



The Light of the World

John 8:12, John 1:1-14

TITLE

This morning is the first Sunday in Advent.

IS THERE MORE TO CHRISTMAS....

No, it isn't Christmas although people are already putting up their trees and pitching their inflatable reindeer on their lawns.

THAN THIS?

Of course for the shops it's been Christmas since September. I can see them wanting to rename Autumn as the Christmas season before long. In fact though, it's not Christmas until December 25th. That said, all the commercial people want to make Christmas perfect for us.

SAINSBURY'S

You can enter a Sainsbury's competition to win the perfect Christmas. Do you want a perfect Christmas? Yes? Then you don't need to enter the competition, just realise the perfect Christmas is FREE IN JESUS CHRIST!

TITLE

But now isn't Christmas: just the preparation period for it. This is the first Sunday in the part of the church year called Advent. Advent celebrates the coming of the Son to this world as a human being, being conceived of the Holy Spirit.

BLANK

This is what we read about this morning from John's gospel. *John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.* SMALL As we lit the candle this morning we remember that the coming of the Son – the One who made the world, the One who has always been. He came the Earth in the smallest possible way; first as an embryo, then a baby. The light started as a small flame. Like the candle flame, Jesus started small – in Mary's womb – but as we remember His birth at Christmas in a few weeks time, we see that light got brighter and brighter.

LARGE

And the flame got brighter and brighter as the baby grew into a boy and then a man.

I AM THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Here's how Jesus described Himself: *"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."* JOHN 8:12 In Jesus, God brought light into darkness. What do I mean by that? Let me give you an example. If the sun did not shine, our world would be a dark, cold, barren place.

NO LIGHT = NO LIFE

With light we get life. This world depends on the light of the sun to bring us life because sunlight allows plants to grow which is the basis of other life on the Earth's surface. Without light there would be no life. That's the picture.

Without the light of life that Jesus brings, people wander around in spiritual darkness, without direction, without hope, without God. This verse is an interesting one. Jesus made this statement about being the Light of the World at the end of a Jewish feast called Tabernacles or Sukkot (*Sukkkot* means shelters) as the Jews know it.

SUKKOT

During tabernacles live in shelters like these for a whole week to remember that time in the wilderness their ancestors lived in tents. On the last day, Jews in Jesus' time and even now, light up their shelter with many small candles, or these days, fairy lights. This is to remind them that God guided them by a pillar of cloud and a pillar of fire. Jesus drew attention to these Sukkot lights and said

SLIDE

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." Just

as the Israelites had a light at night to guide them through the wilderness, Jesus is that light that leads us to life and to God.

HOLMAN HUNT

I'm sure that many of you have seen this painting before. It's *The Light of the World*, painted 1853-54 by William Holman Hunt (2 April 1827 – 7 September 1910). The original one is in Keble College, Oxford but Holman Hunt later painted a much larger version that hangs in Westminster Abbey. It was a picture of Jesus at a door, holding a light in an otherwise dark world. In his representation of Jesus as light of the world, he was impressed by the words of Jesus by Revelation 3:20

REV 3:20

Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

Jesus is the light of the world who shows men and women the path towards God. The only thing is that each person has to recognise that Jesus is the light who can bring them to God, who can deal with the issue of the sins that separate them from God. For Holman Hunt, he portrayed Jesus as the light of the world, knocking on people's doors, and bringing them light, showing them the way.

Jesus is the light but we also read this morning of Jesus that He was: *The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God-- 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.*

People at that time and right down the ages have been presented with the light, given that knock on the door by Jesus but as yet have not let Him in and allowed themselves to be illuminated by Him to understand the truth and that truth is that God, through Jesus wants to make us His children, to give us new life; eternal life. Have you answered that call in your life yet. Have you received Jesus into your life and allowed Him to illuminate every part of it. Today He's knocking, still knocking, asking to come and be a part of your life, to take you out of the dark about God and make you part of God's family.

I know that many of you have already taken that step in your lives. For some of you it's been years, even decades. That being the case, I believe that God has a message for us to at the start of this Advent season. And it's these words of Jesus.

YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

Matt 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

Jesus said "I am the light of the world." Now to us, His people, his disciples he states clearly *You are the light of the world*. What does He mean? The purpose of a light is rather like a city on a hill; it's there to be obvious to all. Jesus came as the light of the world. He came to illuminate our lives, to bring life and hope. He came to reveal God to us. And if we are His people then by the same measure We are the light of the world and we have the same function. Our lives should so shine that people recognise God in us and are illuminated by the truth that brings. As we learned last week, we are the embodiment of Jesus for the present age.

That's a challenge isn't it? When people see the quality of our lives. When they hear our words. When they learn of our hopes and aspirations. What do they see? What do they hear? Do they see God revealed, manifest in us? Because they're supposed to. That's the clear message Jesus brings.

WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

And that is the message God challenges us this: Who are WE going to be illuminating this Christmas

Prayer

*Preached by Mark Reid
MRBC Felixstowe 28/11/10
© Mark Reid 2010*