

The Glory Of The Heavenly Light.

Text: John 8:12-20

Suggested Hymns:

500, 40, 396, 158, 426

- 1) The Guide To Life
- 2) The Faithful Witness
- 3) The Judge
- 4) The Revelation Of The Unseen God

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all. Amen.

The text for our sermon today is John 8:12-20, ¹² *Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."*

¹³ *The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."* ¹⁴ *Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going."* ¹⁵ *"You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one."* ¹⁶ *"And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me."* ¹⁷ *"It is also written in your law that the testimony of two men is true."* ¹⁸ *"I am One who bears witness of Myself, and the Father who sent Me bears witness of Me."*

¹⁹ *Then they said to Him, "Where is Your Father?"* Jesus answered, *"You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also."* ²⁰ *These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come. (NKJV)*

Lord God, heavenly Father, sanctify us through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ,

The transfiguration of our Lord preceded His passion and death. On the mount three Apostles saw the heavenly splendour of Jesus whom only a short time later they were to see humiliated, tortured, and killed.

Between Christmas and Lent the Church has inserted the Epiphany season. Before we go up to Jerusalem to review the atrocities of Christ's final hours, we

are to impress upon our hearts — and that most deeply — who this great Sufferer is, truly the Lord of Glory, the eternal Word made flesh.

We are to see His glory, a glory as of the Only-Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. The contrast between Epiphany and Lent is immense. But as we note it, we shall understand better what it cost God to redeem us.

That is a purpose of the Feast of Epiphany and of the several Sundays after Epiphany. Epiphany means manifestation. All of the traditional Gospels for this season reveal some phase of Christ's glory. So also the text which we shall study this morning. It speaks of *The Glory of the Heavenly Light*. May the Lord bless our meditation and help us to grasp what Jesus is teaching us concerning Himself!

1. The Glory Of The Heavenly Light The Guide To Life

Jesus is of course the heavenly Light of which our text speaks. From heaven Jesus came to give light to *“those who dwell in the land of the shadow of death.”*¹ The glory of Jesus assumes different aspects according to the angle from which we view it. Our text presents a number of these.

The first is the comforting fact that Jesus is our Guide through the darkness of sin and death into eternal life.

¹²*Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, “I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* Jesus had attended the Feast of Tabernacles in the Temple. During that festival the Jews lived in flimsy huts to recall the many years their fathers had journeyed in the wilderness. One of the ceremonies connected with it was the lighting of the gigantic candelabra that stood in the inner Temple. The resulting blaze of light symbolised the pillar of fire by which Israel had been led for forty years. And that, in turn, suggested to our Lord this tremendous claim of His, *“I am the Light of the world.”*²

Life's pilgrimage is a journey through a dark and terrifying wasteland. God is Light, and God is Life. But sin has cut men off from their Maker.

The hymnist expressed this plight in these words

All our knowledge, sense, and sight
Lie in deepest darkness shrouded.³

We know neither God nor ourselves. Life is just an awful problem, a dreadful mess. Its horrors appal us. Its mysteries remain unsolved riddles. We fumble and stumble along, only at last to tumble into the hopeless night of death and hell. Such is the tragedy of the human race, created in the image of God, but reduced by sin below the level of the beast.

Then God enters the picture. He becomes a man so that for man He might bear the guilt and the penalty of sin. At Bethlehem Jesus is born of the Virgin Mary, and the glory of the Lord shines round about the frightened shepherds. Heavenly light pours into the darkness of sin and death. It illumines the hearts of people who are dead in trespasses and sin. They see themselves as lost and condemned sinners. But they also see the grace of God which for Jesus' sake pardons them and restores them to sonship. They repent. They believe. And God gives them His life.

Divine grace does that. It operates through the Word. The Word brings them Jesus and gives them Jesus. So it is a lamp to their feet and a light to their path. They follow Jesus. They no longer walk in darkness. They have the light of life.

However, their earthly pilgrimage still is no picnic. Headaches and heartaches remain. They experience the usual number of trials. They are tempted, and often they sin. But Jesus is with them, and His blood cleanses them from all sin. They follow Him, and they strive to walk in the way of righteousness.

The soft radiance of His love calms their trembling spirit and makes them strong to endure hardship and affliction. Yes, though they walk through the valley of the shadow of death, they fear no evil. Jesus is leading them to eternal light and life. The pillar of fire shines brightly until they reach the New Jerusalem, which has *no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.*

It is a wonderful truth, a most comforting fact, that Jesus proclaimed when He said, *"I am the Light of the world."* He is our Guide through the wilderness of sin and death, He is our life. But His enemies among the Jews, particularly the Pharisees, were bitter to the end. They always resisted the Holy Spirit. So

now they start to argue with Him. And in the ensuing discussion further aspects of our Lord's glory are revealed.

2. The Glory Of The Heavenly Light

The Faithful Witness

We note, secondly, that Jesus is the faithful witness. The Pharisees rejected the claim of Jesus to be the Light of the world, because, they insisted, it was based on nothing more than His own testimony.

Jewish Law required a corroborating witness. *The Pharisees therefore said to Him, "You bear witness of Yourself; Your witness is not true."* In previous debates Jesus had already refuted that charge and pointed to God the Father as His Witness. He makes that point again in this discussion.

But for the time being Jesus advanced a different argument. Our text says, *"Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going."* Jesus knew what He was talking about. He knew His heavenly origin and what He was to accomplish on earth and the glory to which He would return.

But His enemies knew nothing at all about this. Therefore it was an insult, rude and blasphemous for them to judge Jesus. They could go only by what they saw. *"You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one."* To them Jesus was only a Nazarene, perhaps the illegitimate son of Mary.

To the sin-blinded eyes of many people that is all that Jesus still is. He fascinates people, this strange Man, who two thousand years ago appeared in Palestine, taught for three years, and then died on the Cross.

They study Jesus and His sayings. They write beautifully and reverently about Him. *"The Nazarene,"* by Sholem Asch, is an illustration. But essentially they understand Jesus no better than did the Pharisees in the Temple, because they cannot tell where Jesus came from, and where He went, because they judge only after the flesh.

We are truly blessed because by God's Spirit we have been enlightened so that we see not only the man Jesus, but also all the fullness of the Godhead that dwells bodily in that man Jesus. Eagerly then we shall drink in every word of

His, whether it be a teaching concerning Himself or whether it pertain to the problems, great and small, that perplex us.

What am I? What is the meaning, the purpose and the goal of life? Who is God? Does He love me? Can He love me, who am so stained with sin? And if He loves me, why must I suffer? Why is there so much evil, so much sorrow in the world? Yes, there are so many questions that buzz around in our minds and make us miserable.

Jesus has the answers. His record is true. He is the faithful Witness. In His Word He speaks to us. The better we know that Word, the brighter will be the heavenly light that illumines our dark path, yes, the more clearly we shall see the glory of Jesus who is our Light, a glory full of grace and truth.

3. The Glory Of The Heavenly Light

The Judge

Failure to heed and to follow His divine testimony will bring upon men a terrible penalty. For Jesus who is the faithful Witness now will be the stern Judge then. That is the third aspect of the glory of Jesus that we must note. Our text says, *I judge no one.* ¹⁶ *“And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me.*

It is a warning that Jesus says again and again in His presentation of the truth. Now He is the Witness. Now He still stands before people as the Teacher sent from God, as the Saviour from sin. People are such helpless fools. They are so definitely dead in trespasses and sins. They cannot save themselves. But Jesus can do that.

And Jesus would do that for all people. He loves them all, loves them to the uttermost. For everybody Jesus will die upon the Cross. Wide open are His arms as He pleads in Matthew 11:28, ²⁸ *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”* Jesus assures us in John 6:37 *that the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*

People may flout this saving love. But they do so at their own peril. For this same Jesus shall come again in glory to judge the living and the dead. The Father has committed all judgment to the Son. The glory of the heavenly light shall then reveal the secrets of every heart. And woe then to all people who

either openly or secretly spurned Him! His verdict will be, ***‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’***⁴

Let us pray fervently that God may always keep us in His grace. Then we shall in true faith follow Jesus who is the Light of the world, accept His teachings, and so have the light of life here in time and hereafter in eternity.

4. The Glory Of The Heavenly Light

The Revelation Of The Unseen God

One more aspect of the glory of Jesus is found in our text. Jesus is the Revelation of the unseen God. Jesus reverts again to His main point: that He is a competent Witness. The corroborating Witness is none other than God. Our text says ***Father who sent Me bears witness of Me.***

The Pharisees scornfully ask, ***“Where is Your Father?”*** Produce this Witness that we may question Him. And so they give away their whole case. They prove that they know neither Jesus nor His Father. God’s testimony always is available to those who know Him.

Here it is in His inspired Book, the Bible. Those who think that they know more than the Bible, as do the evolutionists, the New Agers, and others, just do not know the one and only true God. Those who let their reason sit in judgment on the Bible, rejecting this, that, and the other text, as do religious liberals of every stripe, just do not know the one and only true God.

In the Old Testament Scriptures, as well as in the New, the Father bears witness of Jesus. All of the Bible points to Jesus. And all of the Bible is summed up in Jesus. He is the incarnate Word. And therefore Jesus is ***“the Brightness of God’s glory, the express Image of His person.”***⁵

In our text Jesus specifically emphasises that He is the Revelation of God. ***If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.*** Ignorance of the Bible means ignorance of God. So also ignorance of Jesus means ignorance of God.

You may recall the time when Philip requested, ***“Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us.”*** And Jesus replied, ***“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father.”***⁶

To know the Father, that will and must satisfy any person. Scripture says in John 17:3, ³ *“And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”* So the perplexed, the sin-burdened, the fearful heart of man finds rest. Seeing God in Christ, we have pardon and peace and can both live and die triumphantly.

Oh, it is a glorious epiphany of Jesus, the Christ, that our text contains! The glory of the heavenly light shines so radiantly through these words. Jesus is our Saviour, our Guide, our Prophet, the Judge of men, and the Revelation of the Father. May God open our eyes that we really see His marvellous glory!

Then gratefully we can say with the hymnist,

Thou, O Christ, art all I want;
More than all in Thee I find.⁷ Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds, in Christ Jesus. Amen.

¹ Isaiah 9:2

² John 8:12

³ Hymn 500

⁴ Matthew 7:23

⁵ Heb. 1:3

⁶ John 14:8-9

⁷ Hymn 158