

## **Follow the Light**

John 8

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, July 29, 2018

Well, you can go ahead and turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John. And as you're doing that, before we begin our sermon today, I want to tell you that in a couple of weeks, we'll be having a special guest with us. James Barbouletos is a family member of Rose Coward's and Mickey and Peter Brodeur. He'll be bringing the Word to us. He's the pastor of Ahtanum Pioneer Church in Yakima, Washington and he's a personal friend of mine.

James and I graduated from the Master's Seminary back in 2007. And we got married and started ministry around the same time. I remember we took one of the hardest classes together; New Testament Introduction. And he was sitting right beside me telling me he was about to marry a girl from Canada. And I said, "Canada? That's a long way away. How did you arrange that?" (It's kind of ironic that I'm in Canada now).

But he was marrying Rose's daughter; LeAnne. They met on a trip to Israel and now they have five children and serve the Lord in Washington. But they'll be joining us on August 12th. So, you want to try to make it a point to be here for that. I had originally planned to have eye surgery that week, so I asked James to come preach for me. But now, I don't have to do that. But he's still coming and I'll be able to see him. So, I'm excited about that.

You'll also want to mark your calendars for Family Camp. It's September 14th through the 16th at Dogwood Valley Camp in Hope. And if you want to stay overnight in the cabins, spots are filling up. That's why I'm mentioning it to you a little head of time. So, please go ahead and register if you would like to stay with us there at the camp. You can do that online. Carl Hargrove will be joining us from Grace Advance. He'll be speaking on the topic of prayer and evangelism. How many of you are just hitting home runs in your prayer and evangelism? See, that's why he's coming. Brent, raise your hand out there? Okay, because the sky may fall in ... oh, thumb down, okay.

We all need to grow in that area. So, that's why we asked Carl to come and minister to us with that. His wife Joanna will be joining us as well for a Q&A, and they'll be talking about the family together in that Q&A time. So, mark your schedules for that weekend, September 14th through the 16th.

With that said, while we're on the topic of evangelism, I want to just jump right into our sermon this way by telling you about an evangelist by the name of Charles Templeton. I don't know if you've heard of that name before, but Charles Templeton was an evangelist with the Billy Graham Crusade in the 1940s and '50s. He shared the Gospel with thousands of people and was successful at it. He led several to the Lord until he abandoned the faith to become an agnostic. It was a pretty famous story at the time. He left Christianity to become an outspoken unbeliever because of a picture that he saw in a magazine.

In his own words, he said "It was a picture of a woman in North Africa during a drought. She was holding a dead baby in her arms and looking up to heaven." And Templeton says, "I looked

at that picture and I thought, 'How could God let that happen? How could He still exist when all that woman wanted was rain?'" And from that point on, Charles Templeton devoted his life to speaking against the faith. He began to attack the One he tried to defend.

He wrote a book in 1996 called *A Farewell to God*, in which he outlined his beliefs. And he said that, "Christianity was outdated, untrue and harmful to people." He said, "A loving God would never allow drought to occur or diseases like Alzheimer's and things like that." And he went on to speak out on the radio. He ran for some political offices here in Canada - he was Canadian. He ran for the Ontario Liberal Party in 1964 and lost. But he ran on the platform of some of his agnostic beliefs.

But here's the interesting thing, right before he died, Lee Strobel, the author of *The Case for Christ* (some of you've seen the movie) interviewed Charles Templeton at his home in Toronto. And he asked him what he thought about Jesus Christ. "After all these decades of agnostic belief, what do you think about Jesus?" And his answer was shocking. It was shocked the first time I read this. He said, "I miss Him." He said, "I miss Him." He said, "Jesus was the greatest human being who's ever lived. He's the most important thing in my life even now. Everything good I know, everything decent and positive I have, came from Jesus Christ." He said, "I adore Him. I absolutely adore Him." And then in the interview, Strobel says he broke down in tears.

Jesus makes that kind of impact on people, doesn't He? You know, man can turn his back on God, but he'll have a hard time turning his back on Christ. He can reject a lot of things, but it's hard rejecting Him.

I told you that in 2013, Time Magazine published a list of the 100 most significant people in history, and at the top of the list was Jesus. Right above William Shakespeare, Muhammad and Napoleon, stood our Saviour. Because Time Magazine said nobody has impacted the world like Him. Nobody has changed history the way Jesus did. And I asked you the question last time, if Time Magazine could say that about Jesus, how much more could we say about Him? And nobody has changed our lives like Jesus.

It reminds me of what another agnostic, Marghanita Laski, said. She said, "What I envy most about you Christians is your forgiveness; I have no one to forgive me." We do have someone to forgive us. His name is Jesus Christ. And our love for Him is hard to put into words.

As I was studying for this sermon, I came across someone who tried to articulate the depth of who Jesus is and what He has done. And they said this. (This is really well done). But it said,

To the artist, He's the One Altogether Lovely and to the architect, He's the Chief Cornerstone. To the baker, He's the Living Bread. To the biologist, He is the Life. To the builder, He's the Sure Foundation. To the doctor, He is the Great Physician. To the farmer, He's the Lord of the Harvest. To the geologist, He's the Rock of Ages. To the jurist, He's the Judge. To the lawyer, He's the great Counsellor. To the jeweler, He's the Pearl of Great Price, and to the newspaper man, He's the Good News. To the philosopher, He is the Wisdom of God. To the preacher, He is the Word. To the sculptor, He's a Living Stone. To the servant, He is the Good Master. To the statesman, He is the Desire of All Nations. To the student, He is the Truth. To the traveler, He is the way. To the

sinner, He is the Lamb of God. And to the Christian, He is everything.

That was well said, wasn't it? I mean Jesus is everything to us. He means more than words could ever say. All those titles don't do Him justice. And that leads us to the Gospel of John because in this Gospel, John tells us about Jesus Christ. And he says essentially this, "He's everything to us." He hits this from several different angles.

If you're joining us for the first time this morning, we're in the middle of a series called the "That You May Believe" series. Because John says he wrote this book so that you may believe in Jesus. And just a reminder of this, John 20:30-31, says, "Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name."

So, John says, "There was more I could have written, there was more I could have said in this book, this doesn't get to the bottom of it; but these things have been written so that you may believe and have eternal life." And if you've been keeping up with us so far, you'll know we're in John 8 this morning, chapter 8. But let me just build up to that. If you've been keeping up with us so far, you'll know John does this by telling us some stories and some highlights about Jesus. So, here's a few of them.

In John chapters 3 through 5, he tells us about some interviews Jesus had with strangers. I've been told everybody in Canada doesn't go to church. And so when you witness to people, often times, you're presenting Jesus to a stranger, right? That they don't know anything about Him. John 3 through 5 talks about some strangers who met Jesus for the first time. One of them was a guy named Nicodemus. You also see the woman at the well in there. They were new to Him, brand new.

Then in chapter 6, things changed a little bit. Because now Jesus interviews some of His disciples or they interview Him; people He had met before. And John chapter 6 is interesting because it says that He offends them. When Jesus was talking to strangers, everything was fine. When He was talking to new people, there were no problems. But when He talks to His disciples, all that changes.

If you look in John 6 (this might be of interest to you) - I've said this before, but this is a little review, just to show you kind of the magnitude of this - John 6:10 says, "There were 5,000 men following Jesus." Do you see that in John 6:10? And verse 4 says they were headed to the Passover Feast in that chapter. Which means that if there were 5,000 men, there would have been something like 15 to 20,000 men, women, and children because Passover was a family event; you brought your whole family to it. So, there was a magnitude of people following Jesus in John 6. One right after another.

I talked to a pastor from Squamish recently, I said, "How many people live in Squamish?" He said, "20,000 people". This is the population of Squamish following Jesus in John 6. And He tells them in chapter 6:41 that, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." He feeds them, all of those people with five loaves of bread, two little fish. He says, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven. I'm the manna," you could say.

Then in 53, He says, “Truly, truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves.” And on account of those statements, the rest of the chapter tells us that everybody leaves. That statement offends them so badly that everybody walks away. He goes from 20,000 followers to 12 in one day. I mean if you think what that would do to any church, any business, any organization - it would devastate it, right? You think it’d be over. But John 6 is not even halfway through the Gospel of John, you still got 15 chapters left in the book.

And John 7 picks up the story this way, after all those people leave Jesus, it tells us what happened six months after that at the Feast of Booths. Passover was a springtime event. It happened every year around April, around Easter time. And the Feast of Booths was a fall event - it was held in October. And so, six months have gone by and if you look in John 7:37-38, this is the next shocking thing that Jesus says. It makes you wonder what He's going to say in the rest of the book. Because He says things like this. If you look in John 7:37-38, it says, “Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, “From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.”’”

I told you last week that was an interesting statement because water is more important than bread. You can live for a month or so without bread or food, but you can't make it a week without water. In other words, Jesus raises the stakes now. He steps it up a notch and He says, “Not only am I the bread, not only do you have to eat My flesh and drink My blood, but you need Me like you need water. You need to love and cherish and come to Me like a thirsty man.” When you're thirsty, you don't half-heartedly drink, right? You just gulp it down. Jesus says, “That's how you have to come to me to have life. Come as if your life depends on it.”

This was a shocking thing to say in the temple. Even today, on the temple grounds, you're not allowed to have a Bible study up there. You got guys walking around with semiautomatic weapons, and they will come confront you if you open your Bible and start reading it. Because that is an explosive thing to do even now on the temple grounds. You have the Dome of the Rock up there, you have the Jews down below on the Wailing Wall praying for the temple to come back - and all that stuff is just a powder keg. The same way 2,000 years ago.

As a matter of fact, verse 37 says that Jesus said this on the last and greatest day of the feast. Which was the day when everything was coming to a climax, the whole feast was coming to a head. It was a week-long event and everything built up to this last day. And on the last day, Jesus says, “I am the water of life.” In other words, “I’m the climax of the feast. I’m the head of it.”

In case they didn't get that, Jesus says the same thing another way in chapter 8:12. If you want to turn there and look with me...David read that a moment ago. But chapter 8:12 gives us another thing Jesus says at this Feast of Booths. (We'll talk about this feast a little more in a moment). Chapter 8:12 says, “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life.’”

If you noticed, I skipped over a portion of this passage in chapter 8:1-11, because it's not in the oldest manuscripts that we have. If you notice, that's why if you look from John chapter 7:53 down to chapter 8:11, many of you have brackets in your Bibles, and some of you have a note.

Like mine has a note at the bottom that says, “Later manuscripts add the story of the adulterous woman.” And they put it in here later on.

If you remember this story, it's actually a wonderful story. It's the account of the woman caught in adultery, whom the Pharisees threatened to stone. They brought her to Jesus and they said, “Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery in the very act.” It's a very interesting story because where is the man, right? You bring a woman in there for committing adultery, you should bring the man to, and they don't. It's very strange.

They say, “Now, in the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women, what do You say?” And Jesus says, “He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to cast a stone,” and they all go away. Do you remember that story? That's this right here in chapter 8. It's an amazing story of grace, it's a wonderful story of forgiveness. The problem is it's not in the oldest manuscripts. There's about 25,000 ancient manuscripts we have of the New Testament - or pieces of them, fragments of them - 25,000 copies, and this story doesn't appear until about the fifth century, making it a little suspect.

As a matter of fact, it doesn't appear in the same place in every old translation of the Bible. Some have it here, some have it later in the Gospel of John. Some put it in the Gospel of Luke. And so, because of that, it's a little hard to know what to do with it. Bible translators leave it in because it's part of the New Testament tradition. And because it agrees with everything we know about Jesus and the Pharisees, this certainly could have happened. But the problem is if it was added later on, then we don't know that it did.

Before you get discouraged by that, I want to remind you that we do have 25,000 ancient manuscripts of the New Testament we can check these kinds of things with. So, don't be discouraged by that. We can go back almost to the original writings, very close to them. But this doesn't seem to fit well here because if you read straight from John 7:52 to chapter 8:12 like we did, and kind of skip over this story, it flows better. It flows very well. Because as we just read, John 7 says that Jesus did all of this on the last and greatest day of the feast. And if that is the case, then chapter 8:12 probably occurred at night, because Jesus says, “I am the Light of the world.”

As a matter of fact, verse 20, if you look in chapter 8:20, just putting all these pieces together, it says that Jesus spoke these words in the temple treasury, which was located in the court of women. This is where the Jews would put thousands of candles every night to light up this feast. One rabbi said that these candles made the city look like a diamond or, we might say, a huge spotlight. If you remember, it was a symbolic. It was called the illumination of the feast. They would set out these huge candelabras, hundreds of them, thousands of candles on them, to remember the time they followed the pillar of fire in the wilderness.

If you guys remember the story, the Feast of Booths was held in honour of the time the Jews lived for 40 years in the wilderness in booths or tabernacles. And while they were doing that, they followed a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And to remember that, every year at this feast, they would fill the court of women in the temple grounds with candles. They would put fire in there, essentially to remind them of this time. And in the midst of all these candles, Jesus stands up and says, “I am the Light of the world. I am the candle, essentially. I'm the pillar

of fire you followed, I'm the cloud by day." It's an amazing thing to say, isn't it?

If you think about it, You just said You're the bread of life, and You lost 20,000 followers. Almost everybody left. Six months later, You say You're the water of life and the Jews try to arrest You. As a matter of fact, John 7, at the end, says they would have arrested Him if Nicodemus didn't talk them off the edge. You think He would pull back on the throttle a little bit, right? Maybe just ease up. Jesus pushes harder, because this was a direct reference to the Messiah. The Jews had several titles for the Messiah in the Old Testament, and one of them was "the light" or the "enlightener" - the one who brings light to His people. They got that from passages like Isaiah 42:6 or Isaiah 49:6.

Let me read Isaiah 49 to you. It says, "I will make you a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the ends of the earth." That was a direct reference to the Messiah. He was going to light up the nations, He was going to bring glory to the ends of the earth. And with that in mind, Jesus says this here, essentially saying, "I am the Messiah." And the interesting thing about it is He doesn't stop.

If you guys have the words of Jesus in red in your Bibles, you'll notice there's a lot of red left in this chapter; He doesn't stop. He goes on to elaborate what He means by that. And that's what I want to talk to you about this morning. Thanks for letting me get through all that background because it builds up to the chapter. But if you're taking notes in John chapter 8, I want you to see, Jesus tells us how to respond and how not to respond to the Light. That's what this chapter is all about. He says, "I am the Light," and then He goes on to tell you how to respond to it and how not to respond to the Light.

This is what we love about Jesus. This is why we admire Him. He doesn't just tell you the truth, He goes on to tell you how to live it out. And that's what He does here in this chapter. And we're going to spend more time on the positive side, on how to respond to it than the other. But let me give you four ways to respond to the Light. Four ways to respond to the Light.

The first one is this: you need to remember that there is only one Light. You need to remember that there is only one Light. There's one Messiah. Spiritually speaking, there's one candle, there's not thousands. If you read in verse 12, this is exactly what He says. Is how He starts off. It says, "Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, 'I am the Light.'"

If you notice, He says, "I'm not *a* light, I'm *the* Light. I'm not the one light among many, I'm the only One you got." If you notice, the definite article is used here. Which means this refers to a specific light, a particular one. If I told you if I was going to visit the prime minister of Canada, you would know who I'm talking about because there's only one. There's not several to pick from. It's the same way with salvation, there's not several options to pick from. There's not a row of choices and you can pick them off like ice cream.

Again, if you remember the setting for this (this is important) as you enter the temple gates, the Jews had several courts that led up to the temple itself. So, there was the temple like this and then there was the real temple. So, you had several courts leading up to the actual thing. And you had the court of Gentiles where the non-Jews could go - that's the first one you came into. (We'll talk about that in a moment). Then you had the court of women where Jewish women could go.

Even today, if you go to the Wailing Wall, the women have a court and the men have a court. Some of you have seen that. The ladies often have head coverings or whatnot, the men have the skull caps. But they're separated by a fence.

Then you have the Court of Israel for the men farther in. And farther in, you have the Court of Priests where the Ark of the Covenant was and the Holy of Holies, and where the sacrifices were made. But this occurs, verse 20 says in the treasury area, which was in the Court of Women. It was a most popular court because the treasury was there. It's where everyone gave their money. You guys remember the story of the widow who gave the two mites? This is where she did that. I think they have ten huge metallic, almost like upside down trumpets, and they would drop their money in those. And they would rattle when they did that.

The Court of Women was where the feast officially began, because it was the court that separated Jew from Gentile. They had a barrier between there. So, the celebration actually started here in this place. Which means that on a day like this, it would be just swarming with people. Historians say there could have been as many as 10,000 people standing comfortably in this court at one time. So, there could have been more than that on a feast day. And you can imagine how many candles it would take to light that up at night. Maybe just thousands of them. It could be a fire hazard.

In the midst of these thousands of candles and lights, Jesus says (and you can imagine He didn't say it in a quiet voice), "I am the Light of the world. The only one." I don't have to tell you that there are a lot of different lights in the world today, aren't there? There are a lot of different religions. According to some estimates (I looked it up this morning just to make sure this is still current) there's about 4,000 different religions in the world today. If you count up all the different versions of Christianity and Hinduism and Islam, it comes to about 4,000 different ones. And they cover about 84% of the world's population. About eight out of every ten people in the world claim to be religious. Now how sincere they are about that, I don't know. But they make that claim.

I mean despite what the media may tell you, we live in a very religious world. There's a few agnostics and atheists out there, but just a few. Because most of us are trying to find some way to get to God, some way to be saved. And in a world like we live in today, Jesus says, "I am the Light of the world. I am the only true religion. There's not 4,000 of them, there's one." That statement is just as shocking today as it was 2,000 years ago, amen? I take your silence as an amen by the way.

I mean Jesus says there's not 4,000 different religions; there's two - the right one and the wrong one. The religion that leads you to heaven and the religion that leads you to hell, and He says, "I am the one who stands at the head of the religion that leads you to heaven." Other religions may have some light in the sense that they say some enlightening things, and they may have some light in the sense that they could make your life better in some ways, but they can't lead you to God. Jesus says, "I'm the only one who can do that."

I remember talking to a Muslim friend of mine in high school, and I don't say that this is representative of all Muslim people, but I remember asking him, "What do you want to do after graduation?" And he said, "I want to kill myself." I said, "Why?" He said, "I don't have any

hope. I don't have anything to look forward to.” It’s because he didn't have any light. Talking to an agnostic friend in college in our philosophy class, and he said, “I have no direction in my life. I have no purpose whatsoever.” It's because he didn't have any light.

That’s what the author Dorothy Sayers said. She said, “In the world, we call it tolerance but in hell, it's called despair. It's the sin that believes nothing, cares for nothing, knows nothing, interferes with nothing, enjoys nothing, hates nothing, finds purpose in nothing, lives for nothing and remains alive because there is nothing worth dying for.” And her point is that if you don't have God, that's what you have. You have nothing. If you don't know Jesus, that's what you have. You don't have tolerance, you have despair.

Some of you have been in a cave, when they turned out all the lights - you might have experienced that before. I was in Ruby Falls, Tennessee one time when they did that. It was this underground waterfall, 11 stories down in the ground. And without any warning, they just shut out all the lights. And I remember that because a chill just swept over me. I just had a lump in my throat. Jesus says, “That's what you have if you reject Me; you have a lump in your throat. Because I’m the Light. And not *a* light, *the* Light. Not one candle among many, but the only candle there is.”

If you think that's exclusive or narrow-minded, let me give you another response to the Light Jesus gives us in this passage. And this is helpful because it balances that out. Second response is this: you need to remember that this Light is for the whole world. Before you think that's too narrow-minded (I guess is the word), remember this Light is for the whole world. Which means it's available for everybody - no matter where you come from, no matter what you've done. Anyone can come to the Light. Poor people can do it, rich people can do it. Little children can do it, old people can do it. Men, women, whoever.

If you read on in verse 12, Jesus says, “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world.’” The word for world here is *cosmos* from which we get the word “cosmopolitan”. When you talk about a cosmopolitan area, you mean it's an area that has everybody in it, right? People from all over. Vancouver – cosmopolitan, right? That's what this word means. Jesus says, “This is who can be saved, this is who my light is for - it's for everybody; the cosmos.” Which is another shocking thing to say in the temple.

And this is why I'm drawing attention to this, because the temple was not for the world. Not in the mind of the Jews anyway. They didn't talk about the world in the temple. The temple in their mind was just for Israel. Like I said earlier, you had a Court of the Gentiles, but to tell you what they thought about that, do you remember when Jesus drove out the money changers and those who were buying and selling cattle? They were in the Court and Gentiles, because that's what the Jews thought of the Gentiles - just a place to make money.

As you were going into the Court of Women, before you got to the Court of Women, you had the Court of Gentiles; it was the first one you came to. You had to walk through the world in a sense. And between those two courts, there was a five-foot wall and a sign written on it, in Greek, Hebrew, and Latin (so you could read it no matter what language you spoke) that said, “No foreigner is allowed past this point on pain of death.” In other words, “If you are from the world and you were trying to get in here, we will kill you. This is not for you,” they said. “Salvation is



not for Gentiles.” Not on the same terms anyway, not the same way.

On the other side of that sign, Jesus says, “I am the Light of the world.” You see the significance of that? He might have been pointing at the sign as He said it. I don't know that He was, probably wasn't. But He says, “My light is for them too. My light is for the Gentiles.” It reminds you of the prophecy in Isaiah 49:6, “I will make you a light to the nations.” Jesus is for the nations, He's for people from everywhere.

One Bible commentator said, “Just as the sun lights up the whole world, so Jesus lights up the world, with this one exception...the sun goes down at night. Jesus never goes down at all. He's always shining.”

Let me tell you what this means for us today, let me tell you why this is so important. Because it means you don't have to be Jewish to go to heaven, amen? Can I get an amen to that? You don't have to be from any one race to go to heaven. You can go if you're a Gentile, you can go if you're from the world. You can march right across that wall, right past that sign and not die because Jesus is your light. He shows you how to get to God. You, a lowly Gentile like me, an outsider to Israel, you can be saved if you trust in Jesus Christ.

When William Carey first went to India to be a missionary, somebody asked him, “Why are you going there?” (He's from England). “Why are you going to India?” And William Carey said, “Because India is in the world. That's why I'm going there.” He said, “Jesus is the Light of the world and India is in the world, so I'm going to India.”

That's what this is talking about. No matter who you are, you can be saved. No matter where you're from, you can see the Light. You can see it in Canada and you can see it in the US. You can see it in India and you can see it in Africa. You can see it in Asia, you can see it in Antarctica, you can see it everywhere. In fact, this was a life changing thing about Christianity in the mind of the Jews. In Acts 1:8, after He had resurrected, Jesus told His disciples, He says, “And you shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest parts of the earth.” Why did He say that? Because the Gospel reaches, the Light reaches to the remotest parts of the earth. It doesn't stop at the temple. It doesn't stop in Israel.

That leads us to the next response to the Light. (I'll go through these next ones pretty quickly). But the next one is this: you need to follow Jesus. We will get out of verse 12 in just a moment, I promise you, and get to the rest of the chapter. But you need to remember there is one Light. That Light is for the whole world; people from everywhere. And once you realize that, you need to follow the Light, you need to follow Jesus. You don't need to stand there and look at the Light, you need to follow it. You don't need to sit there gawking with your hands in your pockets, you need to do what it says.

Verse 12 goes on to say, “Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me...” “...He who follows Me...” Jesus takes it for granted that if you're going to come to His Light, you're going to follow Him. Just as the people of Israel followed the pillar of fire in the wilderness, you're to follow Jesus. They didn't make it to the Promised Land by staying in their booths and Tabernacles, they had to get out and go after Him. Jesus says, “You're going to have to get out and go after Me.” That word “follow” here, it's a military term that

means to “follow your commander” or “follow your leader into combat”. And it carries the idea of obedience with it. To be saved, you obey Christ.

Just to say this quickly, I think it goes without saying that it's not always easy to obey Jesus. You get in a lot of trouble if you do that. Maybe you could say it this way, I think a lot of people want to admire Him from a distance, right? They want to do what Charles Templeton did and say, “I miss Him and I adore Him,” after he spent His life trashing Him. Or they want to do what Time Magazine did: put Him at the top of the list, shower Him with praise, but they don't want to believe He's the bread of life and the water of life, and Light of the world. That's too much.

Jesus says, “That's what it takes to be saved. You have to follow the Light.” To say it another way, only a fool would look at the Light and not follow it, right? Only a fool would see the light in a cave and run toward the darkness. A pastor tells a story of the time when he pulled back a rock in a field and he saw all kinds of bugs and worms and insects under there. And as soon as they saw the light, what did they do? They scurried away, right? You can't do that with Jesus. You have to follow the Light.

Which leads to one more right way to respond to the Light, and that is to walk in it. You have to walk in the Light. I've already said a few things about this, so I won't say much here. But the entire verse says, “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.’”

The idea of walking here, is just the idea that you follow the Light and you keep following it, right? You go after the pillar of fire and you keep going, you don't stop. We got to visit the wilderness where the Israelites were for 40 years, and I'll tell you that is one hot nasty place. I think I drank (I think I told you last time) two big litres of water and never had to go to the bathroom all day. It was just so hot, our air conditioner busted on the trip too. I remember that as well.

You're in a desert like that, you don't stay put very long, right? You don't say, “Boy, I really enjoy this, let me pitch a tent here.” You keep going. Jesus says, you do the same thing with Him. You don't go back to the darkness. The Jews couldn't stop until they reached the Promised Land. You don't stop until you reach heaven.

To add to this, Jesus contrasts if you notice, He says, “He who follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of life.” I think we understand that the light and the darkness are two different things here. Which means you can't walk in both. This is not the language of shadows. Second Corinthians 6:14 says, “What fellowship has light with darkness,” right? First Peter 2:9 says, “For God has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” Which means you can't go back to the darkness now that you're saved. You have to follow the Light, and keep following it, and keep following it.

I told someone the other day, there are no holidays in the Christian life. You don't get days off for good behaviour. We have holidays in the sense that we remember Christ's birth at Christmastime. We remember His resurrection at Easter. We enjoy that and fellowship in that; a wonderful time. But that's not our time off from Christ. We don't get that. We don't get time off.

If you understand this, Jesus says, “You can have the Light of life.” That phrase could be

translated “the living Light.” If you remember chapter 7, Jesus said, “He who is thirsty can have living water” - water that produces life in us. It's the same kind of phrase here except, this is Light that produces life in us; Light that gives us salvation; Light that shines from within us, because the Lord puts it there.

That leads to the negative side of this. That leads to the way not to respond to the Light. We've seen how to respond to the Light. I mean Jesus told us what we should do. We should remember that there is only one Light, and this Light is for the whole world. It shows you the power of a light, if He could light up the whole world, right? This Light is for the whole world. It lights up everybody. And we've seen you should follow this Light, walk in it. Which means you keep following, keep walking, keep going. Don't walk in darkness - go after the Light.

But what are we not supposed to do? If you notice, I'm stopping the positive in verse 12, because the rest of this chapter is kind of the negative. There's 30 to 40 something verses left in this chapter, and the rest of them tell us how not to respond to the Light.

Let me ask it this way, how did the people who heard this respond to Jesus? What did the audience do? Imagine you're sitting in a temple, having a good time with all these candles all around you, and someone stands up and says, “I am the Light of the world,” what would you do? If you were a leader in Israel, what do the leaders do? And the answer is simple: they rejected Him. There's just one wrong way to respond to the Light in this passage; they rejected Him.

Or to be more specific, they question Him and interrupted Him ten times in this passage. Again, if you have a red-letter Bible, it kind of helps to show this. Because you notice, it's just red and black, red and black, red and black, all throughout this chapter, because the leaders interrupt Him or cut him off ten times. You guys ever talked with someone who's done that before? It's very difficult to talk, to have a discussion. That's what happens in the rest of this chapter, and that's the wrong way to respond to Jesus. They don't believe He's the Light of the world. They reject Him and so they decide to question Him and explain Him away.

I can't get into everything here, but let me give you a sampling of what they say. In verse 13, as a response to this, it says (you can kind of follow along with me), “The Pharisees said to Him, ‘You're testifying about yourself. Your testimony is not true.’” To which Jesus replies essentially in verses 14 through 18, “I'm the only One who can testify about Myself. I'm the only One who's come down from heaven, so no one else can testify about Me, except Myself and the Father.” He mentions His father there. “The Father who sent Me,” in verse 16.

So, in verse 19, they say, “Well, where is your Father?” And Jesus says, “If you knew Me, you would know My Father also. Everything I do, I do for the Father. Everything I teach, I teach on His behalf.” In verse 25, they ask, “Who are you?” Which is a silly question because Jesus has just told them, “I am the water of life, and I'm the Light of the world,” right? Then they start getting nasty.

In verse 39, skipping on down a little bit. In verse 39, they say, “Abraham is our Father,” around this topic of father. “Abraham is our Father.” In verse 41, they get really personal here. And they say, “We're not born of fornication.” That was a reference to Jesus' virgin birth. They knew that Mary was pregnant with Jesus before she was married - at least that's what it intimates here. The

rumor had spread around. They knew that His earthly father was unknown, so they assumed He was born in fornication, and they slapped Him in the face with it.

If that wasn't bad enough, in verse 48, they say, "Do we not rightly say that you're a Samaritan and you have a demon." That was the worst insult anybody could think of in the first century, to call someone a Samaritan and demon possessed. So, it's just one insult after another. It's just one attack after another.

And so, Jesus finishes the conversation this way in verse 58. He brings the thing to a climax this way; he says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." That's another way of saying, "I am God." The Lord told Moses that, "My name is I AM." Or if you want to translate into Hebrew, *Yahweh*. That's the name *Yahweh* in Hebrew. Jesus closes this chapter by saying, "I am Yahweh. Before Abraham was born, I was there. I existed before him, I was alive before he was, so I am God." And that finishes the conversation.

If you look in verse 59, this is the last thing that was said. Because in verse 59, it says, "Therefore they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple." That's an interesting passage. I remember the first time I read that, I remember thinking, "Did they just have some rocks in their pockets or something? I mean, were they like guys who just you know, like had a gun in their pocket. What is this? Where did the rocks come from?"

If you remember this point in history, the temple wasn't finished yet. It wouldn't be finished until AD 63, seven years before it was demolished. It's kind of a sad history to this temple. They finished it in AD 63 and then it was destroyed by the Romans. But the point is at this time, it was still under construction which means there were rocks and stones lying everywhere around the temple grounds. And what Jesus says here makes these guys so mad, it makes these leaders so angry that they find some of those stones that are lying around, and they try to kill Him with them. In the middle of a feast, in the middle of thousands of people pouring into the temple grounds, they go after Him and try to put Him to death.

Now, there's been other chapters in John that talks about them trying to kill Him or arrest Him or those types of things, but this is the first time (at least that we read of in John's Gospel) where it gets so explicit about how they did it. That's a way to end the conversation, would you agree? The verse says, "Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple," not because He was afraid to die or afraid of them, but it wasn't His time to die yet, that was going to be six months later at the Passover Feast. So, He hid Himself here and left the temple.

But the point is, that this is the wrong way to respond to Jesus. This is the wrong way to respond to the Light; to reject it or try to explain it away; to question it and keep arguing with it. This was how the first sin came into the world - with a question, with an argument. Do you guys remember what the serpent said to Eve in the garden, "Did God really say?" That's the first question in the Bible. "Did He really mean it when He said you would die if you ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil?" And that's the wrong way to respond. To say, "Did Jesus really say that? Did He really mean it when He said, 'I am the Light of the world?'"

Listen friends, here's what's at stake here in this whole chapter; if you reject Jesus, you have nothing. You have nothing. If you don't have bread and water and life, what do you have? You

have nothing. As Marghanita Laski said, “You have no one to forgive you.” You can say it this way, in John 8 (this is the most shocking thing about this) these men chased God out of the temple. Can you think of anything worse than that? Worse than chasing God out of church, out of His own house? When you do that, what do you have left in the temple? Just rocks and stones, right? You have nothing. That's what you have if you chase Jesus Christ out of your life.

Which leads me to ask you this, what are you doing with Jesus today? How are you responding to the Light? It's a theme we keep going back to in this Gospel. But are you believing in Him, trusting in Him or are you chasing Him away? Are you going to question Him and argue with Him or are you going to follow Him and leave the darkness behind?

We could maybe ask this, are you looking for another light this morning? Another saviour? You're going to find other religions (agnosticism, atheism, secular philosophy) - none of that's going to give you a light like this. Nothing can make you right with God like Jesus can. So, what are you going to do with Him today?

I told you last time, nobody can drink water for you, you have to drink water for yourself. And let me tell you this morning, no one can follow the Light for you. You have to follow the Light for yourself. So, will you do that?

A Swedish woman took her pastor to task one morning because he said Jesus was a Jew and he spoke Aramaic. And she said that wasn't true because Jesus was a Swede and he spoke Swedish. To which the pastor said, “My dear lady, you're going to have trouble proving that,” right? She said, “No, I won't.” And she opened up her Swedish Bible and showed him that everything Jesus said, He said in Swedish and everything He did, He did in her language.

I think there's something to be said for that. Because Jesus is the Light of the world, the whole world. He's the Light for Jew and Gentile, He's the Light for Swede and American Canadian, and everyone else. No matter who you are, no matter what you've done, if you're in the world, you can go to heaven today if you trust in Jesus Christ. You can come into the Light. And let me pray for you now that you would do that.

Father, we thank You so much for what Christ has shown us in this passage. And we kind of bow our hearts and our minds to this because this is a depth that we can't plumb down to, we can't go down to this. We can't go far enough. We don't understand all of what's going on here because our minds are so shallow. But Your word is so clear Father about who Your Saviour has come to be. And I pray Lord for any who are here this morning who have not come into the Light, that You would show them the darkness in their hearts. Show them the darkness in their lives and draw them to the Saviour.

For those who are believers here this morning, who are walking in the Light, Lord I rejoice with them, that You've saved them and You've called them out of the darkness. Lord, may You be glorified as they go out and worship You today.

Father, may we be a church that is known for presenting the Light to people. May we be known as a church that presents the Light to everyone, for this Light is for the whole world. Thank You for Christ, thank You for the hope we have in Him. And we pray this all in His blessed name, amen.