

# I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

JOHN 9:1-11

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Friends, I am excited to be with you in this digital (paper) format today. I pray that things have been well with your soul. Today, friends, we will be continuing our Lenten Sermon Series: I Am.... This series is designed to help us to learn more about our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Throughout this series, we have examined several “I Am” statements from the Gospel of John.

We have discussed how Jesus is the Bread of Life, and how that means Jesus provides sustenance for our souls. We also discussed how Jesus is the Gate and the Good Shepherd. Jesus is our passageway to God and God’s kingdom. We were reminded that a shepherd calls out, and the sheep follow the sound of the shepherd’s voice. If we are the spiritual sheep, then we need to be listening to where Jesus is calling us to go. Then, we discussed how Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. We learned that the way and truth describe how Jesus was unified with God. We are to strive to have this type of unified spirit with God in our lives and having this gives us access to eternal life. Last week, we talked about what it means that Jesus is the Vine. We were reminded of how that means we need to be *menō* or intimately, profoundly, and enduringly attached to Jesus Christ for us to have fruitfulness during our walk in faith.<sup>i</sup>

Today, we will be discussing a sixth “I am” statement: I am the Light of the World. Throughout scripture, there has always been a dichotomy between light and dark. We see in the creation stories of Genesis that God brought light into the darkness of the empty void before God. In the Gospel of John, we even see in in the first chapter this clash between light and dark:

*“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.” (John 1:5, NLT)<sup>ii</sup>*

Here in the ninth chapter of John, we see this battle between darkness and light again. However, before we dive too deep into the scripture, I would like to you take a trip with me. Now, I know we are currently under a “stay at home” order from the governor, so we will have to make do with an imaginary trip.

I would like you to join me on a trip back in time to when I was a little kid. I lived in Loretto, and not the village proper. I'm talking about out in the middle of nowhere, trees and fields surrounding us, Loretto, Pennsylvania. Where I lived, we didn't always have the most reliable power supply. In fact, we would lose power so frequently, my parents kept big jugs of tap water stored in our basement in the case that the power was out when we had to get ready in the morning because we also had well water. If you have a well or ever had one, you know that you need power to have water. I can't tell you how many cold "showers" I have had to take on powerless mornings growing up.

The thing about my parents' house is that when the wind starts to pick up or a big storm goes through the area, the power often cuts out. I can remember times as a child in the evening when we would be gathered together as a family playing a board game (because when it stormed hard the satellite TV also cut out), and all of a sudden, the power cut out. What was once a bright room instantly turned into a space that was so dark that you couldn't even see your hand right in front of your face. Have you ever experienced that kind of darkness before?

When I was little, that sudden darkness used to scare me a little bit. After a while, of course, your eyes would begin to adjust and you could start to make out a little bit of what was around you, but it was still a challenge to see. I want us to hold on to that image of thick, pervasive, darkness.

In our scripture for today, we are introduced to a blind man. I would like to take a moment to say that I understand that there is a spectrum of blindness. I understand that some blind people still can see movement or light and darkness, but there are those still that see nothing and are left in darkness. I would like us to imagine that the blind man in John 9 falls into this latter group. We just imagined what it is like to be in deep darkness, and now I would like you to imagine what it would be like to be this kind of darkness for your entire life. For us sighted people, we would probably have a difficult time imagining what this would be like. For others who have lived this way since birth, it would be normal, and you would adjust life to be able to function in the world without sight.

The blindness that this man experiences is serving a dual-purpose in this scripture. The obvious understanding is that the man is physically blind; however, John often leads us into deeper territory. The blindness of this man also represents

our spiritual lives stumbling around in the darkness of the world. For us growing up in darkness, it may seem normal to live this way and we adjust to living in that fashion.

Interestingly, Jesus did not care about the reason why the man was blind; rather, Jesus said it was an opportunity to express the power of God in the world. If you pay close attention to this scripture, as well, we find that the blind man is unlike many of the other recipients of Christ's miraculous power because he never asks to be healed. Jesus offers this undeserved gift to him without price. This is, of course, demonstrating the graciousness of God.

The other cool thing about this scripture, to me, is the method by which Jesus performed the miracle. If we remember back to the second story of creation in Genesis, God creates human beings out of the dirt of the earth. Jesus, in this miracle, grabs an amount of dirt, moistens it with his saliva, and works it into mud, or as other translations put it, clay. Jesus rubs this clay over the man's eyes and tells him to wash in the pool of Siloam. The man received the gift of sight from these actions. One of the commentaries I was reading this week mentioned how this act resembles the creative actions of God in Genesis. Jesus recreated for this blind man new eyes out of the clay of the earth!<sup>iii</sup>

This gracious, healing act went beyond physical healing. Jesus said he is the Light of the World, and he provided for this man, not just the physical ability to see the lit world around him, but he brought the revelation of God through Jesus Christ. God's creative, healing power was manifested in this one individual. If we read through the rest of the chapter, we would also learn that this blind man begins to learn more and more about who Jesus is and eventually makes the decision to follow him.

The point that Jesus is trying to drive home by performing this miracle is that Jesus is the only one who can help us to truly see God and help us live a life that leads to him. John 8:12 reads:

*"Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, 'I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won't have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.'" (John 8:12, NLT)*

Jesus is the source of the light of God's goodness in our lives, and when we are exposed to this light, it continues to grow in us. It seems that most of this series

has been leading us in this direction. I hope, if you haven't already understood this, Jesus should be a really important part of our lives.

I ask you, today, is Jesus the light in your world? The truth is that we have all grown up in a state of spiritual blindness, and we have all stumbled in the darkness. Jesus has come to this world to be our beacon of hope in the darkness. Jesus has encountered us, and has healed us of our spiritual blindness, and has left us with a choice. We have the choice to follow Jesus in the light or continue to wander around in the darkness.

The blind man in this scripture chose to follow Christ, and I hope that you have too. God has given you and me a great gift of life, and we shouldn't take that for granted. Importantly, I want to lift up what Jesus reminded us in the fourth and fifth verses as well:

*"We must quickly carry out the tasks assigned us by the one who sent us. The night is coming, and then no one can work. But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world." (John 9:4-5, NLT)*

The gospel writer was careful to select the word "we" in these verses. Jesus was reminding us that his work doesn't end when he was to be executed and resurrected. Christ's work continues through his disciples. As people who have accepted the gift of God's grace and live in Christ's light, we have work to do. There's only a finite amount of time to do the work that God calls us to do. Many people still live comfortably in darkness, and friends, I encourage you to be the person that God uses to reflect Christ's light into their dark world. Be kind, be patient, and be loving in this work. Remember, Christ is still here with us, and his light is a beacon of hope for us all.

Amen.

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<sup>i</sup> Study Note entitled "Remaining in Christ" from *New Living Translation Study Bible* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc), 1803.

<sup>ii</sup> All Scripture, unless otherwise noted will be derived from the New Living Translation. Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [Holy Bible: New Living Translation](#) (Jn 1:5). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>iii</sup> Dongell, J. (1997). *John: a Bible Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*. Indianapolis, IN: Wesleyan Publishing House.