

Sermon Series: “Jesus’ Great ‘I Am’ Statements” - Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN 5/9/2004

Title: “The Light of the World”

Text: John 8: 12

Intro.: Ills.: the Light gives meaning

Theme: Jesus comes to take us out of the shadow of death, whose pall is cast across our life and activity and to bring us into the light of his forgiveness and joy and transformational living.

Are you playing in the shadows?

- The **Shadow lands** of our lives (C. S. Lewis book title)
 1. Conduct unbecoming
 1. **Ills.: the darkness of revenge living** (Iraqi Abu Ghraib prison story)
 2. Questionable practices in many of our entertainment and work activities of our lives
 2. Dancing with evil passion — playing on the edges of sexual lust, greed, control of others, addictions
 3. Living the lie – whether to cover up sin or to be who you are not — both are offspring of Satan, the “*Father of lies*”
- The problem with “continuing” to walk in darkness
 1. “*Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*” John 3:20
 2. We are not following Jesus and will miss out on his eternal life (“*the one following me will never walk in darkness*” John 8:12)**Ills.: The O.T. people and the Pillar of Fire** (can chose not to follow and then on your own in the wilderness)
- Repenting of walking in the dark is a pretty “black and white” decision
 1. “*If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*” 1 John 1:6-7
 2. **Ills.: Black light repentance**
 3. Even if we have walked in the dark and come clean, God declares a clean slate and a new start

Stepping out into the Light

- **Ills.: analogy of walking out of darkness and into a bright light and letting your eyes adjust**
- Part of **WHO** you already are in Jesus
 1. “*The one following me will never walk in darkness*” (vs. 12)
 2. It is not about trying harder but about living the life of Jesus’ Spirit already within you by faith
 3. “*Against such things there is no law...Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*” Gal 5: 23,25
- Where **TRUE LIVING** starts
 4. “*Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” (vs. 12)
 5. **A full life**
 1. “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*” John 10:10
 2. Jesus is not talking about a physical life of plenty which at best is only fleeting and which you can’t take with you
 - “*Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.*” Mat 6: 19 (countering the prosperity Christianity theology)
 - “*For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it.*” 1 Tim.6:7 (countering materialism)
 3. Jesus is talking about an eternal living with purpose for today and hope for tomorrow
 - “*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to go on living in the body, this will*

mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.” Philippians 1: 21-23

6. A **content life**

1. “*I have learned the secret of being content... I can do everything through him who gives me strength.*” *Phil4:12-13*
2. Knowing God for Jesus’ sake has all your tomorrow’s covered, what risks could you take for him and others?
3. What challenges and trials could you face with joy without fear of being overwhelmed beyond your ability?

7. A **guiltless/fearless life**

1. “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*” *Roman 8: 1*
2. Instead of hiding in lies to cover up shortfalls and mistakes, you can live transparently in forgiveness and grace
3. Instead of driven by the darkness of guilt leading to bitterness/anger, you can live motivated by light of Jesus’ love
 - **Ills.: Serving a “higher authority”**
 - “*We love because he first loved us.*” *1 John 4: 18,19*

The Light gives meaning

Charles Colson and several other Christian leaders once met with President Borja of Ecuador to discuss Prison Fellowship International's ministry in Ecuadorian penitentiaries. They had no sooner been seated in luxurious leather chairs when the President interrupted the conversation with the story of his own imprisonment years before being elected to the presidency. He had been involved in the struggle for democracy in Ecuador. The military cracked down, and he was arrested. Without trial, they threw him into a cold dungeon with no light and no window. For three days he endured the solitary fear and darkness that can drive a person mad. Just when the situation seemed unbearable, the huge steel door opened, and someone crept into the darkness. Borja heard the person working on something in the opposite corner. Then the figure crept out, closed the door, and disappeared. Minutes later the room suddenly blazed with light. Someone, perhaps taking his life into his hands, had connected electricity to the broken light fixture. "From that moment," explained President Borja, "my imprisonment had meaning because at least I could see." Even more important than the light we see with our eyes is the light that Christ brings to our hearts, giving our lives the understanding and meaning only he can give. **Citation: Ronald W. Nikkel in *Fresh Illustrations for Preaching & Teaching* (Baker), from the editors of *Leadership***

The Darkness of Revenge Living

ABU GHRAIB, Iraq — The commander of U.S.-run prisons in Iraq apologized Wednesday for the "illegal or unauthorized acts" committed by soldiers at the Abu Ghraib prison search), where photographs showed Iraqi prisoners being abused by smiling American guards. "I would like to apologize for our nation and for our military for the small number of soldiers who committed illegal or unauthorized acts here at Abu Ghraib," Miller told the touring reporters. "These are violations not only of our national policy but of how we conduct ourselves as members of the international community. "It has brought a cloud over all the efforts of all of our soldiers and we will work our hardest to re-establish the trust that Iraqis feel for the coalition and the confidence people in America have in their military." . . . **Brig. Gen. Mark Kimmitt**, spokesman for the U.S. command, also apologized for actions at the prison, which was a notorious center for torture and killings under Saddam Hussein. "My Army has been embarrassed by this. My Army has been shamed by this. And on behalf of my Army, I apologize for what those soldiers did to your citizens," Kimmitt said. "It was reprehensible and it was unacceptable." ***Associated Press, Wednesday, May 05, 2004***

Black Light Repentance

Stephen Kingsley of Craigmont, Idaho says that in his family carpet cleaning business he offered a special service for removing pet urine odors. To show potential customers their need for the service, I would darken the room and then turn on a powerful black light. The black light caused urine crystals to glow brightly. To the horror of the homeowner every drop and dribble could be seen, not only on the carpet, but usually on walls, drapes, furniture, and even on lamp shades. One homeowner begged me to shut off the light: "I can't bear to see anymore. I don't care what it costs. Please clean it up!" Another woman said, "I'll never be comfortable in my home again." The offense was there all the time, but it was invisible until the right light exposed it. It would have been cruel to show customers the extent of their problem and then say, "Too bad for you" and walk away. I brought the light so that they might desperately want my cleaning services.

Serving a "higher" authority

Author and educator, Howard Hendricks, sat in a plane that was delayed for take off. After a long wait, the passengers became more and more irritated. Hendricks noticed how gracious one of the flight attendants was as she spoke with them. After the plane finally took off, he told the flight attendant how amazed he was at her poise and self-control, and said he wanted to write a letter of commendation for her to the airline. The stewardess replied that she didn't work for the airline company, but for Jesus Christ. She said that just before going to work she and her husband prayed together that she would be a good representative of Christ. Doing it for Christ's sake adds another dimension to submission. You are submitting not just to your employer or husband or parent, but to the Lord, because of your love and gratitude for him. **Citation: Lorne Sanny, "The Right Way to Respond to Authority," *Discipleship Journal* (March/April 1982)**

John 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."