

2 Series of Jesus / AM texts in John's Gospel

SCRIPTURE: John 8:12- 59

Singing: 15:1-3 – (after reading of Law 1:2, 3)– 293:1-3 – 114:1, 5, 6, 10 -- 365:1-4

Dear congregation,

The city of Jerusalem is again the scene of many people.

This time it is the celebration of the yearly Feast of Tabernacles. (John 7:2; 37)

This feast was a celebration in memory of God's care for Israel during the wilderness journey.

The children always loved this feast because their families would camp outdoors in little huts.

Over many years, the Jews had added a few extras that were not originally part of the feast.

In old Jewish history books, you can read that on the evening of the last day of the feast,

the whole temple was lit up with four huge lamps that were placed in the courtyard.

The purpose of these lights was to remember how God gave the pillar of light in the dark nights in the desert.

Those who truly feared the Lord would think back with thankfulness.

That pillar of fire was the symbol of Jehovah's presence with them.

They thought on how the covenant God of Israel led their fathers on their journey at night with the pillar of light.

When Israel set up camp, this bright burning shining light stayed right above the Tabernacle, serving as comfort and security in the darkness.

Just like a night-light in our dark bedrooms gives us a feeling of comfort.

No other nation in the world was ever given such special gifts as the Jewish nation.

None had a god like their God.

No wonder Moses reminded them in Deuteronomy 4:7: *"What nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon Him for?"*

He was the God which cared and spared.

The God Who guided them through the wilderness with all its dangers.

Do you realize that we also, as part of the visible church, are given these same privileges?

The Word of God is that pillar of light for us, to guide us in the darkness of this sinful and suffering world.

God's Word is also the real security.

On this last evening, the people would feast late.

Sadly, many would turn the last feast day into an ungodly party.

The adultery case mentioned in this chapter was sadly not uncommon on this night!

When finally everyone went to their own house, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives as we read in verse 1. He was not lonely there but desired to be alone in the cathedral of nature, alone with His Father in prayer.

Did He pray over the sermon He preached that day?

For with all His love and sincerity, He had stood up and cried,

"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink."

But instead of coming to Him, they again started to argue about Him and His sermon.

The leaders even sent the temple police to arrest Him.

Oh, how He longed that their eyes would be opened to see Him in His glory!

He knew that the next day they would all go home again.

The feast was over.

Then all those people would face the darkness of their lives without God and without hope.

He knew about their broken homes and their unhappy, dissatisfied lives.

He knew the wounded hearts that many lived with because of betrayal and abuse.

He knew the sorrows and the sicknesses that took their loved ones.

He knew the injustice and the oppression of the poor by the rich.

He knew the moral darkness of their unjust world.

He knew their pining under the Roman yoke.

But He also knew the hopelessness in the teaching that "salvation is by being good and doing good."

Therefore, the next day, Jesus came back early in the morning to teach in the temple (verse 2).

He wanted to teach them once more before they headed back to their homes.

Immediately, they crowd around Him.

Once more He will tell them Who He really is.

He wants them to know that He is not just the son of Mary.

He is the Son of God sent by God the Father!

They need to know that He Himself is God!

He wants them to know that He is Jehovah, the LORD God!

As we see shortly, four times in this chapter, Jesus declares "I AM."

Yet, the more He shines the light of the truth,

the more the darkness of fallen hearts is revealed.

If you read carefully through John 8, you can feel the hostility and fury against Jesus leaping off the page.

Jesus' first declaration as "I AM" is in verse 12: *"I AM the light of the world."*

This immediately stirs a reaction in the leaders.

They accuse Him in verse 13 of testifying of Himself and that such a testimony is not valid.

Calmly He answered them.

Not only **do I** testify about Myself, but **My Father** also bears witness of Me.

Immediately they shoot back a barbed arrow in a loaded question: *“Where is **thy father?**”*

They are all aware of the rumours about His birth.

They know His mother is Mary. But who actually is His father?

After telling them, *“I am from above ... I am not of this world”* He makes the second announcement about Who He is in verse 24:

“... for if ye believe not that I AM he, ye shall die in your sins.”

Notice that in King James Version the word ‘he’ is added!

In verse 25, they push back again on this claim about Himself: *“Who art Thou?”*

They simply cannot accept His assertion that He is Jehovah.

Patience, Jesus repeats it again. *“Even the same that I said unto you from the beginning.”*

For the third time, He declares this truth in verse 28:

*“When ye have lifted up the Son of man, then shall ye know that **I AM ...**”*

Gladly John added in verse 30 that His Word was not without fruit altogether.

Many among them believed on Him.

As Jesus encouraged His new disciples, the bystanders react (verse 31).

And their reactions become fiercer than what we have witnessed so far.

They begin to hurl words of slander, after Jesus exposes their vileness and intention to kill Him (verse 40).

“But now ye seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I have heard of God: this did not Abraham.”

Instantly they shoot back in verse 41 with an open accusation, *“**We** be not born of fornication; we have one Father, even God.”*

Do you hear the implied slander: *All you are is an illegitimate child! You have a bad history! We are not of that stock!*”

Next, they turn racist and revert to calling Him names: *“Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil”* (verse 48).

Finally, it grows so hostile and ugly that they take up stones to kill the Preacher (verse 59).

What was the final straw that made them pick up stones to stone Him?

It is His fourth claim that **He is Jehovah, the I AM!**

For in verse 58 He says, *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, **I AM!**”*

John never forgot this tense moment.

Within his mind he still sees His Master quietly leaving the temple to hide Himself.

Undoubtedly the eyes of the Lord were teared up.

The ugly truth of the dreadful fall of mankind faced Him again.

They **DID really** love darkness rather than light as He preached Himself in John 3.

“And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”

After this overview of the sad chapter, let us give our attention to verse 12.

“Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.”

Dear congregation, behold Jesus, the *Light of the World*

There are two main thoughts to consider.

- I. It is a *hope-giving* revelation of Himself in a dark world
- II. It is a *wide-open* invitation to come to Him out of our darkness

First, let us consider the *hope-giving revelation* in this sermon He preached about Himself.

It was a dark day in which Jesus spoke these words.

The previous night was all artificial light.

That is all that the world and formal religious festivals can give us.

Now that the feast days were over, Jesus knew that they faced the emptiness of life again.

The national highlight of this feast was just a short distraction from the dark circumstances!

They had come to the feast with great expectation and excitement.

But all it proved to be but a temporary distraction. All it provided was a little zap in their flat lives.

Jesus knew it did not chase away the dull ache of their empty lives.

The Lord knew that the burdens of guilt were not less but actually more!

He saw the niggling voice of their consciences, as His question in verse 7 brought to light!

He knew that the gaping breach between them and their Creator had not been removed.

He saw that there was no peace in their hearts.

All those days proved to be but a moment of bright fireworks in a dark sky!

After they burned out, it was dark again.

Are you also discovering that in all the special days on church calendar?

Are all the religious activities failing to bring *peace in the heart and peace with God*?

Is walking faithfully according to good traditions yet leaving you in darkness?

Do you go home from a church service *filled? Stirred? Nourished? Lifted up? Renewed? Hopeful?*

Or do you go back to face your darkness?

Perhaps your life is also full of heavy burdens.

Maybe your heart, full of sinful appetite and passions you cannot control or subdue, is a burden you do not know what to do with.

Or worse, you feel yourself without God and without Christ—and therefore you are without hope?

Are you discovering what the ancient prophet asked?

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread?

And your labour for that which satisfieth not?”

None knew this better than Jesus Himself; therefore, He preached about Himself:

“I am the light of the world:

*he that followeth **ME**, he that trusts **ME**, he or she that looks to **ME** ...*

shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.”

There was a second reason that Jesus spoke these words.

Just before His sermon, He had faced a group of hypocritical scribes and Pharisees.

They had dragged a guilty woman before Him.

Without any regard for her dignity, they humiliated her in their public exposure of her sin.

Of course, sin is sin, and Jesus never diminished the sinfulness of sin.

In the end, He condemned her sin, but He did not do that without conveying a tender love for her.

But these religious leaders were not really concerned about either her sin or her salvation.

They were only concerned about trapping Jesus.

Can you see how the whole scene was darkness?

It was the darkness of hypocrisy, lovelessness, selfishness, and impurity.

Notice how they all crept away, all of them convicted of their own sins of adultery, but yet not humbled!

The only light in this sordid scene was the Lord Jesus.

Though He could have stoned her to death, He did not.

In His first coming to this earth, He came not to condemn, but to save sinners.

He preached the Gospel to her also when He lifted up His voice and spoke again,

I am Jehovah – I am the light of the world –

if any of you follow Me, then, and only then will you be delivered from this dreadful darkness –

if you follow Me – trust Me and embrace My teaching,

you shall have, that is, you shall enjoy the light of life.

Gently, clearly, lovingly, joyfully, consciously, He pointed to Himself: *in Me is hope and the source of joy!*

He did not limit Himself to Israel or church people only.

No, He said, “I am the light of the WORLD.”

Everyone in this world needs ME and I am the only hope **for everyone** in this dark world.

But why would Jesus compare Himself to *Light*?

First, because nothing is more important for our world than light.

No plant life and not even human life would thrive without light.

Light is healing; it gives energy; it helps things grow; and it is cheering to the spirit.

A world in natural darkness cannot even exist.

Therefore, the first act of the Creator was to create light.

By pointing to Himself as ***the light of the world***,

Jesus points out that He is the **first and only hope** for fallen mankind's misery.

He is the only One that can save us from sin.

He is the Only One that changes our hearts!

Not only that, but He is also the Only One that can breach the gap or remove the separation between God and us.

Friends, do you realize that nothing is worse than to live separate from God?

Imagine being separated from your family and friends and being in bondage to a cruel master!

Well, you do not need to imagine this.

It is the reality of the life we live since Adam's fall.

Jesus said in verse 34, "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin.*"

Literally this means we are the slaves of sin. We are in bondage to our vain hearts.

We are imprisoned by our sinful desires. We are captives to the lust of our flesh and pride of life.

Elsewhere the Spirit calls this condition as being "*dead in trespasses and sins.*"

In other words, we cannot change ourselves or our condition of being dead.

But what can shatter and chase away darkness?

Light!

You know that when you flick on your torch (or flashlight) or the switch on the wall:

instantly the grip of darkness is broken and gone.

That is true also with the Lord Jesus. He as the Light of the world, has the power to shatter the darkness and the hopelessness of our life without God.

Hear Him, I am the Light of the world, which means,

In Me is your hope of escaping the grip and despair of the darkness of sin.

In Me is your hope of reconciliation between your holy and just God and you as guilty and hell-worthy sinner!

In Me is your hope. For I came not to judge you for your sins—but to save you from sin!

How beautifully this was illustrated in the previous verse!

Jesus did not stone the woman, though He had every right to do so. She *was* guilty of sin.

But instead, He ministered to her the Gospel as He preached, "*I am the light of the world.*"

You cannot stand before your Judge and be acquitted!

You are guilty of breaking every commandment in thoughts, words, and deeds.

How often is your attitude like the haughty Jews as you judge others in their sins!

How often are you ready to judge others while you excuse ourselves.

This pride, arrogance lives in all of us. But it is so wrong and so misplaced.

Are you facing the ugly darkness of your lust, your covetousness, your discontent, your unbelief, your indifference, or your coldness?

Do you ask, *Oh, how can I ever be delivered from this mindset?*

How can I ever be saved from this depravity and bondage to my sins?

How can I ever be reconciled with God if the only thing I can spin is sin?

Jesus says to you: *I am the Light of the Word: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.*

You know what Jesus is saying as He points to Himself?

He is proclaiming, *In Me is the obedience that you do not have!*

In Me is the righteousness you lack.

In Me is the ransom you owe God.

In Me are all the resources to redeem you.

The sacrifice of My life for sinners is sufficient to pay all your debts.

My righteousness is able to cover your lack of righteousness in sight of God.

My merits are sufficient even if all the world makes an application for it.

Believe Me, I came into this world to save sinners like you.

Though I could cast you forever away in darkness, I am here to shatter this despairing darkness.

In Me is **all** your hope and your **only** hope.

Let us sing with Psalter 114:1, 5, 6, 10

Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, "I am the light of the world:

He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Let us consider in the second place how Jesus in these words gives us all a wide-open invitation to leave our darkness.

Think of it: He invites you to leave your darkness.

If we will not follow Jesus Christ in faith, we *are in darkness!*

There is plenty of evidence of this darkness in this chapter, as we saw earlier.

Remember how angry and vicious the people became as they listened to Jesus.

That are the evidences of the darkness.

That darkness dwells in all of us.

In our unregenerate state, our hearts are only darkness.

This darkness reveals itself more or less, depending on God's restraining grace.

How is this 'darkness of sin' evident?

It is evident in how we use our mouth: gossip, slander, bad-mouthing, put-downs!

It is evident in our dominating feature of our thought world: covetousness!

In verses 7-9 Jesus exposed the darkness of adultery that all those hypocritical Pharisees were involved in.

He exposed the darkness of a secret life.

Are there here among us whose private lives are dominated by the darkness of secret addictions?

Pornography is destroying both men and women.

This dark world of digital adultery and sex slavery is not just outside the church community.

It is the darkness of the devil's domain and bondage.

Be awakened to the fact that knowing about Jesus, and sitting in church, singing Psalms, does not mean you are not in darkness.

It is time to be alarmed for **if** you are not converted ...

if you are not a follower of Lord Jesus ...

then the darkness of the wrath of God is abiding on you.

Do not dismiss this truth.

The axe of God's judgment is laying at the root your tree.

Oh, where would you be today, if **today** God's summon is about you: *Cut him or her down!*

Linger not in the darkness of your lost life.

Instead, listen to what the Lord Jesus is saying to us,

He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness but shall have the light of life.

To follow Him is to become His disciple.

It is to listen and learn from Him.

To follow is to receive His teaching about salvation from the darkness of sin and condemnation.

To follow is to trust Him as the Substitute for sinners; as the Mediator between God and us.

Now, it is important to emphasize that we *should* only follow someone we trust fully.

No, we cannot trust everyone who makes big promises, but no such qualms we need to have with Jesus.

He is safe to trust and to follow.

He has proven Himself trustworthy to His Word and character.

Scan the pages of the Gospel biographies: is there any doubt that He is trustworthy?

Is there any One more Lovely?

He is fairer than all the children of men!

Besides, each miracle of Jesus proves Who HE is: Jehovah! The LORD GOD Himself!

For who only can open blind eyes, heal lepers, feed thousands out of a few loaves and fish, and raise the dead?

All His miracles reveal to us His credentials!

I am able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Me!

Maybe you ask, "But how is He able to bring me out of the darkness of my guilt and sinfulness?"

How can my sins be forgiven? How can I face the holy and just God against Whom I sinned?

And besides, how can my heart be changed?

There is so much darkness in me, it scares me.

The thoughts that come up, the doubts I battle, the impurity I discover, the covetousness I meet, the hypocrisy I see.

... oh, how can this dark world within be changed?

Jesus has the answer; no, Jesus *is* the answer.

To deal with darkness of guilt, He left the light of heaven to enter the darkness of hell.

He Who was with God and is God came into the darkness of our fallen world.

He was made flesh and dwelled among us. He was made in the likeness of our sinful flesh.

In other words, He bore the darkness of our sinful flesh without being sinful Himself.

Daily He faced the dark assaults of sin and Satan, but He stayed upright and pure.

Daily He tasted the bitterness of the fruit of our sins as He was afflicted with all our afflictions, but He bore it with total submission.

Finally, He obeyed His Father in taking the cup of being totally forsaken in the darkness of hell.

He laid down His life on the cross! He paid the terrible wages of sin, which is death!

But that is not where His story ends: He arose on Easter day!

The light of life returned in Him and it proved all His words ever spoken as true!

Now, the resurrected Son of Man and the omnipotent Son of God, invites *you to follow Him*.

He invites us to place our trust in Him and to let Him take care of our debts before God.

He that follows or He that trusts Me, shall not walk in darkness.

If you follow or trust Me at the satisfaction of all what God demands from you, you shall have the *light of life*.

Today already you experience the *light of life* namely the sweet joy of forgiveness.

For He is ready to pardon you sinners.

If you follow Him, He promises to bring you out of the darkness of this fallen world.

He will bring you into a new world wherein is no darkness and where darkness shall never enter.

If you follow or trust Him, He will turn your darkness into the glorious light of life eternal.

Hear Him, congregation, "If any man followeth Me, then

I will remove the dark cloud of God's judgment upon your sin.

I will wash away all the guilty stains from Adam's original and your own personal sins forever."

For Christ will not only deal with the guilt of our sins and the demands of God for obedience.

No, all that follow Him, that look to Him and trust Him, will experience the blessing of His Spirit.

The darkness of our sinfulness cannot be washed away. It needs to be crucified with Him.

This is the work of sanctification which Christ also will accomplish if we follow Him fully.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:31 that Christ Jesus is made of God unto us, not only righteousness, but also sanctification.

Our fruit of holiness is found from Him as Hosea said in Hosea 14:8, *"From Me is thy fruit found."*

As we turn daily with the unclean fountain of our hearts to Him, we will experience His saving power as much as the woman did who touched the hem of His garment.

Congregation, picture Him standing among us. Do you hear Him calling you?

Think upon this gentle and genuine Jesus!

He is Jehovah the Redeemer.

HE means what He says!

HE fulfills what He promises!

Oh, listen to His promise – a promise not linked to your goodness, but based on His goodness!

"He that followeth Me – He that comes unto Me and trusts Me – he shall have the light of life!"

The 'light of life' is obviously something sweet, joyful, beautiful, and attractive.

Especially in the darkness of this cursed world where all leads to death.

What exactly did Jesus have in mind with this 'light of life'?

First of all, it means to be *freed from the bondage and burden of sin.*

Nothing is so desolate than to be a slave: *always serving without ever becoming free!*

It is even worse when we are slaving to serve a selfish tyrant. And Satan is such!

The worst of this condition is that unless there comes outside help, our case is hopeless.

Are you sitting here burdened with your past sins?

Is your conscience tormenting you as you cannot soothe it anymore?

Are you struggling like Psalm 40:12, *"For innumerable evils have compassed (besieged) me about: mine iniquities have taken hold of me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me?"*

Is it your plea, *"Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me."*

This plea is answered by Jesus.

Hear Him speak to you, "I am the light of the world: come – follow Me – embrace my teaching: I AM the LORD and I came to be the Deliverer.

If you would trust Me, I promise you the light of life.

I will be your righteousness in the sight of God the Judge!

I will cover your lack and make you holy, unblameable and unreprouvable in My Father's sight.

I will break your bondage to addictions and deliver you from the powers of darkness.

I will cleanse you from all unrighteousness and finally present you without spot and wrinkle, without fault, with exceeding joy, before the Father of heaven and earth.

I AM means I am the God of grace, mercy, and lovingkindness speaking to you.

I am Jesus, the Son of God, Who has come in the darkness of this fallen world to seek sinners.

My Father sent Me on this mission of redeeming sinners.

I am the Light of hope, the light of a new beginning, the light of redemption.

Through Me it is possible to escape the darkness and return to the light.

Through Me it is possible that the dark reality of your mounting guilt can be taken away before God.

Through Me it is possible that your dark heart be changed and renewed.

My friends, what will this be, to live in the presence of God, delivered from all the darkness of sin!

How well this is expressed in the words of Psalter 422:5:

*How blessed, Lord, are they who know the joyful sound,
Who, when they hear Thy voice, in happiness abound!
With steadfast step they walk, their countenances beaming
With brightness of the light that from Thy face is streaming.
Exalted by Thy might from depths of desolation,
They praise forever Thy Name, Thy justice and salvation.*

I pray that the sad ending of Jesus' sermon then be not the same one today.

The Lord's sermon was met with much hostility. Why? What did He say wrong?

He did not say anything wrong. But what He said was His light exposing the darkness.

Jesus' teaching revealed the revolting sinfulness of proud, arrogant, and resistant hearts to the Gospel of grace.

His teaching that their family ties to Abraham could not save them was offensive.

His exposure of their Satanic anger and vice behind the cover of religion was offensive.

His claim that they were in bondage felt like a barbed arrow.

His declaration that they would die in their sins for not believing in Him as the I AM was a crushing blow.

Before we part, my friends, you also have heard His preaching.

We have been reminded that Jesus is the I AM.

He has plainly told us that we are lost! And guilty! And helpless!

So clear He told us, *“I am here – I have come – to deliver you.”*

He has invited but also pleaded, *“Will you follow Me?”*

Is your question, *“What must I do? What is He expecting of me? How am I to respond then?”*

Oh, how welcome are such questions!

The answer was already given but let us hear it again: *Follow Me!*

Jesus invites us to follow or trust His teaching about salvation from sin through Him.

No, salvation is not hard, for it is all done by Him.

What is hard, yes, even impossible, without the power of God’s Spirit, is to agree to be saved by Him!

That is where the chief difficulty is!

For salvation is to part with all your own works and merits and sink yourself in the open arms of Christ.

Salvation is to look away from every self-effort to reconcile with God and instead to trust in Jesus Christ.

Salvation is following the plain light or the clear teaching of Jesus Christ, as penned by Joseph Hart,

Come, ye sinners, poor and needy, weak, and wounded, sick, and sore.

Jesus stands ready to save you, full of pity, love, and power.

HE is able, He is willing, doubt no more.

Now, ye needy, come and welcome, God’s free bounty glorify.

True belief and true repentance, every grace that brings you nigh.

Without money, come to Jesus Christ and buy.

Let not conscience make you linger, nor of fitness fondly dream;

All the fitness He requires, is to feel your need of Him.

This He gives you. ‘Tis the Spirit’s glimmering beam.

Come, ye weary, heavy-laden, bruised and mangled by the fall.

If you tarry till you’re better, you will never come at all.

Not the righteous, but sinners Jesus came to call.

Amen.