

Light has Dawned: The Light we Bear

Multiple

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Custom

Announcements

Custom

As we approach Christmas, many of us, myself included, would love to keep the spirit bright, joyful, and upbeat. But the world doesn't always march to the beat of Christmas joy, and in much of the world, there is a growing threat of evil that is becoming louder and louder with each passing day. If you've kept your eyes on the news, you recognize that horrific events have littered the headlines. I think back to the aftermath of the first Christmas, when a maniacal, paranoid king took out his vengeance on babies to protect his own interests. It was demonic. And the things taking place in our world are demonic. And while the stanic influence pours into every level of society that is not submitted to Christ, one of the most pervasive and often quiet deceptions of all is found in the religion of Islam. And while naive politicians and ignorant citizens try to propagate the "Islam is a religion of peace" slogan, true Islamists are following the teachings of their Quran and their prophet straight into the pit of hell, leaving bloodied violence and destruction along their path. Today's message isn't about Islam, and I don't have time to go into a full exposure of what Islam is, where it came from, and what it truly teaches. We have to stop and acknowledge evil when it rises. Just last week, 15 Jewish worshippers were slaughtered by men operating under the banner of Jihad, Islamic holy warfare against infidels (Namely Jews and Christians). In Nigeria, there is a mass genocide of Christians taking place at the hands of Muslims and in the name of Islam. No, there is no Muslim genocide taking place because Christians do battle on their knees in prayer, and with their voices in truth, not with machetes and guns. Of the top 5 religions in the United States, Christianity is number one (comprising approximately 63%), and Islam is number 6 (after Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism). How many planned terrorist attacks have been foiled within each group in the last 50 years? Christianity - 0 Judaism - 0 Hinduism - 0 Buddhism - 0 Islam - 140 No, not everyone who identifies as a Muslim promotes violence against non-Muslims. These are the cultural muslims or the liberal muslims. Muslims who take the teachings of their religion seriously are demonically blinded and deceived into believing that they must subjugate unbelievers by force into Islam or destroy them. Now, as Christians, we recognise that every religion and system apart from Christ is dangerous because they are leading people to judgment and eternity apart from Christ. Our response is not to hate Muslims, but to pray for them, witness to them, and expose the error of what they believe to shine the light of truth into the darkness. But we also need to get our heads out of the sand regarding the Islamic agenda and the threat the Islamic religion poses to our society. Not because we hate the people, but the demonic ideas behind the religion are incredibly destructive. [image] I have a QR code with several helpful resources I've put together if you'd like to educate yourself further.

Introduction

For three weeks now, we've been immersing ourselves in the poignant words of Isaiah:

Scripture

Isaiah 9:2 (NKJV) [2] The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined.

Isaiah saw a people stumbling, confused, distressed, groping for answers in the dark. And then he saw something astonishing, not a strategy, not a reform, not a new leader, but a Light. A Light sent by God. A Light that dawned from outside the darkness itself. This would be the eternal light of a coming Messiah who would come as a baby, live as a servant, die like a criminal, and rise as a king. Christmas represents the arrival of that light.

In Week One, we talked about the light we need.

In Week Two, we celebrated the Light who has arrived.

But Isaiah 9 doesn't end with the Light merely shining on the people. The rest of Scripture tells us something even more staggering: That Light would one day shine through the people.

Jesus takes Isaiah's imagery and turns it toward His disciples when He says:

Scripture

Matthew 5:14 (NKJV) [14] "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden."

That is a breathtaking statement. The Light that dawned in Christ has now been entrusted to His church. But before we misunderstand this, we need to be very clear about something from the outset:

We are not the source of the Light. We are not asked to manufacture light. We are not called to shine in our own strength.

The flame we carry is lit by the Holy Spirit. The light is Jesus, the lamp of truth is His word. Our calling is to walk in it, live by it, and refuse to hide it.

So the question before us this morning is not, "Can you shine bright enough?"

The question is, "Will you let the Light you've received be seen?"

Main Point

Point 1

How the Light loves, we must love

When John (the one who we saw last week declared, without reservation, that Jesus was the true light that has come into the world) speaks about walking in the light, he does not begin with behavior. He begins with affection. What we love, how we love, and who we love reveal whether we are truly walking in and as the light of Christ.

God is love, and those who carry His light are called to walk in that love, demonstrating it in practical ways.

Light does not merely illuminate the mind. Light reorders affections of the heart.

John writes:

Scripture

[1Jo 2:8-11 NKJV] 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

That is a searching statement. When John talks about hating a brother, he is not describing a momentary irritation or a problematic relationship. He is speaking about a settled posture of the heart. Persistent hatred, bitterness, or contempt toward fellow believers is not a maturity issue—it is an issue of light and darkness.

Let's briefly look at three aspects of loving in the light:

1. Those Who Walk in the Light Love Their Fellow Believers

John is relentless on this point. He returns to it again and again.

Scripture

1 John 3:14 (NKJV) [14] We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

John echoes the words of Jesus:

Scripture

John 13:35 (NKJV) [35] By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

Biblically speaking, love within the body of Christ is not an optional fruit. It is the most unmistakable evidence of the light. The church is the first place the light of Christ must become visible, through our love towards one another. This immediately removes love from the realm of sentimentality.

And notice, Jesus doesn't say that they will know we are His disciples by our brilliant apologetic argumentative prowess, by the eloquence from behind a pulpit, by community outreach, or even by the supernatural power on display in our churches. No, at the top of the list, it's love among one another.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

"Love is how the Light becomes practically visible to a dark world in how we navigate our relationships with other Christians."

Unlike the world, this love is not built on personality compatibility or shared preferences. It is covenantal and flows from our shared union with Christ. We love one another not because we are easy to love, but because Christ has loved us and given His life for us.

Scripture

Ephesians 5:2 (NKJV) [2] And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.

That means the light presses us into uncomfortable places:

Forgiveness instead of resentment. Patience instead of irritation. Reconciliation instead of avoidance. Sacrifice instead of self-preservation. Generosity instead of greed.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

If the light does not transform how we love one another here, it will never be believable out there.

And we must be clear about this: we do not produce this love by willpower. Galatians tells us it's a fruit of the Spirit's work in our lives. Romans tells us:

Scripture

Romans 5:5 (NKJV) [5] Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The Spirit lights the flame. We walk in the glow of it.

Question: So how are you loving... not those outside, but those right next to you? Is there so much sacrificial love in this church that those outside are provoked to jealousy when they see the way our authentic care pumps and flows within the veins of the body of Christ?

2. Those Who Walk in the Light Love not the World or Its Systems

Immediately after commanding love for the brethren, John draws a sharp line:

Scripture

1 John 2:15-16 (NKJV) [15] Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. [16] For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world.

John is not calling us to withdraw from society or despise creation. He is speaking of “the world” as a system—a way of thinking, desiring, and living that is fundamentally opposed to God.

Walking in the light inevitably means that some worldly loves begin to loosen their grip on our hearts:

the pursuit of status the obsession with comfort the craving for approval the illusion of control
The deception of wealth

Paul says it this way:

Scripture

Romans 12:2 (NKJV) [2] And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

Light doesn't just expose bad behavior. It exposes misplaced affections. It reveals what we've been living for and what we love.

This is not about checking boxes or following rules. It is about allegiance. The more we walk in the light of Christ, the less appealing the world's false promises become.

And again, this is not self-discipline alone. The Spirit reorders our loves by giving us something better than what the world offers.

3. Those Who Walk in the Light Love the People of the World as a Witness

Here's where we must hold biblical balance.

John says, “Do not love the world.” Jesus says:

Scripture

John 3:16 (NKJV) [16] For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

Scripture

[Matthew 22:39] (NKJV) [39] And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

There is no contradiction.

We do not love the world's system—but we deeply love the people trapped inside it.

Jesus was accused of being a friend of sinners. He ate with them. He spoke with them. He moved toward them. Yet He never compromised truth, never affirmed sin, and never imitated darkness.

Paul instructs us:

Scripture

Colossians 4:5-6 (NKJV) [5] Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time. [6] Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to answer each one.

Walking in the light means our posture toward people without Christ is not hostile, but hopeful. Not silent, but gracious. Not compromised, but compassionate. We battle against the spiritual darkness at work, we speak against ideas and philosophies that steal, kill, and destroy, and we demonstrate the love of God in real, practical ways to those in darkness.

Light doesn't just spotlight darkness from a distance; it shows up in the darkness and reveals it on the spot.

Illustration

Just like the Good Samaritan, our love should drive us to see people. He didn't ask the wounded man on the side of the road what his theological beliefs were before he extended a hand of loving compassion and care. He saw a neighbor in genuine need and looked past their ethnic, genealogical, and social differences, seeing a man created in the image of God. When we see our fellow human beings in darkness, it's ok to be angered by and confront their wickedness, but it's not ok to develop a hardened heart that wants to see them destroyed or damned. We should always long for those outside of Christ to know Christ and practically experience His love.

Main Point

Point 2

What light exposes, we must expose

If Point One taught us that walking in the light reorders what we love, then Point Two shows us that walking in the light also reorders what we tolerate.

Light is comforting—but it is also confronting.

Paul writes:

Scripture

Ephesians 5:8, 11-14 (NKJV) [8] For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light [11] And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. [12] For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. [13] But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. [14] Therefore He says: "Awake, you who sleep, Arise from the dead, And Christ will give you light."

That is a strong command. And it raises an immediate question: What does it mean to expose darkness in a Christlike way?

Because Scripture never calls us to be cruel, arrogant, or self-righteous.

Yet Scripture is equally clear that light cannot coexist peacefully with darkness.

1. Light Exposes in Order to Awaken, Not to Destroy

Paul states in vs. 13:

Scripture

Ephesians 5:13 (NKJV) [13] But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light.

And then he gives the purpose: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light." (14)

This is crucial:

Quote

— Pastor Josh

Biblical exposure is resurrection-oriented, not humiliation-oriented.

The goal is not to embarrass people into destruction. The goal is to awaken people to life through the light of truth.

This applies first personally, then corporately, then culturally:

Personally: hidden sin cannot be healed if it is never brought into the light. People who carry the light must be willing to speak the truth in love to one another. Corporately: false teaching and moral compromise cannot be ignored without consequence. To stay silent while darkness slowly creeps into the body of Christ makes one complicit in the destruction the darkness brings. Culturally: silence in the face of moral confusion is not love—it is abdication. For light to surrender ground to darkness in order to “keep the peace” or not “offend the masses,” the light has already diminished its impact.

2. Light Exposes First in Us Before It Exposes Through Us

This is where the church must be especially careful.

Jesus warned:

Scripture

Matthew 7:5 (NKJV) [5] Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.

Walking in the light always begins with self-examination, not public accusation.

David prayed:

Scripture

Psalms 139:23-24 (NKJV) [23] Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me, and know my anxieties; [24] And see if there is any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting.

Light that is not welcomed internally always becomes distorted externally.

Quote

— Pastor Josh

“Exposure without humility becomes hypocrisy.”

This is why Scripture constantly ties light to repentance.

Scripture

[1 John 1:7] (NKJV) [7] But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Light is where our own cleansing happens.

3. Light Exposes With Wisdom, Not Recklessness

Paul tells us:

Scripture

Colossians 4:5 (NKJV) [5] Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.

There is a difference between faithful clarity and unnecessary provocation, between prophetic courage and fleshly outrage.

Jesus never minimized sin—but He also never exposed it unwisely or without intentionality and purpose.

Illustration

Think of the woman at the well (John 4). Jesus exposed her sin, but he also discerned and engaged her with dignity, patience, and truth. He didn't avoid the uncomfortable topics. He didn't let her off the hook regarding the deeper issues of her life and soul. The result was transformation. Wisdom challenges us to think not only about WHAT needs to be said, but also about HOW it needs to be said. It causes us to think about the how, the when, and the why.

That is the pattern of light.

Illustration

In medicine, exposure is never considered cruelty. When a doctor orders an MRI or an X-ray, the goal is not to alarm the patient but to identify what cannot be seen on the surface. Cancer left undiagnosed does not become kindness. It becomes fatal. Bones left fractured do not indicate compassion, but neglect. In the same way, spiritual darkness left unexposed does not protect people—it imprisons them. Light reveals not to wound, but to heal.

Main Point

Point 3

Where the Light goes, we must go

Jesus says:

Scripture

Matthew 5:14-15 (NKJV) [14] "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house."

Notice what Jesus assumes. He does not command His disciples to become light. He declares that they are light — because His light now dwells in them.

The only question is whether that light will be seen or suppressed.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

"Hidden light is not a sign of humility; it's a sign of disobedience."

1. Light Is Meant to Be Visible, Not Private

Jesus uses two images:

a city on a hill a lamp on a stand

Both communicate the same truth: light is meant to be noticed.

Paul echoes this when he writes:

Scripture

Philippians 2:15 (NKJV) [15] that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,

The Christian faith was never designed to be:

Merely personal (just between me and God) - That's where it starts, but not where it stays. Quietly internal - You might be a naturally shy or non-verbal person. But the gospel's call goes beyond personality. Safely compartmentalized - The enemy is into the idea of separating faith from other areas of life and society. The gospel was designed to permeate and transform everything. The light of Christ is public truth.

How we do it matters: This does not mean we are obnoxiously loud. It does not mean we are carnally abrasive. It does not mean we are performative.

But it does indicate that we are visible. People should be able to see Christ's light through our:

Our speech, integrity, courage, mercy, clarity, and faithfulness

Not because we announce it on social media, but because light always reveals itself by nature of what it does and what it is.

2. Light Goes Where Darkness Is Present

Light does not avoid dark places, it moves toward them.

Isaiah foresaw this when he wrote prophetically of what that first Christmas would entail:

Scripture

Isaiah 49:6 (NKJV) [6] "I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth."

Paul later applies this directly to the church:

Scripture

Acts 13:47 (NKJV) [47] For so the Lord has commanded us: 'I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, That you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.'

This means the church does not exist for self-preservation. We exist for illumination of the darkness and a missional purpose to go to those who are blinded within it.

Light doesn't stay in the comfort of its own four walls but goes:

into homes marked by brokenness into workplaces shaped by compromise into conversations filled with confusion into relationships where truth has been absent

We have not been called to be a lightbulb that only illuminates the room we dwell in, the light shines in the darkness of the spaces around it. This means it's always on the move!

Scripture

[Mark 16:15] (NKJV) [15] And He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."

3. Light Bears Witness, Not Pressure

Jesus says:

Scripture

Matthew 5:16 (NKJV) [16] Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

This is crucial. The goal of shining is not attention for us. It is glory for God. Light does not forcefully coerce, nor does it manipulate. Light bears witness.

Jesus reinforces this before His ascension:

Scripture

Acts 1:8 (NKJV) [8] But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Application

A witness does not have to invent the story. A witness testifies to what they have seen. We are not asked to save anyone. We are asked to show what Christ has done that they may be saved! It's not your job to ensure everyone becomes convinced of Christ, but it is our stewardship to manifest what He's done in our lives. Has he rescued you? Bear witness. Has he delivered you from the grips of darkness? Bear witness. Has he freed you from addiction? Bear witness.

Illustration

When you turn a light on outside in the middle of a Missouri summer, what happens within 5 minutes? Every bug of every kind is on your porch. The light simply did what the light does: it shone. When light shines, there will be those who run away from it, but there will be others who are drawn to it.

4. the Spirit, Not Human Effort sustain Light

This is where many Christians grow weary — trying to shine by striving.

But Peter reminds us:

Scripture

2 Peter 1:19 (NKJV) [19] And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts;

That “rising in your hearts” is not self-generated. It is the work of the Holy Spirit as we remain sensitive and responsive to God’s Word.

Quote

— *Pastor Josh*

“We do not manufacture light, but we can tend the flame.”

Through:

abiding in God’s Wordprayerobediencerepentancedependence

All of these things help throw wood on the fire. While we don’t make the light, we can certainly quench it, dim it, or hide it altogether. But when we fan the flame by staying close to the Light, it will burn brightly for all to see.

CONCLUSION: A COMMISSION, NOT A BURDEN

Isaiah saw the Light dawn, the light we need. Jesus is the Light that has arrived. And now, Jesus entrusts that Light to us.

But hear this clearly as we close:

You are not called to shine on your own. You are not called to overcome darkness by mere human effort. You are not called to be impressive; being the light means we don’t need the spotlight on us.

You and I are called to be available.

The Spirit lights the flame. Christ defines the light. Our role is simply this: Do not hide what God has lit.

Scripture

Isaiah 60:1 (NKJV) [1] Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.

The Light has dawned. The Light has come. Now — let the Light be seen.