

Who is Jesus? The Light of the World¹

Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 28, 2009

We are continuing in our series, “Who is Jesus?” by looking at another “I am” statement of His. We are going to be looking at our text from John chapter 9, so I invite you to take out Your Bibles and open them with me to our reading.

Again, why are we asking this question and doing this series? Too many people can talk all day long *about* Jesus, but they don’t know Him. Rather than trying to define or decide who or what Jesus is based on our sinful, broken selves, we need to listen to what Jesus says about Himself. We’re looking at the times Jesus used the words, “I am...” to describe Himself. Remember, I AM was the name God the Father used when Moses asked God what His name was. Whenever Jesus makes one of these “I am” statements, He is taking the Divine Name, using it with a Godly attribute, and applying it to Himself. Today, we’re looking at this statement, “I am the light of the world.”

Let’s take a look at this young man who was born blind. His whole life had been a story of rejection. His neighbors had rejected and overlooked him so long that after he was touched by Jesus they were not even sure whether or not it was him. *His neighbors and those who had formerly seen him begging asked, “Isn’t this the same man who used to sit and beg?” Some claimed that he was. Others said, “No, he only looks like him.”* Maybe they hadn’t really looked at him close enough to recognize his facial features. His parents reject him; they won’t even defend him against attacks from the church leaders. The church folk reject him; they won’t even rejoice over his miracle. They end up throwing him out of church because he has been healed. When he was blind he would have been rejected and unable to enter the synagogue because his blindness made him an unclean sinner in the eyes of the church leaders. Now that he’s healed and whole and can see, they reject him *because* he is healed and whole and can see.

Rejected. Many know what that feels like. Overlooked. Forgotten. Unwanted. Unneeded. Unloved. Unaccepted.

You have been seeking acceptance and approval. You have been trying to fit in. You have been trying to get in the clique and the club. You have been crying yourself to sleep thinking, “No one loves me or wants me.” Your neighbors have laughed at you. Your friends have walked away from you. Even your parents or other family members have forsaken you. Hear and know this today: when everyone else turns their back on you, when everyone else forgets about you, when everyone else rejects you, Jesus will seek you out. In fact, right now He is looking for you. The cool kids don’t like you, but Jesus is trying to find you. The in crowd has ridiculed you, but Jesus is walking the aisles right now trying to locate you. Mom and Dad, family has rejected you

¹ Adapted from “Believing is Seeing” sermon written by Steve Ely

and declared that you are a nothing, a nobody, but Jesus says you are so important He's engraved your name on the palms of His hands. He won't give up looking until he finds you. He will push through crowds. He will push past the 'good church folk' and find you. He can handle your pain. He will accept you right where you are, and what's even better, is that He won't leave you there, but like the man in our reading this morning, will move you to an even better place.

Notice something in this text, and you can make a note of it in your Bibles: Jesus goes looking for the man. The man who has been attacked; the man who has been ridiculed, the man who has been thrown out and unwanted – this is the man who is the subject of a search and rescue mission by Jesus. In verse 35, the Bible tells us that Jesus goes looking for him. He singles him out. He goes out of His way to find a “nobody.” He had been rejected, but the Son of God goes searching for him and keeps looking until He locates him.

Back to Jesus being the Light of the World. Many walk around with 20/20 vision physically but are blind spiritually. We need an encounter like this man so we can really see.

Let's walk through this together, and then come back to the application of Jesus as the light of the world to you and me today, tomorrow and on into the rest of the week.

First, Jesus finds this rejected man and touches him. He spits in the dust, mixes it together and then says, “Here's mud in your eye!” (Ok, I just couldn't resist saying that). He heals his eyes and gives this man physical sight. The neighbors see the man, and can't decide if it was really the same person, and finally ask what happened. Look at how he answers in verse 11, “*The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and then I could see.*”

He has sight but he can't see yet. He has come into contact with the Son of God. He has been touched by heaven itself and when he explains it he says, “That MAN” touched me. He has physical sight, but not spiritual sight.

Too many still see Jesus as a man. They go to church, sing, raise their hands, shout ‘Amen’, but the truth is they are still blind. They still see Jesus as just a man. He is just a man someone talks about. Someone who used to be alive. A man. A mortal. A memory.

Back to the healing. The people bring the man born blind before the church folk so that they can get to the bottom of what happened. So the church folk begin to question this man and when they asked him, “*What do you say about the Man who healed you?*” he responds, “*He is a prophet.*” Note the progression: this man who just a few short hours before thought Jesus was just a man now says Jesus is a prophet. He is more than just an ordinary man; more than just a carpenter's son; more than just a compassionate stranger. This man is a prophet.

The good church folk didn't like his answer, so they dismiss him, but after talking to his parents

they call him in again. They ask him again what happened. Look at what the man said in verse 27, *“I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become His disciples, too?”*

Again, note the progression, and you can make a note of this in the margins of your Bibles. He started by calling Jesus, “that man.” He began to see and then declared that Jesus is a prophet. Now a few hours later when pressed by the church leaders he says an important three letter word, *too!* Go ahead and underline that word in your Bibles: *“Do you want to become His disciples, too?”* He is slowly seeing that Jesus is more than just a man, more than a prophet. He now declares his allegiance to Jesus as a disciple.

The progression of sight coming from faith climaxes when He sees Jesus in the flesh. Look at verses 35 -38:

Jesus heard that they had thrown him out, and when He found him, He said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” “Who is He, sir?” the man asked. “Tell me so that I may believe in Him.” Jesus said, “You have now seen Him; in fact, He is the one speaking with you.” Then the man said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped Him.

Lord. Kurios. YHWH. I AM.

He went from looking at Jesus as a man, to looking at Him as a prophet, to counting himself as a disciple of Jesus, to declaring that Jesus is Lord and worshiping Him. And it all started with Jesus making a simple, yet profound declaration about Himself – *“I am the light of the world.”*

So what does this have to do with us this morning? In the margins of your Bibles next to verse 5, you can make a note of John 1:4-5, *In Him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

We walk in darkness in this world. The darkness of sin; the darkness of self-interest; the darkness of denying the truth about who Jesus is. And all the while the Light of the World shines in our lives but we just don’t see it. The Kingdom of Light has invaded the Kingdom of Darkness, but so many still walk around groping in the darkness for something they can hold onto, something that will provide them with stability, not realizing Jesus stands right there. You can also write in the margins of your Bibles, Psalm 119:105, *Your Word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.*”

Are there any today who feel like they could really use a light in their lives to illumine the darkness? What are those things that keep you awake in the darkness of the night? Jesus says, *“I am the Light of the World.”* No one needs ever be in darkness again.

Got questions you’d love to have a little light shed on? Jesus says, *“My Word is the lamp to your feet and the light to your path.”*

Scared, tired, lonely? Jesus says, “You never need to fear again. Come to me, I will give you rest. I will never leave you.”

The Light of the World shines in the darkness, and we can be bathed in that light. The thing is, light exposes what was once hidden in darkness. If the Light of the World shines on us, it will mean we have to come face to face with those sins we’ve hidden and hoped would go unnoticed.

The secret addictions; the unforgiveness we harbor towards someone; the hatred in our hearts. Those things that we think we’ve gotten pretty good at covering up would all of a sudden come out along with the guilt and shame when the Light shines on us.

But the other thing about the Light is that it exposes those things to get rid of them. The darkness cannot be where the Light is, and once the Light comes, the darkness flees. In other words, where Jesus shines, those confessed and repented-of sins are forgiven and everything is made new.

What would happen if the Kingdom of Light broke through our darkness? What would be different?

First, we would be like this man and find ourselves face down in the dirt in front of Jesus calling Him LORD and worshipping Him as the One that opened our eyes.

Second, our physical eyes would not be the ones we looked with. We would look at things with our spiritual eyes. Eyes given by Jesus, not by the world. Eyes formed by the Word of God, not the opinions of ourselves or others.

Third, it would mean we would see everything we do and say as having an eternal difference, as if we somehow were able to step outside of time and see things from an eternal perspective.

Finally, it would mean we would be like this man in our reading and not be shy or timid about sharing our faith or inviting someone to come to church. We who have had our eyes open to see the answer the world has been literally dying for would do the same thing this man did: tell our story about what a difference Jesus has made in our lives, and then ask the same question, “Would you like to be His disciple, too?”

So how’s your vision this morning?

Don’t you just hate it when I ask questions like that?! Can I let you in on a little secret? Whenever I ask questions like that, understand I’m asking myself that, too. Many-a-wise pastors have said that most sermons they deliver are really them preaching to themselves!

My point is simply this – I don’t think any of us have truly seen the Kingdom of Light... yet. One day those who cling to Jesus as their only hope for salvation will. But I can’t help but wonder if we could see it just a little bit now. If we would just let down our guard, and like we

talked about last week when Jesus said “I am the bread of life”, completely surrender to Him, would the Light of the World shine in on us in a way we’ve yet to experience?

Let’s stop running in our blindness, and like the man in our reading, let Jesus touch us, heal us, make us whole, and come to us.

Would you pray with me please?

Light of the world, You stepped down into our darkness. Open our eyes, let us see. We want to see the light that comes from You – we want to be touched by it, changed by it, transformed and renewed by Your light and love. We want to walk in Your light and have our paths illumined by Your light. We want to be done walking in our blindness, stumbling along thinking we’ve got it all figured out and under control.

Jesus, You touched the eyes of a man born blind and gave him not just physical sight, but spiritual sight and insight. Thank You for seeking Him and healing Him. Please do not stop seeking us. Please do not stop healing us. Send Your Holy Spirit and drive us to the ground in confession and repentance and submission and worship! You are our God. You are the light of the World. You are the One who invaded the kingdom of darkness we walked around in for so long.

Here we are to worship. Here we are to bow down. Here we are to say that You are our God. Help us to believe, so that we can see.

Touch us again, Light of the World.

Amen.