

**Sermon Series: “The Gospel for Life”**  
***The One Who Can Light Up Our Lives***  
**Pastor Norwood N. “Woody” Hingle III, Ph.D.**  
**Sunday, June 7, 2020**

Have you ever experienced darkness in your life? Many people have, and I know what that is like. It is like there is no hope, and we become people who are so inward focused on our pain that we cannot look outside that pain. E.g., the tragic death of George Floyd has brought darkness to our lives. That is why the image of light is such a powerful image of hope in such times. E.g., back in 1977 there was a song that was an enormous success that hit on this theme. It was called, “You Light Up My Life”, and it was sung by Debby Boone. It was a song that sounded on the surface like a romance song of a woman to a man, but Debby Boone said she sang it to the Lord. A particularly memorable line in the song said, “And you light up my life/you give me hope to carry on/you light up my days and fill my nights with song”. It was so popular that it set a Billboard Hot 100 record for being the number one song for 10 weeks, which surpassed The Beatles’ “Hey Jude”. The song’s long stay on the Billboard Top 100 probably says a lot about the longing for someone to come in our lives and be the one who can bring us hope and light in the midst of life’s darkness. Have you ever felt that kind of darkness in life? Perhaps you feel that way today. Well, our passage today points to a hope to fulfill our need for light.

READ John 8:12-20 (p. 101)

**CONTEXT:** Jesus has addressed the crowds at the feast of Tabernacles, and has received positive and negative reviews from the religious leaders. The Pharisees send temple police to arrest Him, but they get so caught up in His teaching that they arrive back at the Pharisees empty-handed. Nicodemus comes to Jesus' defense and says that the law does not allow them to judge a man without first a hearing, but the other Pharisees wonder if he too has been taken in by Jesus, since no prophet, they assert, comes from Galilee.

READ v 12. "Jesus has recently said that He offers living water (7:37-38), and he builds on that by claiming to be the light of the world who offers the light of life so that His follower will no longer walk in darkness. Both of these are themes from the festival of Tabernacles. Cf. Numbers 6:24-26; Psalm 27:1; 36:9; 119:105; Matthew 5:14; John 1:3-5." This theme of God as light is a significant one in the OT. READ Numbers 6:24-26 and Psalm 27:1 and Psalm 119:105. John's gospel begins by identifying Jesus with light; READ 1:3-5. Notice that the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. If you have ever experienced darkness in your life you will know the joy of the light coming in. E.g, very often as a family we go on family trips and we arrive at our destination when it is dark outside, like at Lake Junaluska in the Smokey Mountains of North Carolina, and when we drive back to our place where we are staying I have to know where turns are and by what object our driveway is, etc. But during the day, it is amazing, I can see it all so much more clearly. Life can be like that. I find it interesting a quote from the famous atheistic philosopher from Great Britain, Bertrand Russell, who once wrote this: "Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness" (found in *Conversations with C.S. Lewis*:

*Imaginative Discussions About Life, Christianity and God*, by Robert Velarde, p. 93).

READ vv 13-19. “The Pharisees take offense at Jesus, because He seems to be making an outrageous claim for Himself without the proper authentication, but Jesus asserts He has credentials of the best kind! Cf. Deuteronomy 19:15.” In Deuteronomy 19:15 we read that in Judaism someone could not be convicted of a crime except on the witness of two or three witnesses. We discussed this a couple of weeks ago when we were discussing the ninth of the Ten Commandments, you shall not bear false witness. Well, Jesus has two witnesses— Himself and His heavenly Father who sent Him. It is interesting that the word “true” appears four times in vv 13-17. The NRSV, NIV, and REB all have “valid” here, while the RSV and ESV and F.F. Bruce in his commentary on John all have “true”, and I prefer the latter. And argument may be valid but untrue. E.g., all cars have stick shifts/my Toyota Camry does not have a stick shift/therefore, my Camry is not a car. This argument is valid, but it is untrue. The religious leaders, the Pharisees, are saying Jesus’ testimony is not true, and Jesus emphasizes that His testimony about Himself being the light of the world is indeed true, and God the Father gives the same testimony about Him. Why this emphasis? I think in part at least because there are many fake lights out there. Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. READ 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Have you ever seen a fake light before? E.g., for our Christmas Eve services we use fake candles; we do this because our previous practice of using actual candles had the potential to start a fire and/or hurt someone. But when you see these candles you will notice that they are really not good for anything other than representing a candle; but if you want a real light or candle at night, these will not give you much light. That is the way Satan is. He approximates what is true light for our lives, but it does not give us life but darkness and death. E.g., I recall a guy in a famous rock band who at the height of the band’s success divorced his wife—with all the temptations that come with

rock bands— and a few years later he re-married her and they stayed married. During the time of their divorce he wrote a song saying basically, if I am satisfied with being away from you and with other women, why am I standing by the phone wanting to talk to you? E.g., another lie Satan offers is that somehow our material possessions are the key to our happiness in life, and then we find that they are nice, but they don't fill that void in our lives for meaning and hope. But we can get so distracted by materialism that we can neglect that which is very important. Recently I went jogging in the morning on the levee in Lake Vista and I noticed as I began my run that there was a dad with two sons, about nine or 10, walking behind him while he was engrossed in a conversation on his cell phone; about 10-15 minutes later when I was finishing my run this same dad and his sons were right by where I was, and the dad was still on the cell phone! I was thinking what a golden opportunity he has wasted, as it appeared to me, that on that beautiful day he could have had that moment with his sons, but he was trying to do work on the phone, oblivious to his young sons. Now, I don't know for sure with whom he was on the phone— it could have been a call he really had to take. But so often we get distracted by work and cell phones and trying to get more stuff that Satan distracts us from the really blessings the Lord has put before us. Satan offers false wisdom for living, and Jesus offers the true wisdom and hope for our lives. He offers to forgive us of sins, reconciliation with our Father, and eternal life.

“Where is your and my source of light?” These can be dark and lonely days during the coronavirus. That makes this question especially important for us. Some of us live with a family, some of us live alone. Either way, what we need is a relationship with Jesus through the Holy Spirit— family and friends can never replace Him! And we need what He provides for us in the Body of Christ. And we, thirdly, need to love others in Jesus' name, and point them to Him. Those are three precious ways Jesus provides His light to us, and for others.

