



HG191 *The I AM Sayings Of Jesus*
I AM The Light Of The World

John 8:12-30

Home Group Study Notes

12 January 2020 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

At the beginning of this new year, share your hopes, fears and ambitions for you personally and, if you have any, for Emmanuel for 2020.



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



HG191 *The I AM Sayings Of Jesus* **I AM The Light Of The World**

John 8:12-30

Home Group Sermon

12 January 2020 - Revd Paul A. Carr

1. The Light Of The World

Biologically, almost all living things depend on plants which grow by drawing energy from the sun. Shroud the earth in darkness, through some terrible disaster and within months the only living things would be bacteria, fungi and weeds! I say weeds because as any gardener knows even when we have no rain, and the lawns are parched brown, weeds still seem to grow! Psychologically, though, light is important for us all. Even if we haven't been diagnosed with Seasonally Affective Disorder (often referred to as SAD Syndrome) many of us find ourselves feeling 'down' in the winter months. And it's interesting that if you listen to anyone who's feeling low describing their state of mind they will, almost inevitably, use the language of light by mentioning the 'gloom', the 'darkness' or the 'shadow' that has fallen over them. At a spiritual level, we all need something that brings light to the soul.

The context of John 8 is that Jesus was attending the Feast of Tabernacles in Jerusalem and in the evening they lit four great lamps in the temple which illuminated the whole city. But as the feast ends and lights are extinguished Jesus proclaims himself as the true light of the people of God when he said, 8:12: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."* They knew exactly what Jesus was saying at such a significant time.

Jesus being *"the light of the world"* means the world has no other light than him. If there is going to be a light for the world, it will be Jesus. It is Jesus or darkness. There is no third alternative. No other light. It means, therefore, that all the world, and everyone in it needs Jesus as their light.

It means that the world was made for this light because we were created in God's image to 'reflect his truth and light.' The light of the creator of the world. When this light comes, it not only makes our sin plain, but it also makes everything good in the world shine with its full and true beauty. This world was made to be illuminated by this light. This light of Christ is native to the world. And finally, Jesus being *"the light of the world"* means that that one day this world will be filled with this light.

But even more, he will reveal all that is beautiful. He will be the light in which you see God - the light in which you see the history of redemption and the work of salvation. Nothing will be the same again when you have him as your light.

Everything looks different in the light of Christ. Until his light fills the earth as the waters cover the sea - until it banishes sin and sickness and pain and earthquakes to the outer darkness - until then, even now, his light will help you bear the sorrows of darkness. It will be a soft glow to comfort you in your lonely room after a devastating loss. It will be a lamp on your troubled path. It will reveal the wise and loving face of God in every situation.

John 12:36: *"Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become children of light."* When you believe in Jesus as your precious light, when you follow him as your truth and your wisdom and your way, you have his life, you are "a child of light."

You are born into the family of light. And this light will never go out. In the moment of death, when the world thinks ‘all the lights go out’ for you it will be the light of heaven which shines brightest. This verse tells us that following Jesus is more than tagging along behind him. It means following Jesus for who he is: the promised Messiah. And “... *Whoever follows me ... will have the light ...*” If you follow me, you have me. I am yours. I am your Shepherd, your Living Water, your Bread from Heaven, your God, your Light.

Notice the phrase: “*You will have the light of life.*” What is the connection between light and life? John 1:4 gives the answer: “*In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*” The life gives the light. The life Jesus has and the life He shares with those who follow him gives them light. That is, we are dead and blind to the light until the life of Jesus is revealed to us by God’s Spirit, and then we see. The eyes of our hearts are opened, and this gives us new, spiritual life that gives sight and light to the blind soul.

Without light in the physical world we find ourselves in trouble. We’ve probably all had the experience of wandering around the house in pitch darkness, perhaps as a result of a power cut, or walking up the stairs without switching on the light - accumulating bruises and scrapes as we trip up and/or collide with furniture. Conversely, light can also allow us to see things that are wrong or dangerous and, whilst some people prefer darkness, light allows us to avoid danger. *Whenever God Shines His Light* by Van Morrison and Cliff Richard (1989):

*Whenever God shines his light on me, Opens up my eyes so I can see
When I look up in the darkest night, I know everything's going to be alright
In deep confusion, in great despair, When I reach out for him he is there
When I am lonely as I can be, I know that God shines his light on me*

Quite interestingly, Jesus never mentions light again in this whole chapter. It’s as though he goes off onto a detour because of an objection that is raised. But we have seen before (ref Jesus and the Samaritan Woman in John 4) that when Jesus lets someone take him on a detour, he handles the detour in a way that really illumines the starting point and the destination. So, it turns out not to be a detour after all.

2. The Validity Of Jesus’ Testimony

The dominant focus in verses 13 onwards is that the testimony and the judgments of Jesus are true because of his relationship with God the Father. At least seven times in this passage, Jesus points to the fact that he is from the Father, and speaks with authority from the Father, that He is going to the Father and does nothing on His own.

Verse 28: “*When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am.*” And the reason I say this emphasis on Jesus’s relationship with the Father is not really a detour from verse 12 “*I am the light of the world*” is that the way Jesus is the light of the world is precisely by being one with the Father. Jesus is the light of the world because he comes from the Father and speaks for the Father and is going to the Father and is one with the Father.

Verse 13: “*The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”* Where did this come from? It came from John 5:31 where Jesus said, taking his words very strictly, “*If I bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.*” The Pharisees pick up on this strict wording of what he said, and say, “*See you are contradicting yourself and so your testimony is false because you are bearing witness about yourself. You just said, ‘I am the light of the world.’*”

This response of the Pharisees (“You are bearing witness about yourself”) sets up everything that happens in the next 17 verses of our text. The detour is defined by these words. And Jesus uses this to focus all attention on his relationship to the Father. Because that relationship is the key to seeing him as the light of the world.

Have they caught Jesus in a contradiction? He really did say in John 5:31, *“If I bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true.”* But what did he mean in the context? He meant: if my testimony comes from myself, if it originates with me, if I am a witness to myself disconnected from the Father, I am false.

But the Pharisees didn't hear it in context. They heard it in isolation, and now they use it to divert attention from the tragic fact that when Jesus says, “I am the light of the world,” they see no light. The eyes of their hearts were blind. Seeing, they did not see. Jesus responds to the Pharisees in verse 14: *“Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.”*

In other words, “I came from God. I am going to God. And you don't know God. And therefore, you can't see me as the light of God. Because the fact that I am from God is what it means for me to be the light of the world.” He goes on in verse 15: *“You judge by human standards ...”* That is, you don't have spiritual life and so can't see the light. That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. You need, like Nicodemus, to be born again (John 3:6-7).

He continues in verse 15: *“I pass judgement on no-one”* - that is, I judge no one on my own. I echo my Father's judgments. He explains. Verses 16-18: *But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”*

Verse 19: *Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”* In other words, Jesus says, “I and the Father are so united that if you knew and loved either of us, you would know and love the other.”

These are explosive and dangerous claims that he is making about himself and God. So, John pauses to comment in verse 20 how amazing it is that no one is stoning him or arresting him: *“He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.”*

Prior to this passage, Jesus had been speaking to Jewish leaders, teachers of the law and the people causing the chief priests to send the temple guard to arrest Him because of the blasphemous things he was saying. However, the temple guard didn't arrest him (7:45-46) because: *“No-one ever spoke the way this man does.”*

Symbolically, the language of light is used whenever people talk about resolving difficult issues. We read how ‘light has been shed’ on some mystery, how research has ‘illuminated’ our knowledge or even how someone had a ‘bright’ idea. Indeed, when we struggle with some unknown problem/situation we may admit that we are simply ‘in the dark.’ The presence of light allows us to see more than hazards or problems: it allows us to see both the beautiful and the ugly.

Now he spells out one of the implications of their blindness. Verses 21-24: *“Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.” This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come?’” But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”*

When Jesus says in verse 21 that he is going away, he means going to die and rise again and go to the Father. He is warning them, that if they persist in their blind rejection of him as the light of the world, they will perish in hell forever.

3. The Offer Of Hope

But he offers them hope — and he offers us hope too. In verse 24 we read: *“If you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”* Believe, and you won’t. “Believe that I am, that I am from the Father. And that I and the Father are one. Open your eyes and see that I am the light of the world and receive me as your light. And you will not perish.”

Jesus keeps saying it over and over in this passage - that he is from the Father and that that he speaks what the Father speaks. But things come to a climax in verse 28 where he finally tells how it is that they will eventually come face to face with what they cannot see. Verse 28: *“So Jesus said to them, ‘When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he.’”*

That doesn’t mean that at the crucifixion of Jesus, they all became believers – some believed, some didn’t. What it does mean is that they are going to lift him up. They are going to crucify him. And when Jesus is crucified, his role as the saving, redeeming, creation-filling light of the world will be secured. And he will rise and reign and shine forever and those who trust in him will have *‘the light of life’* we looked at in verse 12. It’s a reminder of the prophecy from Isaiah 9:2: *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.”* And Jesus us saying there will come a day when you will know this. A day when you will know and have your sins forgiven. Or you can be the ones who crucify me, and die in your sins, and find out the truth when it is too late.

Conclusion

All too often darkness brings with it something enslaving or oppressing. I’m sure we’ve all had the experience of lying awake at night, struggling hopelessly with some problem or worry and then, as dawn breaks, finding that we can now see it in a new perspective and break free from it. Darkness symbolises the very worst aspects of life: imprisonment, fear and despair. A verse which I found especially helpful at the beginning of my Christian life, comes in the last book of the Bible, Revelation 3:20, when Jesus says: *‘Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with them, and they with me’*

The artist, Holman Hunt (1827-1910), inspired by this verse, painted this well-known picture, which he called *The Light of the World*. When it was first displayed it received poor reviews. Someone said to Holman Hunt that he had made a mistake: ‘You have forgotten to paint a handle on the door.’ ‘Oh no,’ replied Hunt, ‘that is deliberate. There is only one handle and that is on the inside.’

On 5 May 1854, John Ruskin, the artist and critic, wrote to The Times and explained the symbolism at length and brilliantly defended it as *‘one of the very noblest works of sacred art ever produced in this or any other age’*. Jesus, the Light of the World, stands knocking at a door, which is overgrown with ivy and weeds. The door clearly represents the door of someone’s life. Jesus is standing at the door and knocking, awaiting a response. He wants to come in and be part of that person’s life, but the handle is on the inside ... In other words, we have to open the door to let Jesus into our lives.

Will you open your eyes to Jesus and allow him to bring light into your life, heart and mind and soul?

Emmanuel Church Text for 2020

*“The Lord Your God is with you. He is mighty to save.
He will take great delight in you. He will quiet you with
His love. He will rejoice over you with singing.”*

Zephaniah 3:17



Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. Note the contrast between light and darkness. What do you think is the nature of the darkness? Why are the Jews (Pharisees) so ignorant? What is the nature of their sin? Of their ignorance?

2. What is the difference between Jesus and the Jews in the matter of judgment? (15,16) Why is Jesus qualified to judge? Does he judge? Why or why not? Do the Jews judge? Whom did they judge? Are they qualified? Why or why not?

3. Jesus said: I always do what pleases the Father. Discuss some of the things this attitude to God might have involved for Jesus and how it might apply to us.

4. How might we be able to harmonize all the world's religions? On what basis does Christianity claim unique precedent?

5. What is the significance of Jesus' saying, "I am He"? How can one know the Father (19)? Why do Jesus' words have authority (14,28,29)?

6. What does Jesus mean when he says, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man?" How can one know the Son (28,12)? How do we follow Jesus and have the light of life?



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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