

The Light of the World

He said, "I Am"

John 9:1-7

March 4, 2018

Thanks again for being in worship. I apologize for my voice this morning and that there is no outline to fill in on the sermon notes sheet. I have been home sick all week with a cold that immediately went into acute bronchitis. And yes, baseball fans, if you are scoring at home, that twice I've had bronchitis in the last 2 months. And being the good husband I am, I gave my cold to Myra, who never gets sick.

One of the most celebrated sports heroes in Alabama was Charley Boswell. Charley was blinded in World War II while rescuing a buddy from a burning tank. He had always been a great athlete, so after the war, he took up golf. He would have a friend line him up, give him a distance, and he would hit the ball. Now, I can testify that it's hard to hit that little white ball when you can see it. Boswell won the National Blind Golf Championship 16 times, once shooting a score of 81.

In 1958, Charley went to Ft. Worth, Texas to receive an award from famous golfer Ben Hogan. Mr. Hogan agreed to play a round of golf with Charley. Charley said, "Would you like to play for money?" Hogan said, "That wouldn't be fair!" Charley said, "C'mon, Mr. Hogan, are you afraid to play a blind golfer?" Hogan was really pretty competitive, so he said, "Okay, I'll play for money. How much?" Charley said, "\$1,000 per hole?" Hogan said, "That's a lot. How many strokes do you want me to give you?" Charley said, "No strokes. I'll play you heads up." Hogan said, "Charley, I can't do it. What would people think of me taking advantage of a blind man?" Charley smiled and said, "Don't worry, Mr. Hogan, our tee time is tonight at midnight!"

Charley Boswell was a blind man whose eyes physically could no longer see, but we can see perfectly well, and still be blind. We need Someone who will help us cut through the darkness and see the light.

During Lent, we are looking at some incredible things Jesus said of Himself with a series entitled, "He Said, 'I Am.'" So turn to page 7 in your bulletin.

Two weeks ago, we set the stage. We dug deep into what each of these statements have in common; two Greek words: *ego eimi*.¹ We translate them, "I Am." *ego eimi* is the Greek equivalent to Yahweh, the Hebrew name for God. Jesus is saying, "I am God" by saying *ego eimi*.

Last week, we looked at the wonderful passage from John 14:6 where Jesus says, "*ego eimi*, I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me."² And I remember saying that I thought there wasn't a more appropriate passage of Scripture the Sunday following the death of Billy Graham than this one. Then last night, I came across this picture:

BILLY GRAHAM'S HEADSTONE.

Today, we are going to look at another astonishing thing Jesus said about Himself, so let's look at John 9.

READ JOHN 9:1-9

¹ εγω ειμι

² John 14:6 (NLT)

Jesus comes across a man who was reportedly born blind. The disciples behave quite badly here, wanting to have a theological discussion, a kind of “chicken or the egg” question.

A common belief in Jewish culture was that calamity or suffering was the result of some great sin. So the disciples want to have this deep, theological debate, all the while, a man is before them who has never seen a sunrise, never saw his mother’s face, never seen a newborn baby or a running child or young love or the people and the places around him. He was born blind, and the disciples want to know if his blindness was his parents’ fault or in fact, his own.

That would be like standing before a drug addict or a child with a deformity or a recent widow, and discuss whose fault it is that they are going through this. Can you get any more rude or impersonal or unfeeling?

Jesus doesn’t fall for the trap of “see how smart and insightful I am” and quickly cuts through to the meet of the situation. Here is a man born blind; he needs help, not a debate about his pitiful circumstances. (Boy, I could go off on a tangent here, but it is Communion Sunday and we have limited time.) Jesus isn’t about debating the man’s problem; He’s always about doing something about it. Look at verses 3-4:

“It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. 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.”³

Jesus cuts straight to what’s important: meet the need. Don’t discuss the root of the problem: meet it, do something about it. And Jesus will, but first He says this incredible thing, this “*ego eimi*” statement:

But while I am here in the world, I am the light of the world.”⁴
ego eimi, I, God, am the light of the world.

I want to take the remaining time we have to look at what it means for Jesus to be the light of the world and what that does for us in our journey of faith.

First, Jesus’ light shows us beauty.

A week ago Friday night, when we were driving to West Virginia, it was dark by the time we reached the Ohio-West Virginia border. Many of the roads we traveled I’m sure were quite scenic, but we didn’t know it, for the light was gone, and all I could focus on during the windy and curvy sections was the yellow line to my left, the solid white line to my right, and the signs at the curves to warn me how fast I should take that turn – some were down to 15 miles per hour.

Without light, we cannot see the beauty around us. Everything turns gray, without color. The only beauty we see at night comes from a light source: the stars twinkling in the sky, the moon reflecting light onto a lake, a street lamp illuminating gently falling snow.

Have you ever noticed when reading Genesis 1 and the story of creation?

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep waters. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light,” and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. Then he separated the light from the darkness.

³ John 9:3-4 (NLT)

⁴ John 9:5 (NLT)

God called the light “day” and the darkness “night.” And evening passed and morning came, marking the first day.⁵

That’s the first day. But note what God creates on the fourth day.

Then God said, “Let great lights appear in the sky to separate the day from the night. Let them mark off the seasons, days, and years. Let these lights in the sky shine down on the earth.” And that is what happened. God made two great lights, the sun and the moon—the larger one to govern the day, and the smaller one to govern the night. He also made the stars. God set these lights in the sky to light the earth, to govern the day and night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And evening passed and morning came, marking the fourth day.⁶

God didn’t create the sun to provide light on the first day. He is the light; the light of the world.

Second, Jesus’ light shows us His power.

Before Christ worked the miracle of healing the man born blind, He announced He had the power to do it. Verse 4-5.

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.”⁷

The symbolic use of light to represent power is not uncommon. The ancients knew the power of the sun provided the energy to grow the crops and food. In our day, we especially know that light is power. Just off the departure end of Runway 02 at Dayton Wright Brothers Airport is the Sinclair Community College solar panel field that takes the light of the sun and transforms that into energy.

Light is power, and Jesus is the light of the world.

Third, Jesus’ light shows us enlightenment.

Roman Herculian guard Adrian of Nicomedia was the head of the praetorium. It is said that while presiding over the torture of a band of Christians, he asked them what reward they expected to receive from God. They quoted 1 Corinthians 2:9:

No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.⁸

Adrian was so impressed by their faith that he converted to Christianity and became one of them. On this date in 306 AD, he was martyred for that faith.

Jesus said in John 8:

“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.”⁹

The light of Christ showed Adrian the sin in his life, and there have been countless people who have been encouraged and enlightened by that light.

Finally, Jesus’ light shows us usefulness.

I’ve gotten to the point in my life that a flashlight is a pretty handy and necessary tool. Just the other day, I was trying to read the small print on my vitamin pill bottle. My last blood work showed a slight iron deficiency, and Dr. Fedrizzi told me that in its

⁵ Genesis 1:1-5 (NLT)

⁶ Genesis 1:14-19 (NLT)

⁷ John 9:4-5 (NLT)

⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:9 (NLT)

⁹ John 8:12 (NLT)

infinite wisdom, the government says that people over the age of 50 don't need iron anymore, so companies don't put it in senior vitamins. So, I was trying to check out the label on my bottle, and you know what I did? I had to grab a flashlight to get enough light on the letters to read them.

Light is necessary for usefulness. You drop something small – a bolt, an earring, a paperclip – good luck finding it in the dark. You need light to find it.

Jesus would cure the man born blind, the representative of a blind world, because He came to be the light of the world, not only to give light, but to give sight. And to give us an example of this usefulness.

When the blind man was questioned about his miracle, he made this famous statement that was picked up by former slave trader become poet and clergyman John Newton in his hymn "Amazing Grace":

"...But I know this: I was blind, and now I can see!"¹⁰

The man became a useful witness to those who doubted Jesus is the light of the world.

Christ told his disciples in Matthew 5

You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.¹¹

You and I are to be useful. It is our business to dispense light everywhere; and to neglect no opportunity that may offer to enlighten and save the bodies and souls of people.¹²

Folks, there is a lot of darkness out there. The prince of darkness, Satan, is working as hard and as fast as he can – for he knows his time is short – to bring utter darkness – into the life of a young man who shot and killed his parents in Michigan, to a mass murderer in a school in Florida, to drug dealers who get naïve people hooked on drugs, to two Missouri men who videoed themselves dragging a kitten behind a jeep, then killing it with a rock, in a bid to get viewers to buy them a pizza.

This world needs us to be useful, to shine the light of the world, Christ, so that everyone will praise our heavenly Father.

¹⁰ John 9:25 (NLT)

¹¹ Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

¹² Adam Clarke's Commentary, John 9:5