

THE MAN WHO CHANGED THE WORLD - PART 3

“I Am The Light Of The World”

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John 8:12, John 9:1-11, 18-21, 24-25

Many picturesque phrases and figures of speech have been used to define the life of our Lord. The bible abounds with word pictures describing the wonder and work of Jesus Christ. Centuries before His advent in the world, men with the vision of seers and the soul of poets wrote down their impressions of what kind of person He would be. One of them said He would be like “The Lily of the Valley.” Another spoke of Him as “The Prince of Peace.” They said He would “feed His flock like a shepherd.” Would be “A root out of dry ground.” “A rose of Sharon.” “A bright and morning star.”=

But the most moving figures of speech used to define the person and purpose of Jesus were those He used Himself. For Jesus was not only the greatest teacher who ever lived, He, Himself, was the greatest lesson He ever taught.=

It's not possible to account for Jesus by any of the tests to which we submit ourselves and our fellows. The grandest kings and the greatest rulers look small and inconspicuous beside His sublime and simple majesty. The sages of the ages sound like talkative clowns compared to His teachings. For Jesus is indeed the Incomparable One whose name is above every other name and before whom every knee must bow.=

What glory and illumination there are, then, in His words, “I am the way, the truth and the life.” “I am the door.” “I am the light of the world.” These are not the random reflections of a “blasphemous upstart.” Nor are they the hollow mouthing of “a harmless fanatic.” These are the bold assertions of The Man Who Changed The World. The One who shook the earth out of its lethargy by revealing Himself to be the very Son of God. And then proved His claim by living a virtuous life, dying a vicarious death, and rising again in a victorious resurrection.=

These incredible events put the seal of truth upon His words. And what may seem, at first, to be idle boasts and blasphemous rantings are vindicated, in the lives of many of His contemporaries who chose to follow Him, and millions of their fellows who have also followed Him down the highways of history. Which is to say -- =

Jesus Has Been The Light Of the World.=

Those who have walked after Him have *not* walked in darkness but *have* had the light of life. And those who have rejected Him have aimlessly vacillated between half-light and shadows with nothing before them but the prospect of eternal blackness. To every age, wallowing in it's own brand of darkness and oppression, Jesus has come and revealed Himself to be Light, offering illumination to all who will simply follow Him.=

Even so, he stands at the threshold of our hearts this morning saying, "I am the light of the world. Follow Me and you will not walk in darkness, but rather, you will have the light of life."=

What does it mean for us to have Christ as the Light of our lives? What illumination can He cast upon our peculiar twentieth century darkness? I think first of all Christ offers us -- =

The Light Of Understanding.=

I was searching for a definition of "light" and came across this sublimely simple sentence,
"Light is the agent by which all things are rendered visible."

In other words—light is the key which unlocks the unknown and makes it knowable. Which exposes the unseen and makes it seeable.=

In the realm of matter, for instance, light unlocks the world of color and makes possible all of the sensory experiences which delight our hearts as we feast our eyes upon the beauties of creation. Without light there would be no great masterpieces of sculpture and painting. Without light there would be no radiant, blazing sunsets to dazzle us with their glory. Without light the earth would once again be "without form and void" as it was in the beginning when "darkness was upon the

face of the deep.” In the realm of matter, “light is the agent by which all things are rendered visible.”=

This is also true in the realm of the Spirit. When Jesus said “I am the Light of the world”, He was claiming to be the agent by which we see -- =

The Shocking And Undeniable Fact Of Our Sin. =

This is important, for we are prone to pamper ourselves when it comes to an admission of guilt. We call our sins:

Shortcomings.

Weaknesses.

Omissions.

Failings.

Foibles.

We are quick to rationalize away guilt by arguing we are not so bad as some of the people we know and therefore God surely could not have included us when He said,

“All have sinned and come short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23).=

But Christ *is* the glory of God! And when we stand in the glaring light of His matchless life, we know with assurance that God did include us! Jesus “is the agent by which all things become visible,” including the shocking and undeniable fact of our sin.=

But we must not leave it there. Jesus is also the light which reveals to us the deeper purpose and meaning of our life that -- =

We Are Saved To Serve.=

The initial motivation which brings us to Christ is usually selfish. We are concerned about our own salvation and our own spiritual welfare. Like a tiny baby whose world is centered in itself, we come to God with our childish demands: “gimme, gimme, gimme, gimme.”=

And that's to be expected for, in reality, we are babes in Christ and our initial actions will be the acts of spiritual infants.=

But as we begin to grow, as we come of age spiritually speaking, as we learn to measure the meaning of life in the light of the example of Jesus, we discover that “to live and let live” is not good enough. “We must live and help live!” For The Man Who Changed The World said, “I did not come to be ministered to, but to minister” (Mark 10:45).=

Likewise, the meaning and purpose of our life as Christians is not to *be* served, but *to* serve. And thus, when we are asked to teach a Sunday School class, we cannot dismiss that opportunity by saying airily: “I don't want to tie myself down.” We are followers of One who was willing to be nailed down to a cross!=

When we're asked, on occasion, to help in some service project such as setting the tables on Wednesday evening, or making a few phone calls, or visiting in the homes of potential friends in Christ, we can't skip out of these opportunities by claiming to be too busy. We are disciples of One who was never too busy, or too proud to serve!=

I think one reason so many find so little time to serve Christ and His church is that they are involved in second rate causes and misguided activity. I love the story about a lady who was rushing to catch the boat to Catalina island. As she ran down the dock, she noticed the boat was about six feet away from the end of the pier and, picking up speed, she made an heroic leap across the open water and landed in a heap at the feet of the captain. She stood up, looked at him with a triumphant smile on her face and said, “I made it!” To which the captain replied, “Indeed, you did, lady! That was a fantastic leap, but if you had waited a few moments more, we would have docked!” I'm afraid many of us are like that lady. Expendng our energies in fruitless activity without ever taking thought of whether or not that activity has a place in God's plan for our life.=

You see, we are not our own. As I Cor. 6:20 makes plain, we have been “bought with a price”

and we belong to the Buyer. Our time, our money, our talents are not our own. They are given as a sacred trust and we are called upon to use them as God wills.=

We cannot look upon Jesus, “The Light Of The World,” and turn away with any other conviction than that we have been born to serve. Indeed, in the realm of the Spirit, Jesus is “the agent by which all things are rendered visible.” And then, Christ also offers us -- =

The Light Of Knowledge.=

Through Him we know! And the darkness of spiritual ignorance is lifted.=

“Let there be light”, God said.

And lo, from out of the chasm of the deep

The darkness fled.

Dismayed before the One

Whose brightness

Outshines the noonday sun.

And dawn came out of darkest night

When God, sweeping down across the chaos said:

“Let there be light.”

“Let there be light”, God said.

And lo, from out my dismal heart

The darkness fled.

From bondage I was free.

I only looked to Calvary,

Saw One, and loved Him.

Thus I gained my sight

When God, sweeping down across my heart said:

“Let there be light.”

And then may I suggest that the light Christ offers us is -- =

The Light Of Guidance And Direction.=

This, of course, presupposes we need guidance and by ourselves cannot find our way around in a world like this. A short time ago there appeared, in an Australian journal, a cartoon which conveyed a powerful warning to civilized people. The artist depicted the ruins of a great modern city destroyed by an Atom bomb. No living human was in sight. Two apes were surveying the scene of total desolation and one said to the other, “I hear they were remarkably clever.”=

What a commentary on a large part of the contemporary scene. Too clever to believe God. Too clever to follow Jesus. Too clever to repent and turn from our sins. But, *not* too clever to escape retribution.=

Now, of course, there are small trials and petty tribulations which come to us and to which we are equal and through which we are able to grow. But, there are also burdens so crushing and weights so heavy our heart utterly fail us. There are excruciating moments when “The pruning knife is sharp, the cleansing fire is keen, and the cup of suffering is bitter.”=

It is then that we appreciate these luminous words of Jesus, “I am the Light of the world.” For light is never so welcome as in the dark! And, oh, how many of us have turned to God in those bleak moments of utter despair to find Him standing close by in the shadows like a Sentinel keeping our heart, guiding our feet, garrisoning our mind and giving us a star to go by?=

John Henry Newman was a young man of rare and magnetic gifts. His ministry in the Church of Oxford, England, was a blessing to countless lives. His biographer says his preaching was like “a fine strain of heavenly music” and affected his hearers deeply with his charm and religious power.=

In 1833, when Newman was 32 years old, his labors brought on a prolonged illness and he was forced to take several months off for rest. During this time, perplexed by doubts and

uncertainties, he wandered over Europe. He became more and more distraught and finally, in a fit of extreme anxiety, rushed from port to port trying to get a boat back to England. After a long wait, he succeeded in getting passage on an orange boat from Sicily. But, to his dismay, the vessel was soon becalmed in fog just off shore and, for a week, made little progress.=

During this period of enforced quiet Newman, still ill and perplexed by his inner conflicts, found the peace for which he had been longing. And out of the serenity of soul which Christ gave him in those trying hours, he wrote a prayer which he entitled, "Light in Darkness."=

"Lead, kindly light, amid the encircling gloom,

Lead thou me on.

The night is dark, and I am far from home;

Lead thou me on.

Keep thou my feet; I do not ask to see

The distant scene;

One step is enough for me.=

"I was not ever thus, nor prayed that thou

Shouldst lead me on;

I loved to choose and see my path, but now

Lead me thou on.

I loved the garish day, and, spite of fears,

Pride ruled my will;

Remember not past years.=

"So long thy power hath blessed me, sure it still

Will lead me on,

O'er moor and fen, o'er crag and torrent, 'til

The night is gone.

And with the morn those angel faces smile

Which I have loved long since,
and lost a while.”=

The light of leading. How bright it shines! And, if in the darkness of our night of despair we have the good sense to follow, Jesus, The light Of The World, will lead us too.=

What more, then, can I say? “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom 8:31b). This light of the world is inextinguishable. For 2000 years it has been shining, and all of the darkness which hell can muster has not been able to put it out. Darkness may have its day, but Jesus is eternal. In the blackest hour of life, when the candles of human wisdom, human hope and human love have flickered and failed, Jesus Christ remains. And He has promised, “I am the light of the world. He that follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.”=

This morning, this guiding light can be yours if only you will receive it. May God give you the wisdom and grace to do so.=