

JESUS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

John 7:53-8:30

Key Verse: 8:12

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

In this passage, Jesus saves a woman who was condemned by the religious leaders. This woman had lived a sinful life because she followed her physical desires rather than the word of God. She lived in the darkness of sin. But Jesus shined his true light into her dark life. Then Jesus declared, "I am the light of the world." May God help us to come to Jesus the light of the world!

I. "GO NOW AND LEAVE YOUR LIFE OF SIN" (7:53-8:11)

The excitement of the Feast of Tabernacles was over. The people had spent the last and greatest day of the Feast watching the water-pouring ceremony. They also heard Jesus' invitation to come to him and drink the living water. As the sun was setting on the western horizon, each went to his own home to eat and rest. Where did Jesus go? Look at verse 1. As was his custom, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives, and there he knelt down and prayed. Jesus prayed there all night, as he often did. Jesus prayed—he listened to God and found a direction for his ministry. We learn that the busier we are, the more we must pray.

Look at verse 2. *"At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them."* Jesus went to the temple in the early morning and taught the Bible to the people gathered there. He taught them the word of God whenever he had an opportunity. The word of God and prayer were the two main activities in his daily life. Why did Jesus teach them the word of God? It was because only the word of God could lead them to streams of living water, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life (7:38). The word of God gives a new life to a sin-sick person. John 5:24 says, "I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life." Consider Peter, for example. He used to be an unstable and impulsive man before Jesus met him. But the word of God did something wonderful to his life. So Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (Jn 6:68). Peter's life was fundamentally changed when he accepted the word of God. He learned that the word of God is the word of eternal life. Later, St. Peter testified: "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever" (1Pe 1:24-25). This is the reason Jesus taught the word of God in season and out of season. There are many things we can do to help others. But the best way of helping people is to teach the word of God, because only the word of God can give them eternal life through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at verse 3. Suddenly a group of people stormed into the temple courts, interrupting Jesus' Bible teaching. They were the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

They were not alone. They dragged in a woman caught in the act of adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, in a self-righteous voice, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” (4-5) They didn’t ask Jesus this question to learn the truth from him. Verse 6 says that they used this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing Jesus. In fact, they thought this was a perfect question to ensnare Jesus. If he answered “yes,” he would get in trouble with the Roman authorities because the Jews did not have the right to impose a death sentence (Jn 18:31). He would also contradict his own teaching of forgiveness and mercy. On the other hand, if he said “no,” he would oppose the Law of Moses, which was a serious transgression to the Jews. No wonder they marched into the temple, shouting in their minds, “We’ve cornered you this time, Jesus. There’s no way out.”

What kind of men would use a woman in this way? The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees were supposed to be the shepherds of God’s flock. This woman was one of their sheep! But instead of taking care of her, they used her as bait to entrap Jesus. They did not see this woman as a person who needed God’s mercy. Rather, they used her as a pawn in their political scheme. We wonder how they were able to catch this woman in the act of adultery. They must have put a considerable effort. Perhaps they placed all-night surveillance on her. Perhaps they installed a hidden camera in her room to monitor her activities. Maybe they paid money to the man who committed the adultery. While Jesus labored in the Mount of Olives praying to God, these wolves in shepherd’s clothes were busy snooping around this woman to catch her.

What was Jesus’ answer to their question? He did not answer right away. Look at verse 6b. *“But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground.”* We don’t know what Jesus wrote on the ground. Most likely he wanted to give them a few moments to think about what they were doing and come back to their senses. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, *“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”* The religious leaders were self-righteous. They condemned the woman and dragged her around. But Jesus challenged their consciences when he told them, *“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”* Indeed, Jesus’ words pricked their consciences. They could not deny that they were sinners before the holy God.

What did they do? Look at verse 9. *“At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there.”* In their self-righteousness, they had tried to condemn Jesus as well as the woman. Instead, they were condemned by their own evilness. Each one realized that he could not be the first to cast a stone at the woman. The world is filled with condemnations. Many people are self-righteous and condemn others. Satan tricks them to think that they are a little better than others. But at night, when they are alone, they condemn themselves. Who can rescue us from this condemnation?

Look at verses 10-11. *Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn*

you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” In these verses we learn two things about Jesus.

First, Jesus does not condemn us. We don’t know why this woman came to live this kind of sinful life. Maybe she had been neglected by her parents. Maybe she was abused by her husband. One thing is for sure. She gave in to her sinful desires instead of struggling to obey the word of God. She walked in the darkness of sin. Everyone, including herself, condemned her. No one could save her from this condemnation. But Jesus saved her.

No one has the right to condemn another person simply because everyone is a sinner before God. Only Jesus has the right because he has no sin in himself and because God gave him the authority to judge men (5:22). But Jesus did not condemn this woman. It’s because he did not come to this world to condemn us, but to save us from condemnation.

How does Jesus save condemned people? In order to save sinners like us, Jesus was condemned in our place. He put all our sins on his shoulders and was crucified on the cross. He became the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. Galatians 3:13 says, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’” Because he was condemned on our behalf, there is no condemnation for us. Romans 8:1 declares, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...” The woman deserved condemnation because of her sin. But Jesus redeemed her by paying the price of her life with his own life. How great is the love of God through his Son Jesus! No one wants to see his own son suffer from a common cold. But God in his great mercy let his one and only Son die on the cross so that we might be saved from eternal condemnation. This beautiful gospel has been given to us; but still there are many, especially young people, who remain in sin and darkness. Let’s pray that, through our Bible study and prayer, many young students may come to Jesus and hear this good news.

Second, Jesus gives us a new direction in life. Jesus also said to the woman, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus not only saved her from condemnation; he also helped her begin a new life—life based on God’s word, not on her sinful desires. Jesus wanted to restore the image of God in her. Jesus wanted her to live as a useful person before God. He wanted her to walk in the light.

Without Jesus, all people are helpless under the condemnation of sin. They have no strength to get out of their condemned lives. So they condemn others and they condemn themselves. But when we come to Jesus, he gives us strength to leave a sinful life and begin a new life in him.

“Go now and leave your life of sin”—This command of Jesus teaches us that God loves the sinner but hates the sin. Some people only emphasize the fact that Jesus did not condemn the woman, even suggesting that Jesus also condoned her sinful life. But that is clearly not the case. Jesus said, “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Jesus forgives our sins so that we may abandon the life of sin and begin a new life in his light.

John Newton (b. 1725) was a slave dealer. He was like today's drug dealer. He knew it was wrong to deal with human lives for money, but he had no strength to get out of his situation. But when he accepted Jesus as his personal Savior, Jesus gave him the strength to stop the life of sin. He started a new life in the light of Jesus. He was so grateful to the Lord for his saving grace that he wrote the beautiful hymn, *Amazing Grace: Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.*

II. "I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD" (12-30)

Look at verse 12. *When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* The woman needed the light of life as she had been living in the darkness of sin. So did the Jews who followed Satan, the prince of darkness. All of us also need the light of life in this dark world. In verse 12, Jesus promises that whoever follows him will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. When we come to Jesus, Jesus' light shines into our lives no matter how dark our lives may be.

The light of Jesus is the light of life (1:4). There have been many lights in human history. Dante compared Socrates to candlelight. His light flickered for a while and then died. Jesus compared John the Baptist to a lamp (5:35). John gave light to the people living in darkness for a while. But his light was also short-lived. But Jesus is the true light. John 1:9 says, "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world." In what sense is Jesus the light of the world?

First, Jesus is the light of the world because he is the way. In this dark world, we can easily get lost. It is hard to find a clear direction in the darkness. Many people do not know the purpose of their lives. Thus, they have no direction in life. They just follow the trend of the world. They don't know why they are here in this world and where they are going. But Jesus is the light who defeats darkness and saves people from their dark lives of sin and from the grip of Satan. Jesus is the light of life because he can show us the way to God. He can show us the way because he knows where he comes from and where he is going. Look at verse 14. Jesus answered, *"Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going."* John 14:6 reads: *Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."*

Second, Jesus is the light of the world because he does not condemn us.

Jesus is the only one who has the right to condemn, but he did not condemn the woman. He says in verse 15b, *"... I pass judgment on no one."* He did not condemn because he did not come to judge but to save sinners from their darkness of sins. In order to save us he had to be condemned on the cross, bearing on his shoulders all our sins. Throughout history, the lives of many sinful men and women were turned into sources of blessing to others when they accepted the light of Jesus in their lives.

What was the religious leaders' response? The Pharisees challenged him to deny that he was the light of the world. They rejected the word of God concerning Jesus and said that his testimony was not valid. When Jesus told them that the Father was his witness, they asked, "Where is your father?" (19) When Jesus told them, "I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come," they asked, "Will he kill himself?" (22) Out of compassion toward them, Jesus warned them again, "I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am the one I claim to be, you will indeed die in your sins" (24). But they asked, "Who are you?" (25) They did not believe. Still, Jesus did not give up on them. Jesus said to them, "*When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am the one I claim to be and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me*" (28). Jesus cared for the high-minded people and repeatedly told them that he would die on the cross to save them from their sins. Jesus gave them the life-giving message of God.

Third, Jesus became the light of the world by obeying God's will. Look at verse 29. "*The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.*" Jesus always did what pleased God, not what pleased himself. Jesus became the light of life through his obedience. He pleased God by obeying his will, although it meant to him all the pain and suffering, and even death on the cross. His life of obedience brought light of life into this, otherwise dark, world. Because of our sins, we were in the darkness. But because of Christ's obedience, we are brought from the darkness into the light.

How was it possible for Jesus to die on the cross to save sinners like us? Look at verse 29 again. "*The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.*" It was through his faith in God that he obeyed God's will to the end. Jesus believed that God was always with him. The whole world seemed to be against him. It seemed that he was left alone all by himself in the world. But Jesus knew that he was with God as God was with him. Jesus was not lonely because he knew that God was with him. The apostle Paul also said, "*If God is for us, who can be against us?*" (Ro 8:31)

Joseph in Genesis was sold to a foreign country as a slave by his own brothers. Then he was accused of rape when he tried to live a pure life. But all through these sheer injustices and hardships, he lived a life of faith because he believed that God was with him. This is important for us. We have been saved from our sin and death by faith in Jesus Christ. The precious blood of Jesus washed away all our past, present and future sins. But Satan often whispers into our ears, "Hey, you have done some bad things. And you expect your sins to be forgiven just like that? Besides, you will sin again." But God saved us not on the basis of our merit, but on our faith in Jesus. We cannot do anything about our past sins. Once the police stopped a teenage girl. Her neighbor noticed a car going around the neighborhood several times in reverse. The girl told the police that against her parent's words, she had put too many miles on the car and she was trying to unwind the odometer. We cannot erase our past sins by doing some good things. We need the Savior. It is God who has forgiven our sins. It is God who has brought us into the light of Jesus. If God is for us, who can be against us?

In today's passage, we learned that there is no condemnation in Jesus. We also learned that Jesus is the light of the world. Praise Jesus who shines the true light into our lives as we come to him! May God help us leave our life of sin and walk in the light of Jesus! May God help us to live a life that faith and become a blessing to many other people!