

## **The Light of the World**

### **John 9:1-7**

We are looking at several “I am” statements that Jesus made when he was here on earth to help us understand more clearly who he is for us and experience a deeper relationship with him. Hebrews 12 tells us that Jesus is the Author and Perfector of our faith and he is central to who we are as Christians, so we always need to keep our focus and attention on him, which can be hard to do with our full and busy lifestyles. So my hope is that this sermon series will help.

So far we have seen that Jesus is the Great I Am – the eternal, self-existent Son of God who has stunningly made himself available to us every moment of our lives. He is also the Bread of Life, freely giving us eternal life as a gift so that we can be free from the weight of obligation and duty and be able to experience life that is truly life in him. Today we will be looking at how he is the light of the world.

To help us to see what that means, I want to ask you to go ahead and close your eyes. We’re going to try to imagine what it would be like to be blind. With your eyes closed, extend your arms up above your head about shoulder width apart. Make a fist with each hand but extend your pointer finger. Now try to touch your pointer fingers together without looking. Try it a few times. Ok, you can go ahead and open your eyes. How did you do? Were you able to do it? Even something so simple as that can be difficult and frustrating when you can’t see. Have you ever tried wearing a blindfold for an extended period of time? It’s really hard and kind of dangerous if you aren’t careful. It gets frustrating after only a couple minutes and we never leave a blindfold on for very long.

Now imagine what it would be like to have a permanent blindfold – to never be able to take the blindfold off because you’re completely blind. How difficult would that be? I looked up a description of what life is like from the perspective of a person that is blind and this is what she said about her experience:

- When it comes to transportation, getting places is always a challenge, especially if you live in a rural area.
- It’s hard to find independence – people who are blind are hesitant to venture outdoors on their own unless they’re forced to do so. And If you do, it’s easy to lose your way.

- Finding objects – if you live in a house with other people it is inevitable that things will be moved around and very difficult to find when you need them. Also dropping things and finding them again is another challenge. If you can't hear where it falls and rolls it's really hard to know where to look.
- Putting in contacts: Many blind people wear blackout contacts to prevent headaches from light sensitivity. But these can be extremely hard to feel on the end of your finger. When they turn inside out it's a real pain and if you drop them, they are hard to find.
- Pouring hot liquids – Knowing where to pour and when the cup is full is a real problem.
- Folding laundry – if you don't live alone it can be hard to identify who's clothes you are folding. Trying to match socks is also very difficult.
- Crowded areas – going to a mall or an event is exhausting. Too many people roaming about, bumping into you or tripping on your cane.

Being blind would be so frustrating and difficult. And even though people who are blind do an amazing job of overcoming their disability, they encounter many situations where they are helpless. There are a lot of things you just can't do if you're blind. I wanted you to think about that as we begin the sermon this morning because Jesus used that idea when he told his disciples he was the light of the world. We find that story in John 9 when Jesus was with his disciples in Judea. They came upon a man who had been blind from birth. His disciples had some questions about why he was born blind that led Jesus to reveal himself to them in a deeper way...

Read John 9:1-2.

*As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. <sup>2</sup> And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?"*

So the disciples made some assumptions – that this guy was born blind because of sin, either the sin of his parents or his own sin. In their perspective being born blind was a punishment for sin. But Jesus showed them something completely different.

Read John 9:3-5

*Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. <sup>4</sup> We must work the works of him who*

*sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. <sup>5</sup> As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."*

So he first corrects their faulty perspective – this man wasn't blind because of anyone's sins. God had a purpose for his blindness and it was that through him the works of God could be displayed in his life. He's referring to the supernatural work of healing that Jesus would do in a little bit.

Jesus goes on to tell them that they needed to do such works while it is day because night is coming when no one can work. Now he wasn't talking about literal day and night that has to do with the rising and setting of the sun, he just uses that idea in what he's talking about. The ESV Study Bible says that what he meant by "day" was the present time of his earthly ministry and what he meant by "night" was the end of his ministry when he was crucified. So while it was still "day" or "time to carry out his ministry among the people as the Messiah," they must be about doing the works of God because when he was crucified, it would be "night" and no one would be doing those works.

He's bringing into their awareness these ideas of light and darkness, day and night, and the corresponding works of God that are done in the day. And with those ideas in their minds he makes the statement in verse 5: "*As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.*" You can see he's comparing himself to the light given by the sun. Wherever he is present it is day; it is light. It doesn't matter if the actual sun is shining or not because he is the light of the world. And he's obviously not talking about physical light, he's just using that idea to express a spiritual reality.

The Bible is full of references to the world being covered in spiritual darkness. In Ephesians 6:12 Paul says, "*For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness.*" In Colossians 1:13 he refers to the world as the "*domain of darkness.*" In 1 Peter 2:9 Peter says that we have been called out of darkness. In 1 John 2:8 it says that "*the darkness is passing away.*"

The Bible also speaks of this same spiritual darkness filling people's hearts. Jesus said in Matthew 6:23: "*but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!*"

Ephesians 5:8 says, *“for at one time you were darkness.”* 1 John 2:11 says, *“But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.”*

This darkness entered the world and entered the human race when Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden. It refers to all wickedness and evil in the world. Every wicked thought, word, deed, attitude, motive. Everything that separates us from God is the darkness. The world is covered by it, our hearts are filled with it and it permeates everything that people think, say, and do.

A lot of stories try to portray this idea. In The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe the darkness is represented by never-ending winter that permeates the land. In The Lord of the Rings the darkness is represented by the evil power of Sauron that is spreading across Middle Earth. The darkness in those stories is scary and troubling, but we have to realize it's not just in the fairytales – it's in the real world we live in and it's in our very own lives. It permeates our culture and society. We are swimming in it every day. We are blinded by it. We are enslaved by it. And the crazy thing is, without Christ, we actually love it. In John 3:19-20 it says: *“people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.”* <sup>20</sup> *For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.”*

So this idea of darkness was the backdrop behind what Jesus said when he told his disciples: “I am the light of the world.” Picture the world and all of humanity permeated by darkness and then imagine Jesus as a light in that darkness. I don't know if you've ever been in a cave, but I've been to Crystal Cave down in Spring Valley a couple of times. One of the things they do on the tour is, once you get to the bottom of the cave they turn all the lights off – you can't even see your hand an inch in front of your face. It's pitch dark. You begin to imagine what it would be like to be caught in utter darkness – completely blind. Fumbling along, trying to find your way along, trying to find a way out. It's a creepy feeling. But then they turn a light back on and everything changes. The light brings hope, joy, the ability to see. It brings clarity and purpose and direction. The light changes everything – and that's who Jesus is. He is the light of the world.

In John 1:4-5 it says: *“In him was life, and the life was the light of men.”* <sup>5</sup> *The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”* In John 1:9 it says,

*“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”* In Matthew 4:16 Matthew quotes a prophecy about Jesus: *“the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”* In John 12:46 Jesus says: *“I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”* Jesus changes everything. In this world that is covered in spiritual darkness, Jesus is the light. The light consists of everything that is righteous, good, and true. Everything that is holy and that comes from God. Jesus brings that light. He opens our eyes so we can see. He reveals the truth. He shows us the way. He gives us life. He brings hope and joy. Purpose, clarity, freedom and understanding.

So after telling his disciples he is the light of the world, he turned to the blind man and did something that was very fitting.

Read John 9:6-7.

*Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud <sup>7</sup> and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.*

Jesus did a miraculous physical healing that also demonstrated what he does for us spiritually. In the same way he gave sight to a blind man; he gives light to people blinded by spiritual darkness. He is the light of the world and he wants you to experience him in that way today. Because not only is he the light of the world as a whole, he is also the light for you personally. You can experience him as the light of the world in your life. He can shine through the darkness in your heart to bring light and truth, understanding and new life. And there are three ways that can happen for you that I want to point out.

For some of you, you may need to experience Christ as the light of the world for the very first time. Paul describes this in 2 Corinthians 4:4-6: *“In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup> For what we proclaim is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup> For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”*

You can experience Jesus as the light of the world when God shines the truth of who Jesus is and why you need him into your heart for the very first time. When this happens it's like the lights turn on, the blinders fall off and you finally see him with the eyes of your heart. It's not something that happens just in your mind, but deep in your heart. A new life is born. Even though I knew who Jesus was for a long time it wasn't until I was 14 years old that this happened to me. I came alive within and it changed my life forever. The darkness that was blinding me was pierced by the light of Christ and I could finally see and so I began to believe and follow.

If you've never experienced Christ in this way, God may be doing that in your life this morning. Jesus is the Son of God that came to earth as a man to die for you. And he wants you to put your faith in him so that you will be forgiven of all your sins and have eternal life. If you are believing that deep in your heart for the first time this morning, you are experiencing Jesus as the light of the world. Many of us have experience Jesus in that way at some time in our lives.

But can we experience Jesus even more deeply as the light of the world today? As I've thought about that, I've thought of two powerful ways. One is through further revelation or spiritual enlightenment. Just because you may no longer be spiritually blind does not mean that you can see everything perfectly clear. We need Jesus to do an ongoing work of illumination in our hearts so that we can keep seeing things more clearly.

Paul writes about this in how he prayed for the people in Ephesians 1:16-19: *"I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, <sup>17</sup> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <sup>18</sup> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, <sup>19</sup> and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe."* Since we are still swimming in a world filled with darkness, we need Jesus to keep shining his light into our hearts more and more so that we can see more clearly. And Jesus wants that for you. He will do that for you as you turn to him as the light of the world each day. And as you experience him in that way, you will find him to be nearer to you than you ever thought possible.

And the third way I can see in Scripture for how we can experience Jesus as the light of the world is by letting his light shine through us for others to see. Jesus said something very significant to his disciples in Matthew 5:14-16: *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”*

So surprisingly, Jesus not only says that he is the light of the world, but he also says that we are the light of the world. Once his light has shone in our hearts we can let his light shine through us so that others can see. In the same way he told his disciples in John 9, we need to “work the works” of him who sent us while it is still day. Jesus left us with a mission to do – to continue the works he began until he comes back again. Because by doing these works we are letting our light shine for the world to see and give glory to God. You can experience Jesus more deeply as the light of the world when you see how he lets his light shine through you to help other people to see.