

## ***“I AM...the Light of the World”***

*John 1:1-18 • John 9:1-7*

First Presbyterian Church, Corpus Christi, TX

Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • March 10, 2019

As some of you are aware, the season of Lent began last Wednesday. Traditionally, Lent is a time to reflect on our sinfulness and our need for the salvation that Jesus accomplished through his death and resurrection. Some of you have asked why Presbyterians don't make a big deal out of Lent. The reasoning behind the question is something like this: isn't it a good idea to think about the problem of our sin? The answer, of course, is yes it's a good idea. The reason we don't observe Lent the way some traditions do is *because* we believe it's important. In fact, reflecting on our sin and God's grace is so important that don't think it should be limited to 40 days a year. In our Reformed tradition every Sunday is as important as Easter. We should anticipate worshipping every week with the same excitement we have for Easter. That means that Lent is also every week of the year. As part of your weekly preparation to worship you should be confessing to God and working to make Him the most important thing in your life.

Of course old habits die hard, and for many of us observing Lent is kind of a habit. And it's not exactly a *bad* habit. And so we're going to use the next few weeks leading up to Easter to focus on who Jesus is. Specifically, we're going to look at who Jesus *said* he is. The gospel of John records Jesus making a number of public statements about who he is. Bible scholars call these the "I AM" statements of Jesus. They're called that because in each case Jesus begins by saying, "I am." Now you see why Bible scholars get paid the big bucks.

In each of these sayings Jesus is sharing with us something about who he is and what his purpose or mission is. But before we get into this morning's specific statement, we need to understand why these statements were so controversial. Each time Jesus said this the Jewish leaders got really angry. The reason is because Jesus was actually making a claim to be

God. We kind of miss it in our English translations but the original Greek is *ego eimi*, which literally translates to I AM, I AM or I AM Who I AM. When God appeared to Moses in the burning bush and told him to go back to Egypt, Moses said, "who should I tell them sent me? What do I tell them when they ask your name?" God tells Moses that His name is I AM WHO I AM.

By the time of Jesus the Jews considered this name so sacred that they wouldn't even say it out loud. Jesus comes along and not only says the name of God out loud, he claims it for himself. But He also demonstrates through various miracles that it's true. This morning we see one of those miracles. Jesus has just had a run-in with the Jewish leaders in the Temple and they tried to stone him. But he slips away. Then Jesus and his disciples pass a man who is blind, he was born blind, and he spends his days begging. The disciples decide to ask a theological question. They are pretty sure the man is blind as punishment for sin. But since he was born blind they want to know who sinned. Could he have sinned before he was born or is he being punished for his parents' sin?

We can be a lot like those disciples sometimes. We see people all around us who need help and we end up standing around asking the wrong questions. We want to know if they deserve our help. Or maybe you're the one suffering and you wonder why God is punishing you. Jesus tells them that it's not because of sin, "but that the works of God might be displayed in him." This is what we talked about last week. As followers of Jesus we can expect trials and hardships. We can expect to be mistreated. God's not necessarily punishing you. It may be so that you are a witness to others of the difference trusting Jesus makes in your life.

Jesus then tells his disciples, "We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day;

night is coming, when no one can work. As long as I am in the world, *I am the light of the world.*” This is the second time Jesus has said, “I am the light of the world.” It’s what started the argument with the Pharisees that made them try to stone him. In John 8:12 Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

Most of us don’t really experience real darkness. We are surrounded by light. I remember a couple of times that I’ve experienced total or nearly total darkness. It’s very memorable. A number of years ago we visited Mammoth Cave in Kentucky. The park ranger guides you down into the cave along lighted pathways. At one point on the tour you enter a large chamber that has benches for everyone to sit on. Once everyone is seated they turn out all the lights. Usually when you are in a dark room your eyes will adjust and you can begin to make out objects. That’s because there’s a little bit of light from somewhere. In that cave there’s no light. But after a few minutes the guide lights a single match. That tiny little match lights up the entire cave. That’s because darkness doesn’t actually exist, it’s just the absence of light.

Jesus tells us that he is the light of the world and that if we follow him we won’t have to walk in darkness. In the Bible, darkness represents evil or chaos or ignorance or the absence of God. Light, on the other hand, represents order and knowledge and the presence of God.

For the man born blind, his entire life has been in total darkness. There’s so much of life that he doesn’t know because he can’t see. When Jesus stops to heal the man he’s not just helping the man to see for the first time. He’s demonstrating to everyone watching what he means when he says he’s the light of the world. R.C. Sproul says, “The Bible uses the metaphor of blindness again and again for people who have never perceived the truth of Christ. The eyes of their hearts are blind until God the Holy Spirit, without the help of spit and clay, opens

them. When He does, they not only perceive the light of day, they see the light of the world.”

The first words the Bible records God speaking are, “Let there be light.” God has been revealing himself since the beginning of time. That’s what light does – it reveals things that were hidden in the dark. Romans 1 tells us, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made.” Yet we still can’t see clearly.

Like the blind man, when you have an encounter with Jesus he opens your eyes to see him for who he really is. Think of it this way. The closer you get to a light the brighter it is. In the same way, the closer you get to Jesus the brighter the light of truth is in your life. Not only does the light reveal who Jesus is, it reveals who you are. When you first turn on a light in a dark room it can be uncomfortable for a couple of reasons. For one thing, it hurts your eyes until they adjust. But the other thing that sometimes happens when you turn on the light is that the roaches start scattering. The same thing happens in our lives. When we get close to Jesus, the light of the world, we also see what’s wrong in our own lives and it makes us uncomfortable. But you should let that feeling help you see your need for Jesus who can fix the problem.

Finally, notice that Jesus says, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Most living things need light in order to grow. It’s the same for us spiritually. We need the light of knowledge in order to grow in our faith. That means spending plenty of time in the light of God’s Word. Spend time with Jesus by reading the Scriptures and by praying. Ask God to shine his light in your life, on your priorities, and in your relationships. And then ask him to shine his light through you into the lives of people around you so that they can see Jesus in you.

After the blind man was healed the Pharisees were not happy about it. They interrogated him, questioned his parents, and ultimately kicked him out of the synagogue. Jesus went and found the man and said,

“Do you believe in the Son of Man?’ He answered, ‘And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?’ Jesus said to him, ‘You have seen him,

and it is he who is speaking to you.’ He said, ‘Lord, I believe,’ and he worshiped him.” My prayer is that you have the same response and that you get to help others to believe and worship, too.

*Amen.*