

**Christmas Concert Messages**

**The Light of the World**

**John 8:12**

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You know, I couldn't help but think as we were listening to the music of Christmas, I glanced around us and saw how many lights we use in the celebration. Probably in your home and even the drive here you saw lights everywhere commemorating the season. The reason for that is because John the Apostle connected light with Jesus' first coming. He said He was the Light who came into the darkness of this world and so, because of that, lights have become a part of the celebration. I believe it was Martin Luther who was first tributed as the one who put candles on his tree in celebration of the fact that Jesus as the Light has come.

But the idea of light connected to Christmas didn't begin with Martin Luther. Light has always been connected with the Christmas celebration. It's because of what John said, but it's also because of something Jesus Himself said in a remarkable setting. Jesus was in Jerusalem. He was on the Temple Mount surrounded, probably, by more than a hundred thousand people. It was one of the three required feasts that all Jewish males had to attend. In the middle of that Temple Mount, historians tell us that there, facing that magnificent structure were four massive candelabra - each of them 30 yards high - and at the top of each a bowl and in that bowl would have already been placed 17 gallons of oil. The wicks were ready and trimmed and on the first night of the Feast of Tabernacles in October, every year four young priests would ascend the ladders on the front of those massive candelabra up to the bowls of oil and lit the candles. Each of them at the same moment would ignite those torches and flames leapt into the sky. Those who saw it said, you never forgot it. Those torches lighted not merely the Temple Mount but the entire city of Jerusalem,

It was the next morning, when Jesus was standing in the middle of those massive torches that were still burning, the crowds still there for the feast, undoubtedly more than a hundred thousand, historians tell us, and it was in that setting that Jesus made a remarkable claim about Himself. He said, in John 8:12, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life."

“I am the Light of the world.” It's an amazing statement, shocking really. None of us would ever dare to say anything like that. It testifies of who Jesus was, but it also contains within it several remarkable claims.

The first claim that's obvious is that Jesus was saying the entire world lives in spiritual darkness. He implies by the very fact that He says, “I am the Light of the world,” that the world itself is in darkness. The people of this world have no light. What do He mean by that? The Apostle John in his writings uses light and darkness in a couple of ways. He uses them to compare the light of truth to the darkness of error and ignorance and he uses light and darkness to compare the light of moral purity to the darkness of sin and rebellion against God. You understand what Jesus was saying? Jesus was saying that the entire world and every individual in it - including me and you - lives in a state of ignorance and blindness about spiritual things, a state of ignorance regarding the truth, and more than that, He was also saying that the entire world - every individual in it, you and I - live in a state of sin, a state of rebellion, the absence of moral purity. It's really important that we understand, that's what Jesus was implying because until we come to understand that we live in the darkness and the darkness lives in us, we won't seek the Light.

But Jesus was making another remarkable claim in this statement. Not only was He claiming the entire world lives in spiritual darkness, but He was also claiming that He is the source of absolute truth and moral purity. He says, “I am the Light of the world.” Spiritual light is found in a Person and in a relationship to Him. The Old Testament promised that God would manifest His light in the coming Messiah and so Jesus was claiming nothing less than to be Israel's promised Messiah.

But He was claiming more because, in the Old Testament, God claimed to be the Light of His people. He claimed to be their only Light and so, when Jesus said that, “I am the Light,” He was claiming that He Himself was equal with God - the Light for His people. Jesus is the Light.

How did He put the Light on display? He put it on display in His message and, as well, in His character, and in His life - how He lived. The Light is still on display today. You can see it. Open the gospels. Read Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and John. In fact, I would encourage you - in this

season - read the Gospel of John and see the Light that is Jesus Christ. You'll see the Light of His message. He called it, "the good news," the good news that God has made a way to be reconciled to those who have sinned against Him, those who have rejected His rule, It's a message that lights the path out of our darkness back to our Creator. Jesus claimed that His death could accomplish our forgiveness, our spiritual rescue. He claimed that He would die in the place of sinners and that God would accept His sacrifice in the place of everyone who believed in Him. He said that all we needed to do for that work of His to become ours was to repent of our sins and to believe in Him. Read the gospels and you will see the light of His message. Read the gospels and you'll see the light of His character. You'll see His purity, and His spotlessness, and His compassion, and His love, and His holiness. Jesus is the source of absolute truth and the source of moral purity. That's what He was claiming when He said, "I am the Light of the world."

But there was another claim in this statement of His and that was that He was the only source of Light. Did you hear what He said? "I am the Light of the world." It wasn't claiming to be the Light for Israel only or only for the first century, He was claiming to be the Light in every place, and in every time, and for every person. He was saying there is no other light. It was an exclusive claim. It's like the claim He made in John 14 when He said, "I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father but by Me." He is the only source of truth, the only source of purity in all places, in all times, and for every person. If you want the Light, there's only one place to find it.

But in Jesus' remarkable statement that day, there's one more claim. It's the claim that He is the only way out of your darkness. You see, He gets much more personal. Listen to the rest of His statement. "I am the Light of the world," He said, and He added this, "he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." Jesus, here personalizes the message. He makes it an invitation to you, to me. By nature, Jesus says, you, like every other human, live in spiritual darkness. He says until you're willing to follow Me, you will continue to live in the darkness - the darkness of error and the darkness of sin and slavery to sin. Jesus said the only way for you to leave your darkness, your personal darkness, is to come to Me, the only source of light, and follow Me.

What does it mean to follow Jesus? It means you have to be willing to leave the darkness. You have to be willing to leave your rebellion against your Creator. You have to be willing to leave your own way - the dark path you've chosen - and you have to be willing to come to Him. You see, there's a problem - why most people don't accept the Light. Here's how John the Apostle explained it earlier in his gospel. He said,

Light has come into the world

that's Jesus,

and men loved the darkness rather than the Light; for their deeds were evil. For everyone who does evil hates the Light and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.

The first thing that has to happen is you have to be willing to leave the darkness and to follow Christ. It also means that you must believe in Him. You must believe in Him. Later in John's Gospel, Jesus puts it this way, "I have come as Light into the world, so that everyone who believes in Me will not remain in darkness." To believe in Jesus means that you have to rely solely on Him and on His finished work, on His perfect life, on His death, on His resurrection as your only hope of obtaining forgiveness before God. It means you have to abandon every other way and rely on Him alone.

But the belief in Jesus doesn't merely mean, you believe the facts about Jesus. Most people believe the facts about Jesus, at least most of us here. James said the demons believe the facts. Believing in Jesus means that you are willing to submit your will to His and to follow Him, to obey Him, to identify Him as Savior and Lord. If you will do that, if you are willing to turn from the darkness, and if you're willing to acknowledge Him as Lord and Rescuer of your soul, then Jesus makes a remarkable promise. He says, "the one who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life. Jesus says, I will give that person the life that produces or the Light, rather, that produces life. You can have the Light to know how to walk, and how to live, to

know what's true, to enjoy moral purity, and you can also have eternal life. That's Jesus' promise. If you're willing to leave the darkness and believe only in Him.

As you celebrate Christmas this year, it's my hope that you will remember - every time you see Christmas lights - you will remember this remarkable claim that Jesus made. When you see the lights behind me, when you see the lights on your drive home, when you see the lights in your own home, may your mind go immediately to this remarkable claim. "I am the Light of the world; he who follows me will not walk in the darkness but will have the Light of life. Let's pray together.

Father, we are amazed at Your grace to us in Christ. We acknowledge that our world lives in darkness and, Father, we acknowledge that we live in that darkness apart from Your grace and that darkness lives in us. Father, we thank You that You sent the Light into the world. You sent Him with a message that He called the good news - that reconciliation with You was possible, that forgiveness of sins was possible. Father, thank You for the Light of the world and, Father, I pray during this Christmas season those of us who know and love our Lord, may we be reminded constantly that He is our Light and our salvation. Father, for those here who have never acknowledged that they live in the darkness and have never been willing to turn to the Light, I pray that in this season they would come to Christ and began to follow Him and enjoy the Light that produces life. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.