

# 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: 30 April 2023

Preacher: Tom Muir

[ 0 : 00 ] So I want to speak mainly about this statement Jesus makes, I am the light of the world. Just by way of general introduction, again, if you're not familiar, Jesus says at various times, I am, and he uses these different illustrations.

They're big claims that he makes. So I don't know how much you know about Jesus, maybe a lot, maybe a little. Sometimes people say things about themselves. We're familiar with people, we talk about people as the main man.

So you know what they're saying when they say he's the main man, he's the best at whatever, he's really good, he's somebody I love. Sometimes people say things about themselves.

You may not care at all about football, but a fellow called Jose Mourinho, who's a football manager, when he first of all went to Chelsea, he said, I'm a special, brilliant Jose.

A man full of self-confidence, and he had a lot of confidence in his own abilities. Now, he was a good football manager, and he also infuriated a lot of people as well. That's just part of his whole character.

[ 1 : 02 ] But somebody like that, you know, we may question something like that, because who's Jose Mourinho? He's a human being like us. So he may be good at managing football teams, but often if somebody thinks they're great or says, I'm the special one, we want to say, oh really?

Says who? And part of that's going on in the passage here. You'll notice when we read it, after Jesus makes this claim, some of the religious people of the day say, hang on a minute, what did you just say?

And then they want his credentials. Who says you're who you say you are? And of course, that's part of the passage. I'm not going to look at that so much, but of course Jesus makes an astonishing claim, even by answering the Pharisees, because he says, well, I say I am, and I know where I came from.

So Jesus has an awful lot of confidence in who he is and where he came from, of course, as the Son of God, who's come into the world to be the Savior of the world. And he says, my other testimony, because in his day, people look for the testimony of two witnesses, is God the Father. Now that's quite a claim to make, isn't it? Now, Jesus often, we might say, put the cat among the pigeons in his own day and age. He said things that outraged people. Now, what he says sometimes might feel a bit distant to us because we don't live 2,000 years ago in the particular religious culture that he entered when he lived on the earth.

[ 2 : 25 ] But I think we should notice, at least, that he said things that made people stand up, sit up, and notice. But I also want us to think about the way in which what he says about himself is still groundbreaking and life-changing for us as well.

Now, think about the particular phrase. You'll see it there in verse 12. Jesus spoke again to the people and said, I'm the light of the world. So that's the particular phrase we're thinking about today. Now again, we may use a phrase of somebody that we love. She lit up my life. We get that. He was the light of life.

We just mean, I love them. It's a term of endearment, a term of affection, we might say about somebody. Maybe in a eulogy, you know, if somebody's passed away, it's a way of remembering them with affection and beauty in some ways as well.

Jesus isn't just saying he's like that. He's not saying he's just a kind of lovely person who it would be quite nice to get to know. He's saying something more than that.

[ 3 : 31 ] He's saying something that is, like I say, earth-shattering for the people of his own day and age and equally so for us as well. So first of all, just to get a sense of that, I want us just to think about a few verses in the Bible because light is all through the Bible and it refers to God.

Okay? So let me just, I'm just going to read. You don't have to turn to these in your Bible. Let me just read with you a few examples of how when Jesus starts to speak about light, people in his own day and age particularly, that he is prepared.

The first one I want to think about is in 1 Timothy 6. And it describes how God is and is kind of surrounded by light. God is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who lives in unapproachable light.

Now, you don't say that about anybody. Again, that's a pretty dramatic statement to me. It says that God in his light is glorious. Like he has splendor like nobody else.

Like the coronation of King Charles, there's nothing on the incredible splendor and transcendent glory of God. Second example, just by way of thinking about God and light.

[ 4 : 53 ] In the Old Testament particularly, and in the Psalms, it speaks of how God enlightens. So he is light and he enlightens people. Psalm 119. Your word, the psalmist is saying to God, your word, the scriptures, is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

God gives wisdom. He helps us see the way. Where should we go? And also, he gives light to us in the sense of he redeems us.

In another psalm, Psalm 27, the Lord is my light and my salvation. Whom shall I fear? So there, it's very personal, isn't it?

The psalmist is saying, in a personal sense and in a spiritual sense, God is, his light redeems me. It makes me somebody who I wasn't before. I need God to be redeemed.

These are just a few of many verses throughout the Bible. So we see that light is used as like a symbol of God's redeeming presence. For the Israelites, for the Jews, God was light.

[ 5 : 57 ] He was the one who had redeemed them. He was their savior and he was their God. And so that is all through the Bible. It's deeply significant. Remember, these are the people that Jesus is speaking to.

So we can start to see how, as I said, their ears would prick up when Jesus starts to talk about light. But we're in John's gospel. And I want us now to start to enter into what John wants to say about Jesus and light.

And the first thing, even before we get to our passage, in John chapter 1, where John is introducing Jesus, he's got this really amazing way of introducing Jesus. He calls him the word, which is another kind of image symbol that talks about who Jesus is and his significance.

But in John chapter 1, verse 4, he says this. In him, that's this word, Jesus, was life. And that life was the light of all people.

The light shines in the darkness. The darkness has not overcome. So very quickly in John's gospel, John's keen to get his readers and us to know certain things about Jesus, one of which is that there's life in him, life that we can't get anywhere else.

[ 7 : 15 ] And what that life is, is light. It's like a... And again, that's more than just the kind of light that means, oh, he's a nice person. I quite like him.

You know, I'll occasionally go and see him. There's something in him that's remarkably different, unique, and actually that we need. And so that's why when we get to John chapter 8, finally, a passage that we're looking at.

When Jesus enters the scene, if you like, and starts making claims about himself, I am the bread of life. I am the light of the world. People go, ah, I mean, light?

God, there's something going on here that Jesus is saying. But of course, the remarkable thing is, he's saying, it's me. I am the light of the world. All that you hope for, all that you need, all that you seek in God, it's in me.

And that's the context that we see Jesus here. Now, one more thing to say about where Jesus is in space and time at this moment in John chapter 8. This is in a very public scene, a feast day in the religious calendar of the Jewish people.

[ 8 : 27 ] If you were to flick back into chapter 7, for example, you'd start to get a feel for what's going on. Jesus' disciples have said to him, hey, come on, let's go up to the feast. And initially Jesus has sort of said, no, I don't want to go.

But then he ends up going. And the feast in particular is called the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths. The Jews had a religious calendar where they often celebrated particular festivals to remember certain things about who they were as a people and how they related to God.

So these festivals are so that they could remind themselves of who God was to them. Now, this Feast of Tabernacles was a feast that remembered the way in which, back in their history, when they'd been a traveling people and they'd lived in booths or tents, God had been their God. He cared for them. He led them. And he looked after them. And that was an important thing for them to remember. Again, it might seem quite distant to us, all these feast days that you read about in the Bible.

But these people, it was key. And central to that festival were particular images, different things that they would do and the sacrifices and the different rituals that they would go through where they would use water and they would also have this great symbol, if you like, at the center of their festival of light.

[ 9 : 54 ] I read different books about how they would have this huge, however many feet, 50 foot tall menorah, basically a big candelabra, which makes the people in Jesus' day think back to the light in the tabernacle, in the temple, in their worship, way back in the history of God's people, but also, of course, of the light, the pillar of light that God was to lead the people through the desert.

And this massive pillar, which would have been seen from all around, lit up in the middle of this festival, symbolized, reminded the people of the centrality of God as their light, the one who they looked to for guidance, for salvation, and for help.

So if you think about it, with all of that going on, all the people coming to worship, seeking God, praying to God, making sacrifices, with this big symbol at the center of their festival of God as light, here comes Jesus, who, remember, looked like everybody else.

He looked like a human being like everyone else. And He says, in our passage, in verse 8, I'm the light of the world. That's an amazing thing for somebody to say.

That's why He got so many people's backs up. Remember, people would have said about Jesus, hang on a minute, we know His mum. We know where He comes from. We know that, I was just in the town that He was at.

[ 11 : 22 ] I know His people. And often people, as we see in the passage, like the Pharisees, would have questioned Him. And said to Him, you can't say things like this. Because they know that, as He says, I am the light of the world, He's essentially saying to them, I am the Lord your God.

In me is the fulfillment of all of the promises that God said He would one day send a Savior, a Redeemer, who would be the light that the people needed.

So Jesus makes this claim about Himself, and that means that He's not just plucking a metaphor at random. He's not just saying, hey, I'll light up your life. I'm a good person. I'm a nice guy.

But no, He's saying, I am the light of the world. The light that led the forefathers of the people who are worshiping here, the one who gave them light, who gave them direction, who they sacrificed to, the one who could forgive their sins, the one who could look after them and care for them.

I am the light of the world. And this is something that they, in many ways, should have been anticipating. There's a promise. Let me just read it with you. I'm going to turn to the book of Isaiah, which is a book we call a prophecy book.

[ 12 : 34 ] It's a book written by this man, speaking about things that were to come, in many ways. In Isaiah chapter 9, we read this, the people, walking in darkness, have seen a great light.

On those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. And this is a passage that goes on to speak about the promise of Jesus, the Messiah.

A few verses later, this may be familiar to you, the kind of thing that gets read at Christmas time, when we think about the birth of Jesus into the world. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

Wow! So there we get promise of someone who is to come, who will be light for the poor people who are struggling and wandering in darkness. In that darkness, the light will come and he will be the Prince of Peace.

all of this pointing forward to the one who was to come, Jesus. And here comes, self-conscious of all that he is to do, the role that he has to be the one who lives like no one else could ever live and who will lay down his life to be the Savior that we so need.

[ 13 : 58 ] Now that's unique to Jesus. And that's why so many people were offended. Because Jesus is saying, it's me, I'm the one that you need to come to. He was the one who lived like nobody else could, remember.

He lived perfectly. He was the one who searched people's hearts. He could say things about people that astonished them. How do you know that about me? How do you know what's going on in my heart?

Because of the insight he had, of course, helped all his life by the Holy Spirit. He's the one who, though the Son of God who came from the splendor of heaven, we saw at the start, lay down his life willingly, sacrificially, so as to pay the penalty for the sins of all those who trust in him.

But it says as well in the first chapter of John, remember we saw how it spoke about Jesus being the light, it says how that's not true of John the Baptist who introduced and prophesied about Jesus. John the Baptist came as a witness to bear witness about the light so that all might believe through him. He was not the light but he came to bear witness about the light.

[15:09] So for you and I, there's all kinds of people in our lives who we look up to and trust maybe for very good reasons. There's maybe good friends we have, counsellors, mentors at work, whatever.

That's great. But they're not the light of the world. That's a different category altogether. And even someone like John the Baptist who at the start of John's Gospel came preparing the way for Jesus. He had such an important role. He was a prophet appointed by God to lead people to Jesus that he wasn't Jesus. He wasn't the light of the world. He was coming to say the light of the world was coming.

Get ready. Get ready for heaven. Now, really what we're doing here is just seeing the significance of what Jesus says in this one sentence, in this one phrase.

Again, you may hear different things that Jesus says. I'm the bread of life. You know, I am, I am, I am. Referring back all the time to that great name that God gives himself.

[16:07] I am. And Jesus says here, I am the light of the world. But what I want us to do now is think, okay, well that's all very well and good. I can see the significance of that.

Jesus making a big claim. It's a claim that astonished people in his own day. What difference does it make? Like, how do we see that playing out in the way in which he deals with people?

And how might he deal with me as well in my life? To do that, I'm going to flick back and refer to the start of John chapter 8.

And then I'm also going to refer to John chapter 9. Two different people that are mentioned. And Jesus deals with them, ordinary people, with big problems.

What does it look like when the light of the world comes up face to face with people who, as it were, in the words of Isaiah, are walking in dark?

[17:06] Well, first of all, we get, and you'll see in the Bible if you've got it there, it's in italics. That's just because this is a story that doesn't appear in all of the early manuscripts. But in many ways, it says something really helpful, trustworthy, and helpful about what Jesus does.

The Pharisees, who are the religious teachers of the time, they're, they, if you like, lay a heavy burden on people's shoulders. They've got micro-rule after micro-rule for people to keep and to follow in order to be right, to be living in the way that they think God wants them to live and also living in the way that they approve of.

And they bring a woman in front of Jesus who they accuse. Now, what they accuse her of is true. But the point is, she's somebody who has trouble in her lives and who is not living.

Correctly, she's been caught in the act of adultery. So these guys bring her before Jesus and say, all right, Jesus, what are you going to do? Now, a big part of the reason they do that is because I think they want to catch Jesus out.

They want to see, well, let's see, let's see if Jesus handles this situation well. Let's see if he deals with her in the way that we would deal with her. They're being very censorious and very judgmental.

[18:17] And the way they're dealing with the woman is pretty shocking. They're not treating her in any way as a human being. They're treating her as an example to be made of. And they maybe expect Jesus to do the same.

And even if you don't know the Bible very well, you may be familiar with what Jesus does. He says, okay, guys, if any of you, because effectively they want this woman to be punished brutally.

Jesus says, whoever here hasn't sinned, you can throw first. You can go first in punishing this woman.

Silence. Because everybody's thinking, no, I can't do this. And one by one they all just leave. because they all realize that what Jesus has said as the light of the world, as the one who has

perfect insight, moral insight, and who can rule and discern the human heart correctly with wisdom and grace and holiness.

What Jesus has said puts to the heart of everyone there. No one could stand before Jesus in this moment and call himself righteous. So they just leave.

[ 19 : 33 ] And it gets to the point where this woman is left with Jesus. And Jesus deals with her very, very graciously. He says, where have they all gone? She says, well, they've gone.

They've just left. And what he says to her, again, demonstrates the way in which he is the light of the world. He says, I don't condemn you, but go and sin no more.

He speaks to her, knowing that she's sinned, calling her accountable for her sin, saying, this is not the way for you to live. We'll change your way of living.

But he's not just going to slam her, bury her, punish her. He sends her off again back into her life with a sense of the mercy that he has shown her.

Presumably, the forgiveness and the chance again to go and live in the way that is going. So Jesus deals with her in a way that was astonishing for those around her.

[ 20 : 35 ] And one more example, the light of the world as he meets people face to face. The next chapter, chapter 9. This in many ways illustrates our point perfectly because Jesus comes across a man who's been born blind.

He literally can't see. Now, the streets of Jerusalem or wherever in the days where Jesus walked the earth were sadly filled with people who were physically impaired in one way or another and without a welfare state or system to fall back on were just left to their begging and their own devices.

They wouldn't have received the attention of a prominent teacher like Jesus. And yet, here, Jesus, the glory, the splendor of heaven comes down into the world, the light of the world with, as I said, perfect insight with this great mission to be the saviour of the world.

And what does he do? Well, let me just read these few verses with you. As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. And his disciples said to him, Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?

Again, they've got to talk about the man as if he's a case study. And their question is, well, whose fault is it? Somebody must have done something bad so that he's in the state he's in. Jesus says, neither this man nor his parents.

[ 21 : 50 ] This happens so that the works of God might be displayed in him. As long as it's day, we must do the works of him who sinned. Night is coming when no one can work, but while I'm in the world, I am the light of the world.

Because Jesus is going to go on, and in his own very particular way, heal the man. He gives him sight. And that's an example of the capacity that Jesus has.

God in the world, what does it look like when God comes into the world? Well, the blind see.

Physically, this man could see what a transformation, what love Jesus shows him.

This, if I could say, this nobody, this guy who just sat in the dust at the side of the road, Jesus cared for him personally, one-to-one, touched him. But of course, it points us to that wider issue of the spiritual life, the revelation of who Jesus is.

He's somebody like nobody else, and he can do for us what nobody else can do for us. Primarily, of course, he's the one who sees into our heart, who sees everything that's there, and who says, I'm the one who can forgive you.

[ 23 : 00 ] I'm the one who can give you access, as we were saying to the kids earlier, access right into the throne room of heaven, where your prayers will be heard, and where you will know fellowship with God.

It's the promise that Jesus brought. So in all of our searching, sometimes our stumbling, sometimes our going around in circles, sometimes our darkness, the light of the world says, come to me.

I will love you. I laid down my life for you. I will lead you into my presence of God, where you will be well. Jesus is the light of the world.

He makes claims that nobody else can claim. He's not just like Jose de Mourinho, or like our best friend, who we like, maybe with good reason. He's somebody altogether different.

But I want to leave you with one of the verses we read in John 1, just the introduction to Jesus, and all that John wants us to think about. In verse 4, in him was life, and that life was the light of all people.

[ 24 : 10 ] Great. Jesus is the light. The light shines in the darkness, but it says, the darkness has not overcome it, or can be translated understood.

Because there were many people in Jesus' day who met Jesus and who just walked away or who turned him away or who even were there in the crowds chanting, crucify him because they want to be rid of him.

We can close out the light. The image I thought of, which you may find helpful, it's springtime. It's nearly summertime. What happens in my house when it's springtime and nearly summertime is my kids, when they go to bed, they say, I can't go to sleep, it's too light.

Their bedrooms are all burnt. So we get out the blackout light, pick it to the window, and start.

Sometimes we need to block it. It's possible for us to block out the light of Jesus.

So we may do that because we don't want to trust in him. We may push him away. Sometimes we can even do that, sadly, in our lives as Christians, as we're walking with him.

[ 25 : 18 ] We can kind of pull down the blind for a while, whether deliberately or just because we forget to listen, we forget to see, we forget to listen to him. So the question just to think about as we finish is Jesus is the light of the world.

He's there. He's calling to us. He's revealing himself. That is a good one to let into our lives. Hear him. See him.

And even speak to him. Pray to him. And ask him to flood your heart with his life, with his goodness, and with his truth. Let me pray and ask him to do just that.

This is a good one. Lord Jesus, when you look on the world, you look with love because it's the world that you made.

Thank you that you redeem. You don't just leave us to our own ends, but you came with our rescue mission. We also know, Lord, that as you looked on the world and you see a world that needs saved, it must have been so offensive.

[ 26 : 25 ] All of the sins, all the troubles, all the horrors that you see. And yet, Lord Jesus, you come into the world to be our light.

Teach us, Lord, to look not to ourselves because, again, we can't fix ourselves. Teach us to look to you and teach us more and more about what it means that you are the light of our lives.

And help us to worship you, we pray. In Jesus' name.