

## Sermon 24 October 2021 'Light of the World' (Lockdown)

### John 8:12-20

When Jesus made his claim to be the Light of the World, the religious leaders were not impressed. To them it sounded like a claim, as indeed it was, to be the Messiah, and even more so, to be carrying out work that was directly associated with God. In Jewish thought, the word *light* and God were very closely associated. 'The Lord is my *light*.' Psalm 27:1. 'The Lord will be your everlasting *light*.' Isaiah 60:19. 'When I sit in darkness the Lord will be a *light to me*.' Micah 7:8. There are many more examples.

To the Rabbis, the Messiah and light went hand in hand, so when Jesus said he was the Light of the World, there was no mistaking his claim that he was indeed the Messiah.

Interestingly, Jesus, as he was prone to do, doesn't come out with the bald statement, 'I am the Messiah,' but rather hints at it, albeit in a way that borders on the obvious. But he does require his listeners to figure it out for themselves.

I cannot help but draw a comparison with his parables. Jesus invariably did not explain his parables. He tells the story and leaves us to figure it out. However, as is the case with his claim to be the Light of the World, the conclusion, the message is inevitably quite plain.

The other aspect of this exchange I want to highlight is the role of Jesus as a light. Jesus uses a range of metaphors to convey the nature of his ministry to us all – a shepherd, bread, a vine, and in this case, a light. So what does a light do?

We talk about 'shedding light on an issue,' which means that the truth, the reality is revealed about something. I think this is what is happening here. Jesus, in his own way, is revealing that he is indeed the Messiah.

A light both leads and gives comfort in the dark. So there is a sense that Jesus is there for us when the dark times intrude into our lives. Let me tell you a story.

Long ago near a town in Alaska, the local Indians used to light their houses with a fire burning in the centre of the room. Then the goldminers arrived. They used candles. Later the miners brought kerosene lanterns. Eventually, the town put in electricity.

One evening an old Indian, who lived in a distant settlement in the woods and seldom came to town, entered a hardware store in the town to buy some nails and some ammunition for his hunting rifle. As he entered the store, the storekeeper pulled the hanging light cord and light flooded the room. For the first time in his life the old Indian saw an electric light.

Next morning he asked his wife for some money to buy something, not telling her what it would be. He went again to the store. 'Can I but that?' he asked, pointing to the hanging electric light. 'Sure,' said the shopkeeper, thinking the man knew all about electricity. The storekeeper measured off some electric cord, attached a socket, inserted a bulb and gave

the parcel to the Indian. When the old man arrived home he took his electric cord and fastened it to the roof pole of his house.

What a wonderful surprise he planned for his family! As soon as it was dark he walked over to the cord and pulled it, just as he had seen the storekeeper do. What a disappointment! He had everything there that he had seen at the store, but there was no light. He did not know that to have light the cord must be connected to the electricity, the source of light.

If Jesus is to be a light for us; if Jesus is to lead and give comfort, then we have to connect with him. I don't want to state the obvious but if there is no relationship, then there ain't going to be no light. There are various ways we can deal with the dark times in our lives. A very good option is to have a relationship with God and Jesus. Let me speak about them as one person. We need to make him our source of hope, comfort and inspiration. He is the light of the world and we need him to lighten up our lives.

And here's a thought, perhaps we in turn can be something of a light for someone else in these rather murky times.

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