

The Light of the World

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Preacher: Nathan Rambeck

[0 : 00] It's so great to see everyone here this morning. As the song says, it's the most wonderful time of the year.! Like I said last year was, I think a lot of people, our family was sick for just about the entirety of winter, it seemed like.

But this year, I know that some people got the pre-Christmas bugs, so maybe we can mostly enjoy the holiday without hugging the toilet.

But this morning, I'm just going to do a quick tour through the Scriptures.

We're going to tour through the Scriptures and talk about what we talked about with the kids. You know, we celebrate Christmas with lights. And it reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world.

That's one of the things that he said about himself. But Jesus being the light of the world isn't something that is just one verse that kind of pops up in the middle of the Gospels, and then that's it.

[1 : 16] The story of light, God's light, actually starts from the very beginning of the Scriptures. And it runs all the way through to the very end.

And so we're going to start this morning in the book of Genesis, and we're going to end in the book of Revelation, and just take a journey through the Scripture, looking at what the Bible says.

In the book of Beginnings, in Genesis, it talks about the very beginning of all things, or at least created things.

It says this, starting in verse 2, So the evening and the morning were the first day.

And so it described on that first day, in the beginning, that there was darkness that covered the face of the deep. Before there was any material thing, anyway, there was nothing.

[2 : 40] It was just darkness. Darkness is the absence of light. And the first thing that God did, interestingly enough, has this made anybody curious?

He didn't create the sun or the stars first. The Scriptures tell us that He actually created light itself first. A way to separate from the darkness.

A way to separate day from night. And He spoke it into being, and He said, Let there be light. Or in a very literal fashion, if you look at the original language, He just said, Light be.

And light was. And it says He separated the light from the darkness, and He called the light day, and He called the darkness night. And this separation wasn't just arbitrary, it was purposeful.

It had meaning behind it. And we think, in our own lives, right, we experience night and we experience day. And when we think about the day, what do we think about? We think about activity, things happening, work happening, life flourishing.

[3 : 50] We can see things clearly. We talked a little bit earlier about not liking to drive at night, especially when you're older, because it's harder to see in the dark. But in the light, we can walk confidently, we can find our way.

I think about the plant life, and you have these seeds, and they're buried in the ground, in the darkness of the ground. And over time, they stretch out, and they reach out towards the light.

And that light actually feeds those plants, and causes them to grow. But when we compare that to the darkness, to the night, we think about things like stumbling and confusion.

Anybody ever bumped into, tripped over things in the middle of the night, when you're trying to run to the bathroom? Things stalk around at night, predators. There's dangers at night that you don't have during the day.

Many evil things happen at night. The Bible talks about evil things happening in the night. And you know, not long after creation, after the light was created, part of our creation, part of the world, the darkness started to overcome the light.

[5 : 13] Sin entered the world, through both Adam and Eve. And a different kind of darkness, not a physical one, but a darkness of the heart.

An absence, not of physical light, not of photons, but an absence of God's presence, of his righteousness, and then an absence of his peace.

And that darkness started to cover the human heart, and bringing along with it pain and misery, broken relationships, broken bodies sometimes.

And ultimately, this darkness culminates in even death itself. As you read through the scriptures, there is a phrase that you will see over and over and over again that speaks about the darkness and how it culminates into death.

In fact, King David used this in Psalm 23 when he wrote about something he called the valley of the shadow of death. When you're in a valley and shadows are all around, it is a symbol of death because the darkness ultimately leads to death.

[6 : 34] And you know, throughout the ages, many people have tried to kind of find their own light, to light their own way, to light their own torch.

But those lights flicker and they fail because the darkness has become too deep, too strong. The darkness always seems to win.

But our own light is not sufficient. We need a light that is from outside of ourselves.

We need a light that is powerful enough to overcome the darkness. You know, early on, God gave a hint in the garden there right after the fall.

There was an indication about someone named the seed of the woman who would ultimately crush the head of the serpent. Just this little hint about something that was coming in the future.

[7 : 39] During the time of Moses, he spoke about a great prophet that would come, a prophet greater than even himself who would come that the people needed to listen to.

During the time when the rebellious nation of Israel was being led out of Egypt, and then they refused to go into the promised land or to have the faith that they needed to enter the promised land.

And they ended up wandering in the wilderness for 40 years. During that time in the wilderness, they encountered many of the people of the land.

And there's this story about one of the enemies of Israel who was afraid of them and wanted to curse them. And so he hired a man who was a prophet.

We don't know much about this man. His name was Balaam. But he seemed to actually be a genuine prophet of some kind speaking on behalf of the Lord. And he was hired to curse the nation of Israel.

[8 : 43] And when he went to go curse, and he went up on a high mountain to curse the nation of Israel, and he was not able to do so, the Lord actually spoke through him and gave, instead of a cursing, gave a blessing.

Because God had plans for this nation of Israel despite all their foibles and failures and sins, even against the Lord.

He had a plan for them. And during one of these prophetic statements from the Lord, Balaam mentioned something about, that would come out of this nation.

And he said this, a star shall come out of Jacob. A scepter shall rise out of Israel. There will be a star, a light, a coming ruler, a light to shine in the darkness.

And that was it. It was just this tiny little glimpse about something that God planned to use this nation of Israel to bring forth a light.

[9 : 57] And that little glimpse thousands, you know, many, many centuries later, gained more description through a man named Isaiah.

many hundreds of years later, Israel actually ended up becoming somewhat of a prosperous and mighty nation with kings. Ultimately, it peaked with the King Solomon became a grand nation, highly prosperous.

But eventually, things started to decline. The people started worshiping false gods, and they started being attacked by their enemies and losing the ground that they had gained for their nation.

The people not only were being overrun by other nations, by their enemies, but they were worshiping false gods, oppressing the poor, and perverting justice.

And so, God raised up this man named Isaiah, who became a prophet, to speak on God's behalf.

And as you read through the book of Isaiah, he spends much time rebuking the nation of Israel for their idolatry, for their sin, both the leaders and even the common citizens of Israel.

[11 : 28] But it wasn't just rebuke. It wasn't just admonition. Also among the words that Isaiah spoke, he spoke words that contained hope. I want you to listen to these words from Isaiah chapter 9.

He said this, The people who walked in darkness, they have seen a great light. Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.

These are people who are walking towards destruction. Ultimately, we find that they are destroyed. The nation of Israel is taken captive. Their temple is destroyed.

They are taken away into captivity among the other nations. But here, it speaks of something that God is going to do in the future. That in the future, they will see a great light.

Not a little light, a great one. A light powerful enough to pierce deep into the darkness. In fact, a light that dawns like the sun rising over the horizon, that banishes the night each day.

[12 : 40] Later on in that chapter, chapter 9, Isaiah tells us a little bit more about that light. And he says this, For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, of the increase of his government and peace, there will be no end.

Upon the throne of David and over his kingdom to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from this time forward, even forever, the zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.

God is going to bring this to pass. But the light will come in the form of, he says, a child born into a dark world.

But what will his name be? His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, but not just Wonderful Counselor. He will be called the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace.

And his government, he will rule, will have no end. He will establish peace upon the earth, and a kingdom that will order and establish justice and judgment forever and ever.

[14 : 00] This prophecy about this light, this glimpse, this little hint mentioned by Balaam, we're getting a little bit more detail.

Later on in Isaiah chapter 42, Isaiah speaks about a man he calls a servant, the servant of the Lord. In the beginning of Isaiah 42, he says, behold my servant whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight.

This is one whom God has chosen. I will put my spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. Not just to Israel, but to all the nations of the world.

I'll read in Isaiah 42, verse 6.

I, the Lord, have called you in righteousness. Again, he's speaking to his servant. And I will hold your hand and I will keep you and I will give you as a covenant to the people and also as a light to the Gentiles to open blind eyes, to bring out prisoners from the prison, those who sit in darkness from the prison house.

[15 : 20] And so here is a promise, this light. He will not just be a light to Israel, but also a light to who? To the Gentiles, to all the rest of the world, to all the nations of the world.

And then in Isaiah chapter 60, it speaks even more of what will happen on that day.

When the light will come to Israel. And it says this, Isaiah 60, verse 1. Arise and shine, for your light has come.

And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth. And deep darkness the people. But the Lord will rise over you.

And his glory will be seen upon you. And the Gentiles shall come to your light. And kings to the brightness of your rising.

[16 : 20] He speaks about Israel, this nation. That someday their king will come. And he will be the great light that will shine from among them.

God will be the Lord. And that light that shines among that nation will draw the whole world to itself. That's speaking of a time when Israel, they will be, they will be the ones who are the chief nation of the world.

And their king, the Messiah, will be the chief, the king of all the kings and the Lord of all the lords at that time. And we fast forward in time.

A few hundred years later. the promises have been spoken. The people talk about them. They wait. They hope. The darkness continues.

Israel now is occupied, even though they've returned to their land, they're occupied by a foreign power, by pagans, by Rome. But they're still longing for the day when they will be delivered.

[17 : 38] There's an old priest, his name is Zechariah. He serves in the temple. His wife has never been able to have children. She's barren. But God does something in her and she conceives a child.

Zechariah is somewhat unbelieving when all this comes to pass. And he's not able to speak because the Lord has silenced his tongue.

God has silenced them. But finally, one day, his mouth is opened. And he actually gives a prophetic statement. And he talks about the one whom his son, his son named John, will herald.

And he says this in Luke 1, verse 78, through the tender mercy of our God, with which the day spring or the rising sun from on high has visited us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

He talks about somebody that his son will herald, somebody who is just around the corner, but someone that the prophets spoke of.

[19 : 04] Here he is quoting the prophet Isaiah about the great light who will come, who will come to pierce the darkness and the shadow of death.

death. Just a few years later, Jesus is born to Mary and Joseph.

And they take him to a temple to have him circumcised according to the law. And this is in Luke chapter 2. And there's a man there that the Bible describes.

His name is Simeon. And he has actually been waiting, hoping that in his lifetime, he might see the consolation of Israel, the Messiah, the one whom the prophets spoke of.

And the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die, even though he was quite old, until he had seen the Lord's Messiah. And when he's at the temple and he sees this baby and the Lord reveals to him that this is the child that Isaiah spoke of, he takes the tiny infant into his arm and he blesses him.

[20 : 13] He knows. That this child is the one. This is the light. And he declares this. This is in Luke chapter 2, verse 30. Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word.

For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles and the glory of your people, Israel.

This is the light that the prophet Isaiah spoke of, who would bring light not only to Israel, but to all the nations of the world.

All of the prophecies from Isaiah and others, all those promises, all of the waiting, and he was finally here in the form of a little child.

Jesus grows up and he starts his ministry. He's born or lives, grows up in Nazareth, even though he's born in Bethlehem. But then he begins in his ministry in a place called Galilee.

[21 : 23] And the Bible describes that when he does this, it is the fulfillment of another prophecy. Matthew chapter 4, 14. When it talks about the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, it says this, that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan.

Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And upon those who sat in the region in the shadow of death, the light has dawned.

There's that prophecy again from Isaiah. This time, it's not in the future. This time, it is now. It's happening.

The prophecy is being fulfilled. The great light has come and he is walking among the people of Israel, teaching them and healing them and calling them to come out of the darkness, out of their sin, and to follow the Lord.

We have John's gospel. John himself speaks about this Jesus and makes many references to the light that Isaiah spoke of. in the beginning of his gospel.

[22 : 40] He says this about Jesus. All things were made through him and without him nothing was made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it.

all the evil, all the sin in the world, all the hatred and the rebellion and the wickedness that in the world could not put out this light.

Jesus himself declared it this way. He said in John 8, 12, I am the light of the world and he who follows me shall not walk in darkness but have the light of light.

Later on when Jesus, he healed a man who was born blind, who couldn't see, who did not have light entering into his own eyes. And at the end of that narrative, that passage about him healing the

blind man, Jesus said to the people, he said to them, a little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest the darkness overtake you. He who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light that you may become sons of light.

[24 : 03] And then a little bit later he says, I have come as a light into the world that whoever believes in me should not abide in darkness. also in John's gospel, he tells the story of a man named Nicodemus, a leader among the Jews.

And he came because he knew Jesus was somebody special. All the miracles that he had done and the things that he had spoke, he knew he was somehow from God. And so he came asking Jesus, who are you?

This is the passage where we have the famous John 3.16, for God so loved the world that he gave his only son, that whoever should believe in him should not perish, but should have an everlasting life.

But that's not the end of what Jesus spoke. He also spoke somewhat of a warning, of a foreboding. He says this later on at the end of his interaction with Nicodemus.

He said, and this is the condemnation of the world, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light. Why? Because their deeds were evil.

[25 : 13] For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. And boy, was that true. Jesus exposed many, many sins throughout his, many, much corruption throughout his ministry and his three years of ministry on the earth.

There were many people at the time who hoped in Jesus as their Messiah, but there were great many others who preferred the cover of darkness.

Jesus to them was an annoyance, and not just an annoyance, but he was a threat to them. And so they schemed to bring an end to his life.

And then finally a day came. They captured him. They beat him. They mocked him. They even nailed him to a cross.

And the Bible says when it describes that event that at the noonday hour in the middle of the day, darkness covered the whole earth, it says. In the middle of the day, darkness, as if the sun was put out.

[26 : 31] For three hours there was darkness over the earth as Jesus hung on that cross. And it was as if the whole of creation was groaning under darkness, the light of the world who had come to save the world.

The light was fading. And evil seemed to have won. The darkness seemed to have overcome the light. And he died.

And they put him in a tomb. The darkness. Buried him in the earth. They rolled a stone across the entrance. And his own disciples just sat in darkness.

For days. But then, early on that first day of the week, on that Sunday, it's so interesting.

The Bible tells us when Jesus rose from the dead. And it happened early in the morning, just as the sun was rising, is when they found that empty tomb.

[27 : 41] Death could not hold him. He had risen from the grave. The darkness that he was buried in could not hold back the light.

As the sun rose that morning, so the sun of God rose with it. Victorious over sin. Victorious over death. Victorious over even the darkness itself.

You know, for us, Jesus is our light. He was the light to Israel. As the story goes, Jesus was supposed to establish a kingdom for Israel.

Even at that time. But because of the rebellion of his own people, of Israel, that nation was cut off. Till a future time.

And God instead raised up a man named Paul to be the apostle to the Gentiles. And you know, Paul describes that time in which he was called to deliver a message to the nations of the earth.

[29 : 09] And God told him this, that it was his plan to send Paul to the people of the world. To the Gentiles of the world. To the nations. It says this, to open their eyes in order to turn them from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God.

That they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in me. And when Paul was ministering among the Jews, there was a time when he turned, the Jews rejected the message of Jesus.

The light of the world. And he turned to the Gentiles and he said, I want you to know something. I am going to deliver the same message to you. Because this is what Isaiah prophesied. And he quoted that verse from Isaiah. And he said this in Acts 13, 47 to the Gentiles that he was ministering to you. I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.

And there were Gentiles that were thrilled and they received that message of the gospel to come to Jesus. And so where are we at today?

[30 : 26] This is the miracle of the gospel of grace. The gospel to the Gentiles. When we come to Jesus, when we believe in that great light, the Bible says that we actually become light as well.

Light in the Lord. Paul writes this in Ephesians 5, 8. For you were once darkness, he says to these Christians. But notice he doesn't say you were in the darkness.

Right? He says you once were part of the darkness. You were the darkness itself. The darkness had consumed you. And you became a part of it.

But now, he says, but now in Christ, you are light in the Lord. And he uses that as a way to encourage them to live as children of light, as children of the day.

In Thessalonians, Paul also speaks to this theme of light. And he says in 1 Thessalonians 5, 5, to the Christians in Thessalonica, he says this, you are all sons of light and sons of the day.

[31 : 39] We are not of the night nor of the darkness. You know, as believers who trust in Christ, we are no longer identified as part of the darkness. We are defined by the light that we have come to.

We are children of light, it says here. Children of the day because we belong to him. Yet, the darkness still seems to invade our lives.

even though we have the light of God in us, we are called children of light. Doesn't it still seem like there's darkness all around us?

What's going on? Well, the prophecies of Isaiah still have yet to come fully to pass. In fact, there's coming a day, the Bible calls it a day of tribulation, a day of trouble for Israel in which the darkness will become so dark, darker than at any time in human history.

But that time will end with the light, that great light, Jesus the Messiah coming, writing, on a stallion to pierce and to drive away the darkness forever.

[33 : 11] You can read about this in the book of Revelation, but as you get into the very end of the book of Revelation, it talks about the culmination of all things.

And John sees a vision. He sees a vision of the city of Jerusalem, but this isn't the old city of Jerusalem, this is a new Jerusalem, actually coming down from heaven. And in this new Jerusalem, he writes this, he said, the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the lamb is its light.

In Revelation 22, verse 4, it says this about the people in that city, that they shall see his face and his name shall be on their foreheads, and there shall be no night there.

It's going to be day, 24-7, and they need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light, and they shall reign forever and ever.

Finally, there will come a time when there will be no more darkness, no more night, no more pain, no more suffering, and even no more death.

[34 : 31] Just the light of God's presence forever and ever. And Jesus, who is the great light, that great light that we have seen from the very beginning, from Genesis all the way through Revelation, he speaks at the very end of this book of Revelation.

And he says this in Revelation 22-16, I, Jesus, have sent my angel to testify to you these things in the churches.

I want you to know what's coming. I want you to know the hope that you have. And then he says this about himself. He said, I am the fruit and the offspring of David, the king who was said to come. And he says this about himself, I am the bright and the morning star. I am the light that you were told was coming.

And then he gives an invitation to all the people of the world. It says this, and the spirit and the bride say, come. And let him who hears say, come.

[35 : 46] And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely. And that is the message of Jesus, the light of the world, to all men.

It's simply this, just come. Come to him. That's what light is for, to show you the way.

God's invitation to all men. Come to the sun. Come to the sun, both in the sense of light, but also come to the sun as in the son of God.

Come to Jesus. He is the great light to rescue us from the darkness, to rescue us from the darkness in our own hearts, as well as the darkness that surrounds us, to rescue us from our sin, that we might receive eternal life and live in the light forever and ever with him.

And so this is the message to you. If you today have not come to the light, today this is the message that God sends to you.

[36 : 59] Come. Jesus is the light of the world, and he invites everyone to come to him. And we can live in the light forever and ever.

Are you grateful for that this morning? Amen. Let's end in a word of prayer. Father, everybody knows that light is good and dark is bad.

It's a pretty basic thing. Jesus said that he was the light of the world. And for many people that's an intimidating thing.

For many of us in our past and maybe even now, darkness is some place that we can hide, maybe hide our sins. But we need the light of the Lord to expose everything in us, to make us see what is right, what is true, what is real, what is good, what is just.

If there's anyone in the sound of my voice who has not done what was asked to come, to just simply come, I ask, Father, that you would work in their hearts even this morning, that they would turn to you, put their trust in you, the great light of the world.

[38 : 33] And for the rest of us, those who put our trust in you, we look forward to that day in which we will just bask in the light of your glory forever and ever.

All the darkness will be pushed out of the way and we'll be able to live in the light forever and ever.

We thank you for your promises to us. We thank you for all these things in Jesus' mighty name.

Amen. Amen. Thank you everybody and Merry Christmas Christmas.