

John 8.12-19

Jesus said, 'I am... the Light of the World'

Amington

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Jesus said... [2]

Cross Purposes

The following is not a true story, but it is quite a funny story... **]**
Show video of US Navy vs Lighthouse. The story goes back to the 1930s at least – for a while the US Navy even had a page on its website debunking it as an urban legend.

That said, in 2008 Mike McConnell (at the time the Director of National Intelligence), opened a speech by saying, ‘this is ... true. I was in the signals intelligence business where you listen to the people talk and so on. This is true. It’s an actual recording.’¹

I don’t doubt he heard an actual recording... but I also don’t doubt the ability of his colleagues to make a prank recording of an old joke to see if anyone swallows it...

¹ <https://www.snopes.com/fact-check/the-obstinate-lighthouse/>.

The slightly tenuous link to our passage this morning is that a similar misunderstanding is going on between the overly pompous Pharisees and Jesus. They have no idea what he's on about – but worse, they don't *want* to know.

Tabernacles

In chapter 7 John tells us that these events took place at the end of the Festival of the Tabernacles (e.g. 7.2, 7.37).

This Festival was an annual event, prescribed by Moses in the Law. Its purpose was to commemorate how the people of Israel lived in tents, or 'tabernacles', for 40 years in the wilderness; but more than that, how *God himself* 'tabernacled' or 'dwelt among' them.

The people knew God's presence through:

1. manna which was new every morning,
2. fresh water which came out of the rock,
3. the pillar of cloud and fire which was their light in the darkness of the night.

'So what?' I hear you cry!

In chapter 6 Jesus says, **‘I am the bread of life... I am the living bread that came down from heaven’** (6.35, 51).

In chapter 7 Jesus says, **‘Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them’** (7.37-38).

And now in chapter 8 Jesus says, **‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’** (8.12).

Those three gifts of bread, water, and light, were more than God’s way of keeping his people alive as they wandered in the desert – they were pointing forward to Jesus and to the life he brings. Did you notice? In Jesus we don’t have ‘bread’, we have **living bread**. In Jesus we don’t have ‘water’, we have **living water**. In Jesus we don’t have ‘light’, we have **the light of life**.

Jesus was using the most important symbols of God’s presence with his people in the wilderness, and saying that *he* fulfilled them *all*. ‘They only kept God’s people *alive* from one day to the next,’ Jesus was saying, ‘whereas I give *life* that never ends...’

‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’

Pharisees

Is it any wonder the Pharisees got shirty?

Here is some bloke, from some Northern backwater town, of uncertain parentage, claiming that *he is the light of the world!* He's not comparing himself to some candles lit for an evening or so, but to **J** *the Sun itself* (or to the Son *himself*...!)

The other day I was up all night worrying about what had happened to the Sun, but then it dawned on me.

What do you call a sunburned librarian? Well red.

Did you know bread is like the Sun? It rises in the yeast...

The Pharisees get a bad press in the gospels – and quite rightly, because they are rather like the apocryphal US Navy captain. But every now and then, I confess I feel a little sympathy for them.

'Here you are,' they said to Jesus (13), **'appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.'**

They had a point. In the Law, testimony from at least two (ideally three) witnesses was required: **a matter must be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses** (Deuteronomy 19.15).

But as Jesus pointed out to them in chapter 5, his testimony about himself goes with:

1. John the Baptist's testimony about him being the promised Messiah, the Lamb of God;
2. the signs and miracles he was doing which testified about his essential goodness and power;
3. the Scriptures themselves which testified about Jesus.

The problem wasn't a lack of evidence, it was an attitude of heart. Jesus said to them: **'you refuse to come to me to have life'** (5.40). And here he says to them, **'You have no idea'** (14). They didn't *want* to know; *that* was the real problem.

As Ray said last week many scholars doubt that Jesus said the words John puts on his lips. He's right – they do. Yet there is more actual evidence for what Jesus said and did than anything else in the ancient world. We have more manuscripts written closer to the events than for any other history of the time.

In the Bible we are presented with evidence from not two, or even three, but *four* witnesses: four gospels bearing witness to what Jesus said. I suspect scholars reject it not because of the lack of evidence, but because of its content.

Life

You see we like to be told we are loved and valued by God. We don't want to be told we are sinners in need of a saviour. But both are true. We like it when Jesus shows compassion – we don't like it when he challenges sin. But he does both.

We like it when Jesus says, **'I pass judgement on no one'** (15) – we don't like it when he says, **'The Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgement to the Son'** (5.22).

You see, both are true. In his earthly ministry Jesus came not to judge but to seek out and to save the lost, to die in our place so that all who come to him might receive forgiveness and life.

But one day we will have to give him an account of our life. And as he said, **'whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life'** (5.24). This is a literally a question of life and death.

And friends, there is one way to life, and one way only: Jesus. All else is or may as well be darkness. He is *the* light that shines in the darkness – the darkness of pain, sadness, death, evil. His light can sometimes be hard to see – yet if we're honest that's because like the Pharisees we have our eyes closed. So let's keep them open.