthy priests (those not afraid of heights obviously) would climb those 86 feet candelabra with oil, probably having to make several trips. They would pour the equivalent of 17 gallons of oil into each of those massive bowls sitting at the top of each candelabrum. On those special nights, the entire temple mount would have been jammed with people. Perhaps hundreds of thousands of people, according to many historians' reports. All eagerly watching as the priest climbed those massive candelabra, poured the oil into the bowls, and then, as each of them were poised and ready, simultaneously lighting the wicks in each candelabrum and massive flames would leap into the sky. Eyewitnesses tell us that when those lamps were lit, their light not only illuminated the temple courts, but the entire city of Jerusalem. After the lamps were lighted during the Feast of Tabernacles the Jewish Mishnah tells us men of piety and good works used to dance before them with burning torches in their hands, singing songs and praises, and countless Levites played on harps, lyres, cymbals, and trumpets, and instruments of music. It was a massive celebration. Can you imagine what it would have been like to have stood there in the darkness of the first century, homes lighted with little oil lamps, and suddenly into the blackness of the night burst these massive flames lighting up the entire city and the hillsides nearby.

Now with that background, I want you to turn with me to John 7:1

After these things Jesus was walking in Galilee, for He was unwilling to walk in Judea because the Jews were seeking to kill Him. Now the Feast of the Jews, the Feast of Booths, *(or of Tabernacles)* was near.*(So we're in October. It's almost time for this celebration.)* Therefore His brothers *(these are His physical brothers—scripture tells us in Mark's gospel that Jesus had four brothers, and His brothers)* said to Him, leave here and go into Judea, so that Your disciples also may see Your works which You are doing. For no one does anything in secret when He Himself seeks to be known publicly. If You do these things, show yourself to the world. For not even His brothers were believing in Him. So Jesus said to them, 'My time is not yet here, but your time is always opportune. The world cannot hate you, but it hates Me because I testify of it, that it's deeds are evil. Go up to the feast yourselves'; *(And Jesus says I'm not going to go up at this time)* Having said these things to them, *(verse 9)* He stayed in Galilee. But when His brothers had gone up to the Feast, *(remember now, we're talking about the Feast of Tabernacles)* then He himself also went up, not publicly but as if, in secret. So *(of course you know what happened)* the Jews were seeking Him at the feast and were saying, 'Where is He'? And there was much grumbling among the crowds concerning Him; some were saying 'He's a good man.' Others were saying, 'No, on the contrary, He leads the people astray.' Yet no one was

speaking openly of Him for fear of the Jews. (*Now watch verse 14*) But when it was now the midst of the Feast Jesus went up into the temple, and began to teach.

During that seven day Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus goes onto that massive temple mount, that 35 acres. He finds a place with tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds of thousands of people around, and he begins to teach. Now look at verse 37. Just to orient you as to time frame, verse 37 says "Now on the last day, the great day of the feast" So now, we're on day seven of that feast. And the rest of chapter 7 is in that same time frame. We're still on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles.

Now notice John 7:53 begins with a bracket. And that bracket runs all the way down to the end of verse 11 of chapter 8. You see the bracket that ends it at verse 11? That's because, if you were to look at the marginal reference, that's because the early manuscripts don't contain this story. The earliest manuscripts don't contain them at all, and those manuscripts that do contain the story put it at various places. Some put it at the end of the gospel of John, other places—some put it here. So probably, this story was not originally in this place. There is reason to believe it is an authentic story, we'll deal with that on another occasion, but not here.

So, regardless, though, what I want you to see is when you come to chapter 8 verse 12, we're still in the same time frame. It's still the last day of Tabernacles, the last day of the feast. Now, what had happened the night before? The night before would have been the last ceremonial lighting of those massive candelabras filling the night sky with their flames. And Jesus was standing next to them. Look down at John 8:20 Verse 20 says; "These words he spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple;" The treasury was where the money was collected. The treasury was in the Court of the Women, right next to those massive candelabra. So Jesus is standing in the middle of those candelabras. Perhaps there are little flames still flickering from the top of them from the previous night's ceremony--we don't know. But that's the context in which He makes a most remarkable statement about Himself. Go back to 8:12. He's standing there the day after those massive candelabra were lighted with great ceremony. He's standing in the middle of them, and He says this. "Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life.'" It's a shocking statement, really. Imagine anyone else saying that. Imagine if some other person, imagine if I said to you this morning, I and I alone am the light of the entire world.

What exactly was Jesus claiming for Himself in this great statement? Well, as we prepare our hearts for the Lord's table, I want you to think just briefly with me, that within this statement, that He is the light of the world, Jesus was making four remarkable claims. Let's look at them together. The first claim He was making is that the entire world lives in perpetual darkness. Jesus says I am the light of the world. The clear implication behind that statement is that the world, and the people who live in it, are in darkness. There's light and there's darkness. Jesus

says, I'm the light, everything else is darkness. Now, what does He mean by that? Well, in Scripture, especially in John's writings, light is used in two ways. There is the light of truth as opposed to the darkness of error and ignorance. And there is secondly the light of moral purity as opposed to the darkness of sin. So you have the light of truth vs. the darkness of error and ignorance. And you have the light of moral purity vs. the darkness of sin. (the absence of purity) What is Jesus saying? Well, obviously, Jesus is saying something about Himself, and we're going to get to that in the next claim that we're going to cover together. But first, Jesus is saying something about us. He's saying something about the world of humanity. He is saying, when He says He is the light, that the entire world and every individual in it lives in a state of blindness and ignorance and error. We are disconnected from the truth. We live our lives either in ignorance or in error.

Jesus was also saying that the entire world and every single person in it lives in a state of sin, the absence of moral purity. You see, Jesus wasn't just making a statement about Himself. He was making a statement about us. He was, in essence, in this great statement, teaching what theologians call the doctrine of total depravity. That doesn't mean every sinner is as bad as he or she could be. That's not true, thank God, because of the restraining influences He's placed in the culture around us, and even the conscience He's placed within our own hearts. But what it does mean is that we are affected in the totality of our being by sin. There is no part of who you are, or who I am that has not been affected by the darkness of sin. And that's what Jesus was teaching. It's what the rest of Scripture resonates with over and over again. There're so many places you can go to see how God thinks of the darkness of humanity. Here are a few. Psalm 143:2. "in Your sight (*God*) no man living is righteous" Now it's interesting. In our sight, some people look pretty righteous don't they. They look pretty good. Wish I could be like that. But in Your sight, God, no man living is righteous. Ecclesiastes 7:20 "Indeed, there is not a righteous man on earth who continually does good and who never sins." This is the testimony of our own heart, right? Your heart condemns you like my heart condemns me. You know that's true. You know you're not the exception. Ecclesiastes 9:3 "the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives." Sin is a form of insanity, isn't it? We know it's self-destructive, and yet we make those choices. We know it's contrary to the God before whom someday we will stand and give an account, but we often choose that path regardless. Isaiah 64:6 "For all of us have become like one who is unclean"--like the leper who had to say don't touch me, I'm unclean--I'll contaminate you. That's how all of us are. And all our righteous deeds, the prophet says, are like a filthy menstruous garment. And all of us wither like a leaf and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away. We think we're in charge, but just like that wind that blew in with that cold front that came in the other night (and kept us awake sometimes during the night) drove the leaves before it, our sins do the same thing to us. We're completely powerless apart from grace and apart from the work of God to His family. They just drive us away. What's Jesus saying here? He's saying, until you understand that you live in the darkness, you're not going to want the light. Until you not only know that the world is in darkness, but that you live

in a state of spiritual darkness, you will never be interested in Jesus. You sit here this morning, and you're just not interested. The reason is, you don't really understand how dark your own heart is, from God's perspective, and you don't really understand how light Jesus is. And so, you're happy, you're happy with the darkness.

Jesus was also making a second claim in this great statement. He was saying that He himself is the source of absolute truth and of moral purity. He says, I am the light of the world. This is the second of the seven great *I am* statements in the gospel of John. And the emphasis in these statements in the Greek text is on *I am*. We could read it like this. **I am** the light of the world" That's the construction in the Greek text. It's emphatic. **I am** the light of the world, Jesus said. Jesus in His own person is claiming to be the light of the world. Spiritual light, He says, is found only in Me. There's no light outside of a relationship to Me. Now, it's not really shocking that He claimed that. The Old Testament pointed to the Messiah as the way God would bring light. We already saw that in Isaiah's prophecies. Even the Jewish rabbis of Jesus' time who didn't embrace Him, still believed that light would be associated with the coming Messiah. In one Jewish writing, the Messiah is called "*the enlightener*, and the light dwells with Him". So in John 8:12, Jesus is certainly claiming to be the Messiah, the One who brings light from God. But He was saying far more than that. Because if you go back to the Old Testament, guess who the source of the light of God's people really was. It was her God. And only her God. Psalm 27:1 "Jahweh is my light" Look at Isaiah 60. Isaiah looks ahead to the future, to the eternal state, and he says this in Isaiah 60:19. In those days:

No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD (*Jahweh*) for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory. Your sun will no longer set, Nor your moon wane; for you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, and the days of your mourning will be over.

The Old Testament says the God of Israel, Jahweh: He's the light of His people. This was true during the wilderness wanderings. In fact, go back to Exodus 13:20. How did the Children of Israel know where to go in that wilderness? How did they know where God wanted them? Exodus 13:20

They set out from Succoth and camped in Etham on the edge of the wilderness. The LORD (*Jahweh*) was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night, and He did not take away the pillar of cloud by day, nor the pillar of fire by night, from before the people.

You know what this is? This is what theologians call a theophany—an appearance of God. God manifested Himself as a blazing cloud during the day, and a pillar of fire by night. And He led them in that way. He was their light. In fact (and this is important) it was that reality, that He went before them as a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day that was pictured in the lighting of the candelabra at the Feast of Tabernacles. The great Jewish scholar Alfred Edersheim says the lighting of the candelabra in this great ceremony commemorated the pillar of fire that led the Children of Israel in the wilderness. In other words, they couldn't picture God, but He pictured Himself as a pillar of fire, and so in the middle of The Feast of Tabernacles, as they celebrated God taking them from Egypt to the Promised Land, they lit these great candelabra and they represented God as a pillar of fire leading them. So when Jesus said, on that seventh day, while those candelabra were gathered all around Him, perhaps still just a little flicker of light from each from the night before, their light is now extinguished by the light of the sun, Jesus says, I AM the light. You know what He was saying? He was saying that He was the light that led them through the wilderness. He was the Shekinah, the glory cloud. He was the presence of God that was with them in those times. He is claiming He's equal with God. He is the light for His people. By the way, the rest of John makes that clear as well. Look at John 1. As soon as John introduces us to Jesus as the Word—as soon as he tells us He made everything, notice what he says about Him in John 1:4.

In Him was life, (*God's life*) and the life was the Light of men . The Light shines in the darkness, (*that's describing the incarnation. He came as the light into the darkness of our world,*) and the darkness did not (*and you notice the marginal reading I think is better here*) overpower it.

Just like you can light a candle—one little candle in a dark room, and the darkness can't put that candle out. The darkness flees before the light. Jesus was like that. He goes on to say John the Baptist came (verse 7) to testify about that light. He wasn't the light. (verse 8) (Verse 9) Jesus was the true light which, coming into the world (there's the incarnation) enlightens every man. The only way anyone ever gets light into His soul is through Jesus.

That's what John is saying, and Jesus Himself later makes exactly the same claim. **I am** the light. Jesus is the light. He opens the darkness of men's minds to the truth—the truth about themselves, the truth about sin, the truth about God, the truth about how to become right with God. Jesus put the light on display in His message, in the gospel He preached, in His character, in what He was like, and in His life and how He lived. And by the way, Jesus still demonstrates that same light today on the pages of the New Testament. You want to see the light? Read the gospels. Read the gospels and listen to Jesus' message of light—a message He called the good news (the gospel). A message that lights our path from the darkness of our own lives into the light of our Creator. You learn that He claimed that His death could accomplish our spiritual rescue from darkness and bring us into light, that He would actually die in the place of sinners to

satisfy God's eternal wrath against the sinner who believes. And that all you need to do for His sacrifice to become yours is to repent of your sins and believe in Him and Him alone. Read the gospels and examine His character. In the light of His character as you see it on the pages of the New Testament, you will see your own utter sinfulness and selfishness and pride, as I do when I read it. But you'll see more. You won't just see your own sin. You'll see the incredible beauty and attractiveness of Jesus Christ. Read the gospels and look at how He lived. And you'll find that His life is like a light to show you what God wants from us, how we ought to live. It shows us God and His ways. Jesus Himself is the light. He is the source of absolute truth and the source of moral purity.

Jesus' third claim in this statement is that He Himself is the only source of truth and purity. The only source: in all places, at all times, and for every person. He's not merely the light for His own people Israel. He says I am the light of the world. There is no other light. John Calvin, in commenting on this passages says "Christ does not speak of it as what belongs to Him in common with others, but claims it as being peculiarly His own." In other words, Jesus is making an exclusive claim to be the light. Calvin goes on to say "hence it follows that outside of Christ there is not even a spark of true light". Listen to that again. "outside of Christ there is not even a spark of true light." In every time period. Remember, by the time Jesus lived, the great Greek philosophers that are studied in western literature had lived and taught. In His own time. In every place—whether you're talking in that tiny nation of Israel or whether you're talking in India or China or Australia or Africa or Dallas. In every place and for every person. You understand that not Plato, not Aristotle, not the great Greek philosophers that came before Jesus, not the brilliant minds of Jesus' own time period, not the great men and women who have lived since—the great leaders and the conquerors and the philosophers and the scientists. Of all of them, Jesus is saying I and I alone am the true light. That grates on the inclusivist atmosphere of the times in which we live. And yet, our Lord is the one who said in John 14, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father but by Me." He is the only light. He's the light for men and for women. He's the light for young and for old, for Jews and for Gentiles, for rich and for poor, for the educated and the uneducated, for the wise and the foolish. He is the light for every person in every place and in every time.

So in this statement that He's the light of the world, Jesus claimed the entire world lives in perpetual darkness, that He Himself is the source of absolute truth and moral purity, and that He is the only source in all places, at all times, and for every person. In this remarkable statement, there's one last claim that's related really to these others, and it's this. He Himself is the only way out of the darkness in which you live. You see, Jesus personalizes this. Look at the second half of verse 8:12. "he (*now we're talking about an individual, in the Greet text it's the one, talking about one person. he*) who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the light of life." Jesus says every single person listening to Me is in spiritual darkness, including you. And until you're willing to follow Christ, you live in and will remain in, a state of spiritual darkness—

the darkness of error and ignorance about God and spiritual things, and the darkness of slavery to sin and its power. The only way to leave the darkness is to come to the only source of light and follow Him. What does it mean to follow Christ? Well, obviously it means to be willing to leave the darkness and to want to get out of it. To leave the darkness of your sin, the darkness of your error. That's what the Bible calls repentance. It's a willingness to follow Christ which demonstrates a genuine faith in Him—a confidence in Him. So it includes an initial decision, but it's more than that. Because in the Greek text the word *follow* is in the present tense. We could translate it like this. 'the one who is continually following Me will not walk in darkness.' In other words, in Jesus' thinking, to follow Him is to live each day following Him, literally. Which means obeying Him. You have to follow where the light leads. Remember the picture? The picture was that pillar of fire that led the Children of Israel through the wilderness. What did they do? How did they know where to go, what to do? They followed the pillar of fire, literally. It stopped, they camped. The next morning, it picked up and began to move, they knew it was time for them to pick up and move. They knew they needed to go somewhere, they needed to follow the pillar of fire—the light. That's what Jesus is saying. Every day, you must follow Jesus just as if He were your personal pillar of fire. Not literally and physically, like Israel in the Old Testament, but spiritually, you and I follow Him by following what he taught us through His apostles in the scripture. If you're a follower of Christ, you're following Him. You don't get to map out your own course through life. By the way, there's a test here as well. You know, most people listening to me this morning—there are a few people, I know, here this morning, who would say 'I'm not a Christian.' But most people listening to me this morning, here or in overflow or via live-streaming, most people listening would say, 'yes I'm a Christian.' How do you know? Well, are you still walking in the darkness? Are you still, as a pattern of life living by some standard other than Jesus and His teaching? Are you still living in an unbroken pattern of sin in your life? Are you still comfortable with your ignorance of the scripture and spiritual things? Do you each day choose your own way, your own course—listen this is my life, I'll do what I want to with it. If that's true of you, then you're not following Jesus, however much you may think you are.

But if you'll come to Him and you'll tell Him that you're willing to turn from your sin and the darkness and to follow Him, He makes an amazing promise. Look at the end of verse 12. He says to that person, "I will give the light of life". There are several possible ways to understand that phrase, *the light of life*. But it probably means this: the light that produces life. Light does that, right? If you want to kill your plants, just don't give them any light. But where there's a seed planted and the right light is applied, there's life. Jesus says follow Me, and you'll not only have the light to know what's true and where you ought to go, but in My light you will receive true eternal life. Folks, Jesus extended this invitation to the crowd. He said it to the crowd gathered that day among the candelabra in the Court of the Women. He said I am the light of the world. He said come and follow Me. But few were actually willing to do it. Why? Look at John 3. Jesus tells us why through the apostle John. John 3:19. Here's why. "This is the

judgment, that the Light has come into the world, (*that's Jesus*) and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were evil." Here's why people won't come to Christ. It's because they know what it will cost them. I don't want that man to rule over me. I want the darkness. I want the sin that I enjoy. I don't want to give it up. I'm not quite ready to give it up. But if you will, He'll receive you. Look over to John 12. Here's an invitation to you. This is from Jesus to you. John 12:35. Jesus said "For a little while longer the Light is among you" Verse 36: "while you have the Light, believe in the Light, so that you may become sons of Light" There's the transition. Jesus is the light, but when we believe in Him, we become sons of light. Look down at verse 46. "I have come as Light into the world, so that every one who believes in Me will not remain in darkness." There's the invitation. You don't have to stay in the darkness of error, the darkness of slavery to sin. Jesus will give you light and life. If you've already come there--if you've already come to see that you're in the darkness--if you've already come to put your faith in Jesus alone to find light and life in Him--if you're truly following Him today, then you have the light of life, and He's given us a different ceremony to remember Him as our light, as our hope, and that's the Lord's table.

Let's pray together. Father, thank You for this time together. Thank You for this powerful image that Jesus gives us of Himself. Lord, may we respond. I pray for us who are in Christ that You would help us to walk in His light. That we really would see Him each day through His word in Scripture as leading us like the pillar of fire led your people in the wilderness. May we respond in obedience to what we read there. Father, I pray for those here this morning who don't know Jesus, who still walk in the darkness. Lord may this be the day when they learn by Your grace to hate the darkness and to love the light—to follow Jesus and find that He is their light. We pray in Jesus' name, Amen.