

BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of Dan Duncan

John 8: 12-20 Summer 2022

"The Light Of The World" TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Seth, and it is good to be back with you all, and I'm very grateful for Jeff standing in for me the past two weeks. It is good to be with you, but since I've been gone for a couple of weeks we need a little review.

We are in John chapter 8 and we're going to look at verses 12 through 20. But chapters 7 and 8 are really of the same time period and you will remember in chapter 7 that Jesus goes up from Galilee to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. And that feast, ("the great feast" as it's called in chapter 7, verse 37), is over by the time we get to chapter 8.

In fact, chapter 8 is the next day after it concluded and we're told that Jesus went up to the temple "early in the morning." He went to the Court of the Women where He taught. And then, you'll remember, His instruction was interrupted by a group of Pharisees, 'who brought a woman and placed her in the middle of the group there, and said, 'Master, rabbi, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now the Law condemns her to death. What do you say?' ' (vs3-5).

Of course, they were testing Him, putting Him on the horns of a dilemma; and He handled it marvelously. He said to them, in effect, 'The one of you that is without sin, let him cast the first stone.' (vs7). And we're told, as the crowd begins to melt away, (because they were convicted), Jesus said to the woman, 'Where are they who condemn

you? Does anyone condemn you?' (vs10). "She said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more.' " (vs11).

So that was our last lesson in the Gospel of John. It was early in the morning, and so now we come to our passage. And as I imagine this incident to have taken place, I believe it occurs early in the morning as the sun is rising and the rays of light are filling the temple, we read in verse 12,

Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who comes to Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." ¹³ So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not true." ¹⁴ Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. ¹⁶ But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone *in it*, but I and the Father who sent Me. ¹⁷ Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is true. ¹⁸ I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." ¹⁹ So they were saying to Him, "Where is Your Father?" Jesus answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also." ²⁰ These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

John 8: 12-20

It is a great text of Scripture; may the LORD bless our time together in it.

We want to pray for ourselves that God would enlighten us: That "the Light of the world" would shine into our hearts and give us Light and understanding. Let us bow in prayer,

Father, we do thank You for this time together; what a privilege it is to be with Your people on a Sunday morning—and to say that every Sunday is not a redundancy,

it's a true statement. It's a glorious thing to be with Your people and to be fellowshipping as we do here; through Your Word, considering a text of Scripture and what it means, what it says about You, about the Triune God, what it says about Your grace and Your mercy, and how it applies to us—and so LORD, teach us. May the Spirit of God enlighten our minds and help us to understand the great applications that all of these verses have for us, each individually. So LORD, build us up in the faith and be glorified in this hour.

And Father, we thank You for the great privilege we have of interceding for ourselves but for others as well. And so LORD, we have a number of people that are dealing with physical issues. They're not unimportant and they can affect our spiritual life and the way we walk with You. And yet so often they give an opportunity for Your people to see Your faithfulness: You're always faithful regardless of the circumstances and the outcome, but we pray, LORD, for a blessed outcome for all of these issues.

Bless us now LORD, as we turn our attention to Your Word. We pray that You bless us as we sing our next hymn and use it to prepare our hearts for this wonderful time we have together. We pray that everything that's done in this hour would be to Your honor and glory. Prepare our hearts through this hour for the time we spend in worship and taking the Lord's Supper that follows. So we look to You to bless LORD, in Christ's name. Amen.

(Message) When Martin Luther was 21 he left law school to enter the monastery because he thought there, by earnest effort and acts of piety, he could find peace with God. He later wrote of his experience: "I tortured myself almost to death in order to produce peace with God for my troubled heart and agitated conscience. But surrounded with thick darkness, I found peace nowhere."

Well, the expression 'thick darkness 'may seem like a harsh way to describe a religious order, a religious institution, but that's what man-made religion is. More broadly, it's what the whole world is spiritually—'thick darkness'. And only when we see how grim the human condition is do we see how glorious the Lord's words are in John 8,

verse 12, "I am the Light of the world." He alone drives away the darkness and gives us peace.

This is the second of the Lord's seven "I am" statements in John's Gospel and it was made after an act of mercy—when He forgave a sinful woman and set her free to live a new and holy life. It all happened early in the morning, just as the sun's rays were filling the temple. The sunshine was shining in and ,as she is leaving, she hears Jesus say, "I am the Light of the world."

She must have left full of wonder. And those words must have had a deep impact upon her: they were words of great encouragement; they were words of assurance. He didn't thrust her out into the world to find her own way. She could go out into a dark and threatening world in His Light—in the life and knowledge and guidance that He gave as she followed Him.

His statement revealed that—but also revealed who He was. The One who forgave her was God; God's Son. No one can forgive but God. No one can separate our sins and guilt "as far as the east is from the west", but God. (Ps 103: 12).

And the very words, "I am", indicate that He is the Light because He is God. The words are from Exodus chapter 3, verse 14. We've considered that passage before which recounts the LORD speaking to Moses from the burning bush and revealing Himself as "I AM WHO I AM." He is the eternal, self-sustaining God of all things. And Jesus' use of that expression here connects Him with that event at the burning bush. They are the words of deity. Jesus claimed for Himself deity in this text.

"Light" indicates that, too. Not just the "I am" statement, but this reference to Light. In Psalm 27, verse 1, the psalmist writes, "The LORD is my light and my salvation." Isaiah said that the Christ is appointed to be the "light to the nations", (Is 42:6), and bring 'salvation to the Gentiles'. (Is 49:6). So it's not surprising that John would use this

word, "Light", throughout the Gospel to describe Jesus. In chapter 1, he does that; he calls Him the "Light of men." (vs4).

But this is the first time that the Lord used the word of Himself. And He chose a very appropriate occasion to use it, not only because of the morning sunlight shining in on this forgiven woman, but also because of the Feast of Tabernacles; it had just concluded and the ceremonies were still fresh on the minds of the people.

Those ceremonies were designed to remind the nation of God's faithful provision for the people in the wilderness after the exodus. It was the water ritual, which commemorated the LORD's provision of water when Moses struck the rock. Each morning, priests would draw water from the Pool of Siloam; they would carry it up to the temple in a gold pitcher; they would pour it out beside the altar and they would sing Psalms. And as they concluded the Psalms, they would recite Isaiah chapter 12, verse 3, "Therefore with joy shall we draw water out of the wells of salvation."

It was following that, (in chapter 7, verse 37), that Jesus stood up on the last day of 'the Great Feast' and cried out, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."

A second ceremony occurred at night. As the sun set, four great golden candelabra were lighted in the Court of the Women. They were as tall as the highest walls in the temple. And at the top of each were great bowls filled with gallons of oil. Priests would carry oil to the top and they would light wicks made of old priestly garments. Huge flames would leap from the torches illuminating the temple and giving off their glow over the whole of the city. In fact, the Mishnah speaks of that: It states, "There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect the light."

It was a spectacular ceremony that recalled the great pillar of cloud and fire that accompanied Israel during its wanderings in the desert of Sinai. The pillar guarded the people from the Egyptian army before crossing the Red Sea. It guided them through the wilderness for 40 years and to the promised land. All of that was symbolized in the lighting of the great candelabra in the temple.

John 8 begins the morning after the feast ended and after the great lamps had gone out. It was in the absence of their light that Jesus declared, "I am the Light of the world." (vs12). It was a clear reference to the pillar of cloud and fire, and a way of saying to the people that, 'He is everything signified in that great phenomenon.'

And what it signified, first of all and most obviously, was God's presence among His people. The cloud billowing hundreds of feet into the air into the sky, and filled with fire at night, made it very clear to Israel that God was with them. Fire often signified God's presence, as it did in the burning bush. And so against all that background, when Jesus said, "I am the Light of the world", He was saying, "I am the pillar of cloud and fire. I am Emanuel, I am God with you."

And the fire within the cloud was a proper picture of the Lord's deity within His humanity. The column of cloud was a type of Christ. It foreshadowed Him and it illustrated what He would do for His people. The pillar guided the people and protected them. Desert temperatures can reach as high as 150 degrees in the daytime and go below freezing at night, and the cloud gave shade in the day and it gave warmth at night.

As it blazed through the night, it dispelled the darkness so that that barren, hostile place could be livable. It gave the people safety when they camped so they could move about freely without stumbling in the dark. It drove away unfriendly reptiles. It kept things safe and livable. And at every stage of their forty-year journey, (sometimes at night), the cloud gave the nation guidance. When the cloud moved, they moved; when it stopped, they stopped; and the Lord seems to make that comparison here when He added, "He who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the Light of life." (vs12b).

The Lord made that statement in the present tense, (which is the tense of continuous or continual action), giving the words the sense of, 'be continually following Him, continually believing Him'. The forgiven woman had that: The command, "Go. Sin no more," is in the present tense—and that was how she was to go through life: not

yielding to sin, but walking in His Light—in His forgiveness and life, and in His direction, His revelation.

Christ does not call us to a casual relationship with Him but to devoted discipleship. Like that sinful woman we believers have been forgiven; we've been justified; we have been made right with God; we have been made free and clean. And out of gratitude for His grace, we are to follow Him wherever He leads.

Israel didn't chart it's course through the desert; it followed the pillar of fire and Light. Otherwise it would have wandered off into oblivion. But by following the LORD it entered the promised land. The LORD led Israel well. He led Israel to good places—always to good places.

Now they were not easy places. In the very beginning, when they lacked water, they grumbled; and God provides. But to every difficult place He led them, to the difficult places where their faith was tested, it was tested for their good; to show them how far short they fall and how desperately they need Him. And so they went through years and years of going to difficult places, places they didn't choose for themselves, but places that were always right—and always good.

And we have the same assurance in our life. In verse 12 Jesus says the believer, "...shall not walk in the darkness...", or, "...shall certainly not, in no wise, walk in darkness...", —that's the idea. In fact, Dr. Johnson translated it, "Shall by no means, ever at all, walk in darkness." As we walk in His Light, (and we get out of that Light sometimes), but as we do walk in His Light, we are in the right place—always. He guides us properly and well.

The Lord's completely dependable. That's what He's saying here to us, He is completely dependable. He is our ever faithful guide through a world of darkness. So as we follow Him, we will not stumble; we will not drift off course into error as we follow Him.

Again, He didn't promise an easy life. Israel's journey through the desert was, as I said, very hard; it was demanding. That's why it's essential to follow the Light. It was

essential for them to follow that pillar of cloud and fire; just as it is essential for us to follow our Lord. He will always be with us to give direction in the confusion of this world in which we live and to give comfort and encouragement during trials and disappointments in this life—which will certainly come just as they did to Israel in the wilderness. He is our guide through all of that; He is our guide through darkness.

A number of years ago, my wife and I were on the Atlantic coast and we were at the end of our vacation there. We went out onto a point to see the sunset. It had been a nice day, so we expected a beautiful sunset. But as we were going out, the weather suddenly changed. So instead of seeing this great sunset, we saw fog roll in off the ocean. Visibility was limited, so there was little to see but waves crashing on the rocky coastline.

I stood looking into this mist, really, taken by the eerie atmosphere of it all when something caught my eye. Out of the corner of my eye I saw a flash. I turned and off to the right was a beacon in the lighthouse there on the shore. It had begun to shine at that very moment and it shone through that thick, clouded air signaling ships and guiding them away from danger.

The first thought that came to me is, "That's the LORD. He's our beacon." He is our Light, guiding us through the fog, away from the rocks, away from the danger. Only He's not stationary; He's with us wherever we go. He's our living guide. We, (He says), "will have the Light of life." (vs12c).

It's not like the original disciples did with His physical presence. We might read about them in the Gospels, and say, 'Hey, wouldn't that be wonderful if the Lord were right with me and I could ask Him questions, and He could give me His wisdom, and we could have this fellowship?' That would be wonderful, I would agree. But the reality is that we have His presence and guidance in a far better way with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

That is an inner presence, we might even speak of as a subjective experience; but it is an objective reality. The Holy Spirit is as real as Christ. The Holy Spirit literally dwells

within every believer to convey the life of Christ to us; to give us the wisdom of Christ and give us the guidance of the Lord. It's a reality; He literally dwells within us. And that's a far greater blessing than a pillar of light in the desert. And even, as I said, a greater blessing than having the Lord Jesus physically with us as those disciples did in the days of the Gospels.

We have the third person of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, actually living within us, to teach us, to empower us, and to direct us through the difficulties and the challenges that we face in this world.

Galatians chapter 5, (verse 25), says that we "walk by the Spirit." Through the Scriptures the Spirit teaches us God's principles of conduct and enables us to form correct judgment at any given moment. He's really within us, counseling us, and encouraging us. So, we are well equipped for this world. And as we live in obedience we become Lights to the world with the message of forgiveness, the message of the Lord—the one that He gave to that sinful woman.

What a great privilege is given to us: The Light we come to, and have, is the "Light of life." (vs12). That's how He describes it at the end of the verse, meaning, 'It is life giving.' It's the Gospel: It's the promise of forgiveness for all who come to Christ.

It's similar in thought to Psalm 36, verse 9, "For with You is the fountain of life; In Your light we see light." The Lord is the source of life, eternal life, of light, and of knowledge and understanding. And just as light dispels darkness, scatters it, so too the Light of Christ delivers people from the prison of spiritual darkness—from its error, enslavement, and corruption, to freedom and life.

The child of God knows the Creator of the universe, knows the Redeemer of the world. We know God's revelation, His Word—and believe it! That's a miracle! And we believe it by God's grace. So, in believing it, in believing the Word of God, and believing the revelation that's given to us in Scripture, we understand reality. We understand the way the world really is, and the way the world really works, and how we are to live in it, what we are to do.

Well, that's an amazing blessing; it sets us apart. What greater blessing is there than that? To have eternal life now, (the certain hope of heaven and the resurrection to come), and the knowledge to live well, to live rightly in this present, confused age—this age of thick darkness. But that is only found in Christ, who is the Light of the world, the Son of God. There is no other life giving Light than He.

But John wrote back in chapter 3, verse 19 that, "...men love the darkness rather than the Light..." —so they don't come out of the darkness. They stay in the realm of error and sin. It is willful ignorance and it is active hostility toward God. Apart from the grace of God, that describes every man, woman, and child in this world; they are in willful ignorance and hostility toward God. And once again, it's on display here in the response of the Pharisees in verse 13. They heard the Lord's claim to be "the Light" and they challenged it: "You are testifying about yourself;" they said, "Your testimony is not true." And what they meant was, 'His testimony was not legally valid. It would not stand up in a court of law.'

According to Jewish Law, a matter could only be established on the basis of two or more witnesses. That's Deuteronomy 19, verse 15. It's a wise judicial policy; two or more witnesses. And Jesus, they said, didn't have supporting witnesses, so they refused to believe Him. They made no attempt to deal with His claim. They didn't even deny it explicitly. They simply dismissed it on a legal technicality because they had already made up their minds about Him, (and they had rejected Him).

But Jesus knew the Law: In verse 17 He acknowledged the Law's standard of two witnesses but then points out that He has the witnesses. Verse 18, "I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me." And He is a valid witness to Himself because of who He is; He's the Son of God; He's the Light of the world.

He drew attention to that in verse 14, when He stated that He knew His origin and His destiny; "My testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going..." He came from the Father where He existed with Him from all eternity. That, we

might say, is His origin. He had no origin, really, in the sense that He is eternal—eternally generated from the Father. And He would return to His Father by way of the cross, the resurrection, and the ascension to heaven. That was His destiny.

Well what better witness could there be to the truth than He—the Son of God. He is the Light. And Light is its own best witness; it cannot avoid giving perfect evidence of itself. The sun in the sky is self-authenticating. It is self-evident. And the Son of God, by His self-revelation; the purity of His life, the wisdom of His teaching, the power of His miracles, is self-authenticating. He was His own best witness.

But the Pharisees believed none of that. They wanted none of that, (and that maybe is the right way to put it). They believed none of it because they wanted none of it. And so they didn't know who He was. Faith in God, faith in His Word, His revelation is the step to knowledge. You want to know?... You must believe.

Their problem was; they judged according to the flesh, they judged according to appearances—this is what is stated in verse 15. They saw Jesus, they saw His flesh, they saw His physical form, and they judged Him to be only a man like they themselves were. They never considered that He might be what John has said that He is at the beginning of this Gospel, 'the Word made flesh', that He was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophesy, "Immanuel", 'God with us', (Is 7:14), for they didn't consider His third witness, the prophets.

They saw His common form and despised Him—not realizing that was fulfillment of prophesy: "Who has believed our message?" Isaiah asks. That's how he begins the great 53rd chapter of his book, "Who's believed our report?", (ibid. KJV). 'I live in a day of unbelief', he's saying. And that was a prophesy of the day that Christ would come, a day of unbelief—and the Pharisees were fulfilling that prophesy because they judged according to the flesh, by a faulty human standard—with fallen, darkened minds. And they came to a false conclusion that He was 'just flesh', that He was 'just a man.'

In all of this, the Pharisees were really just going over old ground. They had this discussion with Jesus earlier on a previous visit to Jerusalem that's recorded back in

chapter 5, verse 31. There He said to them, "If I *alone* testify about Myself, My testimony is not true." He's reflecting there on the Law and the principles of justice in Israel. He recognized the requirements of the Law. —He knew that.

And here they've thrown that back at Him, "You testify about Yourself; Your testimony is not true.", (vs13), almost quoting Him there. But on that previous occasion, the Lord answered that He was not alone in His testimony about Himself: There was John the Baptist, there were His miracles, there were the Scriptures that prophesied of Him. And there was His Father in heaven; "...the Father who sent Me" He said, "has testified of Me." (Jn 5:37).

And here, in chapter 8, He again answered them with that reply; His Father was His witness. Verse 18, "The Father who sent me testifies about Me." And His testimony carries absolute authority. If the Father testifies about Him, it's all the testimony that's needed. God has spoken. There's no higher authority to which to appeal.

But they were unconvinced and said, "Where is Your Father?" (vs19). The Lord answered, "You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would Know My Father also." (vs19b).

A person can know God the Father only by knowing God the Son. We reject God the Son, we'll never know God the Father, we'll never know God. This kind of exchange took place later. We'll see it in chapter 14 when His disciple Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father." (vs8). Jesus answered, "Have I been so long with you, and you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father." (vs9). He is the full revelation of God. He's the second person of the Trinity. So to know God, a person must first know Christ. He's the Light and He is self-authenticating. With Christ there, in front of these men, and like the sun at high noon, shining on them in all of its brightness, He was shining, and they didn't see the Light.

The woman caught in adultery did. She went away knowing that God had been revealed to her in her forgiveness and the kindness that Christ showed to her. The message here is, 'Know Christ, and you will know God. He is the Light of the world.'

In His Light we see Light. By coming to Him in faith, by following Him, we live in His revelation; and we have His understanding and we have His Light—everything then falls into place.

The world seeks knowledge everywhere it seems—everywhere but in the right place. The theoretical physicist, Lawrence Krauss, wrote an article about exploring Mars and studying its earthquakes. (This is in an article in the Wall Street Journal about a year ago.) I read it. I thought it was interesting. At the end he wrote, "As we learn more about Mars, we also learn more about our own origins. This can't help but change how we view our position and purpose in the cosmos."

Well, I'm for studying Mars and the stars. It's God's creation. It's worth our investigation. But I have a better source for "understanding our position and purpose in the cosmos" than the red planet—it's Christ!

Through Him we understand who God is and who we are. We understand where we came from and where we're going. And we have life everlasting because Christ is the "Light of life." Turn away from Him and there's only darkness; uncertainty about this present life, about the future, and confusion. People get lost in the dark and that's the world—lost in deep darkness, lost in thick darkness.

Christ came, as John wrote at the beginning of chapter 1, verse 5, 'Shining in the darkness', convicting the world of its sin and unbelief—but also in the midst of that, calling people to Himself. And all who hear were to come out of the darkness and into the Light. That's what He did with this woman caught in adultery and the grace He showed to her, 'Called her out of the darkness into the light.'

The passage ends with verse 20. "These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come."

The treasury was the Court of the Women, where both men and women could gather together and could be taught together; so that may have been a very large group listening to Him.

He was also near the hall of the Sanhedrin, where that great court met. And yet we're told no one arrested Him. They could have taken Him right to court; He was right there. But they did not arrest Him—not because they didn't have the will to do that but because it was not God's will that they do that. He was in control. The Father, the Son—in complete control; and it was 'not yet His hour,' His time to go to the cross; His time to return to the Father. Until then, His enemies were powerless and they would have to live in His Light. They would chafe in that but they could not stop that from happening. They could not change things; 'It was not His hour.'

And even when they were allowed to seize Him, when His hour did come, they were only able to put out the Light for a brief moment. The crucifixion was followed by the resurrection. —And when He rose from the dead He began to spread His Light throughout the world and shine into the darkest corners to give forgiveness to sinners and life to the dead.

What a tragedy to come near to the Savior, near to the Light, as these men in the temple did and never receive the Light of life. That's been the tragedy of many. Many of the world's best and brightest never come to the Light. They've lived in darkness.

Years ago I had a brief stay in Frankfurt, Germany. And so I filled some of the day with a visit to Goethe House, the house where Johann Wolfgang von Goethe was born. He was perhaps, and perhaps still is, Germany's most famous writer and a person who had a huge influence on Europe in his day. When Napoleon met him he said, "At last a man."

He was a great man. He was a man with a powerful intellect and knowledge. But as I left the home of his birth, I thought of his death, and his final words, "mehr Licht", "More light." He was a genius who lived in darkness.

That other German, Luther, the monk who was in deep darkness, in "thick darkness" as he called it, got 'more light', the "Light of life"—but not by monkish practices that almost killed him, but by coming to the Savior, the Light of the world. He

came to realize that the righteousness a sinner needs for peace with God is not the righteousness we produce, for we can't produce it, ("Our righteousnesses are as filthy rags", Isaiah 64:6 said). It's not the active righteousness that a person attempts to produce that leads to peace but a passive righteousness—the gift of righteousness, the righteousness of Christ.

We can't earn that. We can only receive it by believing in Christ, recognizing that He is the "I Am", God's Son, who came to die for sinners so that all who trust in Him are forgiven, and accepted by God.

If you've not believed in Him, come to Him, 'Come now!' Don't be like those Pharisees who argued with Him and rejected Him—who loved darkness rather than the Light. May God help you to yield, to quit the fight and come to the Light and be saved. That's the invitation that's given to the sinner. Come to Christ.

Let us pray in closing,

LORD, it is true, nothing can compare with Your Son who triumphed over death, who was raised by Your power, and is seated at Your right hand—and He's coming again someday. We've been able this morning to consider His greatness, His self-description as "the Light of the world", and how we've just touched on the greatness of that expression and all that it means; that Light and life go together, truth and Light go together. It's all there in Him.

LORD, may we take our faith more seriously. May we understand more carefully, and live more carefully in the Light of who we are as believers in Christ and as His disciples. I know He's going to put everything together some day, put it all in order, for He's coming back to do that; and in the meantime it's for us to follow Him, to live in His Light, live in Your Light, live in the Light of the Triune God. So LORD, help us to understand how great and glorious You are. We can never understand that fully. We'll spend all

eternity learning about that. But help us to grow in that and to live lives that bring honor to You.

Now the LORD bless you and keep you. The LORD make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The LORD lift up His countenance on you and give you peace. In Christ's name. Amen.

(End of Audio)