

Pastor Daryl Diddle

Sermon Series: *The Color of Redemption*, No. 4

Yellow

April 3, 2022

John 8:12 (NIV)

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

John, Chapter 8, verse 12: that's where we are this morning. John 8, verse 12. Only one verse, but what a verse it is! Wars have been started over less than what Jesus says here in this one verse.

"I am the light of the world." That's Jesus' statement – seven words, only six in Greek.

"I am the light of the world."

That's quite a thing to say, isn't it? What a thing to claim! No wonder the Pharisees challenged Him: this two-bit, unschooled, Nazarene carpenter. How dare he make such an enormous, breathtaking declaration!

"I am the light of the world."

You can consider all the different major faiths and philosophies of our globe, but you'll find nothing else like this.

Buddha said that he, himself, is nothing but a rediscoverer of old, forgotten paths.

Confucius said that he, himself, could be called nothing more than a man of endless craving, who never tires of teaching.

Even Mohammed said three times of himself, "unless God cast the cloak of His mercy over me, there is no hope for me at all."

Yet Jesus claimed to be nothing less than the light of the world – which is fitting on so many levels.

I mentioned a couple weeks ago that Jesus loved to use things around Him as living illustrations of His words.

When He was in the Galilean countryside surrounded by sheep pens and shepherds, He could easily point to those and say things like, **"You see, I am the gate for the sheep,"** and, **"I am the Good Shepherd."**

Here, Jesus was in Jerusalem. Verse 20 tells us He was in the Temple Court of the Women at the time of the Feast of Tabernacles or Booths.

At this festival and in this particular court, at dusk, the priests would light four huge lamps – first century versions of big streetlights – so tall you had to use ladders to reach the top. On the tops of the stands were huge golden bowls filled with oil. They were lit ablaze with wicks which scholars say were the worn out underwear of the priests.

These lamps lit the whole Temple courtyard – and more.

Since this took place on the Temple mount, the highest point in the city, it's said that the light spilled all over Jerusalem – they would probably get hit with light pollution claims today, but back then it was appreciated

because it allowed the worship and celebrating to go on well into the night.

It was in this place during the festival events that Jesus, no doubt looking at those great lamps and maybe even standing under one of them, declared to the crowd, **"I am the light of the world."**

And those words, in the ears of a Jew, would immediately bring to mind the many things that light had come to mean to them through the ages.

Light was a symbol of nothing less than the divine presence – the presence of God Himself, just as God led His people out of Egypt and through the desert by the pillar of fire.

So light was a symbol of deliverance.

Light was also a symbol of salvation, as the Psalmist declares, **"The Lord is my light and my salvation."**¹

Light was a symbol of God's word – a lamp to the feet and a light to the path ahead.²

And, light was a symbol of Israel herself: the nation God set apart and called to be a light to the nations, revealing the one true God to the world around her.

All these images and symbols, you see, would rush to the minds and hearts of those who heard someone claim to be **"the light of the world."** To those who heard, it would mean that this person was claiming to be one – the one – who could save them, lead them, deliver them, teach them and inform them.

But far beyond all that, it would mean that this person was claiming to be, in fact, Immanuel: God with them.

So, it's no wonder the Pharisees challenged Jesus. They all realized what He was saying about Himself, because they knew what light meant.

They knew – every one of them knew – that the color of redemption was yellow: the color of flame, the color of fire, the color of light. And I don't mean the sterile, harsh, white LED things, or even worse, the pale, sickly, bluish-green that come from some old fluorescents.

No, you see, to them light was warm and welcoming – inviting. Light was soft and calming and patient and forgiving.

And yet, at the same time, it could be blinding and hot, full of unspeakable power and might.

They understood that light is, at the same time, redeeming and refining, and it's one of Scripture's most prevalent symbols of God Himself.

And here's Jesus saying, **"I am that. I am the light, not only of this courtyard or of this temple or even of this city or nation. No, I am the light – of the world. Guidance, deliverance, redemption, truth, salvation for all peoples, everywhere: it all can be found in me."**

¹ Psalm 27:1

² Psalm 119:105

The light of the world.

How the world needs light today!

I remember people like my dad, my grandparents and uncles: as they aged, when they'd want to read some print or see some fine detail, they'd have to turn on some extra lights so they could see it.

Now I've become them!

But so has our world: our societies and cultures.

The older we get – the longer we exist, the more light we need: to see by, to walk by, to live by.

And in our world, there are all sorts of false lights out there, claiming to know the way to redemption.

"Follow this: this will save you."

"Vote for that: that will save you."

"Live like this, eat like that, believe this, study that, learn this, practice that..."

"Give all your attentions and efforts to this or to that, and you'll find salvation."

There are so many false lights that lead people to places that are either sterile, artificial and cold, or dark and deadly, or that sickly green-blue – somewhere in the middle, between green and blue.

Yet Jesus says, "*I'm the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but have the light that leads to life.*" Real life that is warm and welcoming. Life that glows with God's power. Life that is dependable and true.

Life that is eternal.

Our world is badly broken.

God knows we need light by which to see truth.

God knows we need deliverance from the dangers around us.

God knows we need heavenly wisdom to walk this earthly way.

That's why He sent His Son to be a living light for our good.

And He gives us the choice about what we do with Him.

We can receive Him for who He is and live in the blessing of His light – as some did there in the temple courts.

Or, like most of the Pharisees, we can reject Him – and even try to snuff Him out.

But no matter what we choose, He's a light that can't be put out, and He shines on with that sort of light that's warm and attractive – that draws people and reveals the way forward that works.

Now, it's true that His is a light that also shows us our faults: it reveals things that sometimes we wish could stay hidden.

But it reveals those things to make us better, to make our lives better, to make our thoughts clearer and our paths

straighter. The light shines in our lives to make us more like God Himself.

That's what God's sort of light will do – if we'll embrace it and live within its glow.

Do you know Jesus, the light of the world?

Do you follow Him? Do you let Him light your path, your choices, your decisions?

He really is the light of the world, and He can be the light in your world, no matter how dark and cold it is today. He can bring warmth. He can bring redemption. He can reveal God's good path for you for every day ahead and for forever.

You can receive Him this morning. Even as we receive Him in Holy Communion today, you can say to Him, "Jesus, I accept You for Who You say You are. I'm sorry that I've lived in darkness for so long. Would You come and be the light of my life?"

Service of Holy Communion

Closing Song: *The Light of the World Is Jesus*

Benediction:

The color of redemption is yellow, because Jesus said that He is the light of the world.

Now, here's the thing about that statement of His: you cannot be a person who operates in honesty and integrity and just let that go. You have to respond in some way.

In an argument called *the trilemma*, first used in 1844 but popularized by C. S. Lewis, the assertion is that you can't receive those words from Jesus and still claim that He was simply a great man or a good teacher or a great prophet or just a good guy.

For someone to claim to be the light of the world and everything else Jesus claimed about Himself, you have to conclude one of three things:

Either the man is crazy: insane and he doesn't know what he's saying.

Or he's lying: he knows what he's saying and is intentionally deceptive.

Or he's telling the truth, and so really is the light of the world.

Lunatic, liar or Lord.

Mad, bad or God.

Jesus must be one of the three – He can't just be dismissed. He has to be one of the three.

So, which one is He? Which have you made Him to be in your life?

Choose wisely.