

“I AM the Light”

Psalm 27; John 8:12-30

12 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.”

13 The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.”

14 Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going.

15 You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one.

16 But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me.

17 In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true.

18 I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

19 Then they asked him, “Where is your father?”

“You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied.

“If you knew me, you would know my Father also.”

20 He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

21 Once more Jesus said to them, “I am going away, and you will look for me, and you will die in your sin. Where I go, you cannot come.”

22 This made the Jews ask, “Will he kill himself? Is that why he says, ‘Where I go, you cannot come’?”

23 But he continued, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.

24 I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

25 “Who are you?” they asked.

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning,” Jesus replied.

26 “I have much to say in judgment of you. But he who sent me is trustworthy, and what I have heard from him I tell the world.”

27 They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father.

28 So Jesus said, “When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he and that I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me.

29 The one who sent me is with me; he has not left me alone, for I always do what pleases him.”

30 Even as he spoke, many believed in him.

Introduction

Forest fires in the West have been dangerous and costly in recent years. A photographer for a national magazine was assigned to shoot one of these enormous fires. He was told a small plane would be waiting to take him over the fire area. Sure enough, the Cessna was waiting. He jumped in with his equipment and said, “Let’s go!” The pilot swung the plane around into the wind. Soon they were in the

air.

“Let’s fly over the north side of the fire and make a few low level passes. The nervous pilot asked, Why?” “Because I’m going to take pictures... that’s what a photographer does.” After a long pause, the pilot said, “You mean, you’re not the instructor?”

Confusion can get the best of us: expecting one thing and hearing, seeing, experiencing another. In John chapter 8, Jesus is speaking to the religious scholars and the lay leaders at the Temple. There seems to be a lot of confusion as the dialogue goes back and forth.

I. The Light

It was during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) when a great ceremony called the “Illumination of the Temple” took place. Four huge menorahs/candelabras (seventy-five feet high) were lighted in the Temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that had guided Israel in their wilderness journey. All night long, it is said, the brilliance of the light illuminated the entire city. The holiest of Israel's men danced and sang psalms of joy and praise before the Lord. This festival was a reminder that God had promised to send a light, the Light, to a sin-darkened world. God promised to send the Messiah to renew Israel's glory, release them from bondage, and restore their joy.

Imagine that you are in ancient Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles. Visualize seeing these massive menorahs giving a tremendous amount of light. Now imagine the extraordinary claim by Jesus in the Temple courtyard when he announced, “I am the Light of the world.” Jesus is literally saying that he is the fulfillment of Isaiah 9: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them has light shined.” Remember the giant menorahs in the Temple during the feast.

Martin Luther imagines Jesus saying this: “Darkness rules wherever I am not; whenever I am extinguished, no one sees anything.” John Calvin writes that “Christ is not speaking of what he has in common with others, but claims Light as uniquely his own.”

Notice how this “I AM” saying of Jesus is both Christo-exclusive and Christo-inclusive. Jesus is THE light. There is no other. He is the Messiah Savior. At the same time, Jesus is the light for the whole world. Jesus is not a parochial Lord. He is Lord of all. Anyone, anytime, anyplace can place their faith in Christ. The light of the world is available to all.

II. The Father and the Son

Yet the Pharisees challenged Jesus. “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.” Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid.” Self-testimony is always considered weak at best. As serious religious people, you and I probably would have sided with the leaders of the church. The Pharisees seem perfectly in order to challenge Jesus on this point.

Jesus adds to the confusion with further difficult-to-prove self-description. “For I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.”

It is quite understandable how Jesus’ opponents did not understand these enigmatic, perplexing words of Jesus. Imagine hearing your pastor, imagine this pastor saying such a thing! I would be calling “U-Haul” for a moving truck tomorrow.

There are still false messiahs on the world’s religious stage today. Last Sunday night, three teenage Korean girls were promoting the “Gracias Christmas Cantata 2016 U.S. Tour.” There are free tickets for the Maverick Center performance on September 29th. The “Cantata” is a brilliant marketing tool of the International Youth Fellowship CULT established in 2001 by Ock Soo Park from Korea. It has all the marks of a welcoming/abusive cult. Go online and see for yourself. If you know anyone sucked in to going, give them fair warning. Ock Soo Park is liable to turn out to be another Jim Jones, David Koresh, Marshall Applewhite, Sun Myung Moon, or Warren Jeffs, to name a few.

Jesus the Christ, the Anointed One, the Messiah is the only one who was vindicated in all his claims in the Resurrection. Accepting, following, trusting and faith in any other will end up a disaster. As the Lord told the people, “If you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

A missionary, home on furlough, was shopping for a globe of the world to take back to her mission station. She was shown a reasonably priced globe and another with a light bulb inside. “This is nicer,” she thought. “But of course, a lighted world costs more.” Yes, indeed, it cost our Savior his sacrificial death on the cross for the forgiveness of sin. And then, the brilliance of the Resurrection shines eternally for all who trust in him.

III. Then You Will Know

Jesus tries to explain himself and the validity of his claims. “In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.” Jesus is saying, in effect, “When I speak, the Father speaks as well and gives me that authority.” Then they asked him, “Ahem, where is your father?” Now they have him cornered.

“Where is your father?” was clearly referring to Joseph and the bastard son of Mary. The story of this young couple having a child out of wedlock had made it around during Jesus’ ministry in the Galilee region and in and around Jerusalem.

Jesus countered, “You do not know me or my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” And once more Jesus said to them, “You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I

am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins; if you do not believe that I am he, you will indeed die in your sins.”

Here Jesus is making a most impassioned call to faith. If they do not make their decision for him now, they will regret it the rest of their lives. “Now is your once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. If you do not decide for me now,” says Jesus, “I fear for your future.”

Then they asked “Who are you?” Isn’t that the most sought after question? “Jesus, who are you, anyway?”

Conclusion

“Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. Haven’t you been listening? Or why am I even talking to you?” Jesus closes this conversation with the Cross in view. “When you have lifted up, when you have hoisted up the Son of Man, then you will understand. You will know that I AM.

It is no surprise that solar deities and Sun worship can be found throughout most of recorded history in various forms. In Hinduism, the Sun is still considered a god.

In science, the Sun is a G-type main-sequence star estimated to be brighter than about 85% of the stars in the Milky Way. Some estimate that the Sun today is roughly halfway through the most stable part of its life. It has not changed dramatically for over four billion years, and will remain fairly stable for more than five billion more. Aren’t you glad to hear that! Without the Sun, there would be no life.

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Without the Son, there would be no life. This is the witness of Jesus, his life, his word, his death and resurrection.

Let us pray with and for one another.

Psalm 27

1 The Lord is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear?
The Lord is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?
2 When the wicked advance against me to devour me,
it is my enemies and my foes who will stumble and fall.
3 Though an army besiege me, my heart will not fear;
though war break out against me, even then I will be confident.
4 One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek:
that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life,
to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.
5 For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling;
he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.
6 Then my head will be exalted above the enemies who surround me;
at his sacred tent I will sacrifice with shouts of joy;
I will sing and make music to the Lord.
7 Hear my voice when I call, Lord; be merciful to me and answer me.
8 My heart says of you, “Seek his face!” Your face, Lord, I will seek.

9 Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger;
you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior.

10 Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me.

11 Teach me your way, Lord; lead me in a straight path because of my oppressors.

12 Do not turn me over to the desire of my foes,
for false witnesses rise up against me, spouting malicious accusations.

13 I remain confident of this: I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.

14 Wait for the Lord; be strong and take heart and wait for the Lord.