

“I Am the Light of the World” John 8:2-12

*At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin." 12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

The NIV note says that John 7:53-8:11 isn't in the earliest manuscripts. How do we respond?

The early church did not have a meeting and announced, “Hey! We need to write the New Testament.” Their book was the Old Testament. That was “The Bible” to them. However, as the church grew, they wanted to record some of the history. They also wanted to record some of the information that was being shared by their leaders. Thus, these books were written by different authors who were known and respected. These letters began to be in use.

What’s a “**Manuscript**?” A manuscript is technically anything which is written by hand (“manual inscription”). For our purposes, we’d say that it is simply a copy of the original writings of scripture. The original documents have disappeared long ago. Actually we have “copies of the copies of the copies.” Most manuscripts were divided into 4 parts: 4 Gospels, Acts & General Epistles, Paul’s writings, Revelation. Rarely did one manuscript contain the entire New Testament. We have about 5,000 manuscripts of the New Testament.

The original Greek language used capital letters and had little, if any punctuation. This is how John 3:16 would have appeared in its earliest form:

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We have different versions, in part, because they use different manuscripts. Scholars continually seek to improve. As language changes, we also have to make changes. We do not speak like they did in 1611 when the King James Version was produced. We believe the manuscripts we have now are qualitatively better than the ones used in 1611. Those who think that the Bible is only the Bible if they use the King James Version are misguided. The KJV is wonderfully poetic, but it’s also 400 years old. For the 1500 years before it, Christians did not even possess it. Very few spoke the English language. The Bible was written in Hebrew, Greek, and a few bits of Aramaic. I’m not against using the KJV (Psalm 23 only sounds right in the KJV) but I find it to be very hard to understand! We didn’t deal with the better manuscripts, believe it or not, until the mid-1800’s. There’s a lot of drama to these stories, of course.

\*\*\*If you are looking for further study on this, I’d recommend this book: “**How We Got the Bible**” (Neil Lightfoot).

2.) In addition to John 7:53-8:11, Mark 16:10-16 is not found in the earliest manuscripts. We have to admit: “We don’t know” if 8:1-11 is authentic, though it certainly sounds like something Jesus would do. It fits His character perfectly. As the old saying goes, “If it looks, walks, and quacks like a duck. ...it must be a duck.” But we also must admit that it isn’t in the earliest manuscripts. It was probably a tradition handed down by the early church.

The church had to decide what should go into the bible and what should be rejected. The term, “the **canon**,” means a “ruler” or “measuring device.” Certain books were deemed as “canonical.” They were historically accurate, were accepted by the church at the time, and were in theological accord with the rest of the Bible. Others were judged as being in error. A 3<sup>rd</sup> group of books are referred to as “Deutero-canonical.” That means they were second in nature. They weren’t the primary books. The church didn’t feel they measured up to the highest standards of scripture. However, they often had beneficial things in them. “The **Apocrypha**” of the Old Testament are the “hidden books” which Roman Catholics accept as being in their Bible but Protestants reject. There are other New Testament Apocrypha books which neither Catholics nor Protestants accept. My feeling is that John 8:1-11 certainly fits into this category.

We take seriously the authorship, date, and content of the Bible. Other religions often refuse questions about their sacred texts. I don’t understand some parts of the Bible. I’m growing, too. But nobody else is perfectly accurate, either.

The **context** of this section = Jesus is speaking to the people & then to the leaders & then back to the people. John is emphasizing how the religious leaders are in such strident opposition to Jesus. In chapter 9, they harass a blind man.

Jesus is the great “I Am.” This is linkage to the Old Testament when Moses asked God what God’s name was – and God said, “I Am.” By saying “I Am... (these 7 objects Jesus names),” Jesus claims to be God. He gives us only **2 options**. It’s an “On/Off” button. We might prefer a 3<sup>rd</sup> option – Red/Green + Yellow. Jesus often gave people ultimatums which consisted of only two choices. As C.S. Lewis famously stated: Jesus is a liar, a legend, a lunatic **or** the truth.

Matthew 6:24 *"No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money."*

I.) **Walk in darkness.** Lost people act in lost ways. In this story there are 2 groups of people walking in darkness.

A.) The “**Sinner**.” This must have been a very awkward situation. She was literally exposed. When things come to light, it can be tremendously embarrassing. Let’s not gloss over the impact of adultery! Getting caught was almost punishment enough. She must have felt her life was over at that time. Nor did Jesus tolerate her behavior.

Matthew 6:22-23 *"The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"* When life is full of darkness, it’s agony, not a happy time!

B.) The “**judges**.” They caught her “in the very act.” And of course, it does take two to tango. Where’s the guy? This smacks of selective justice not impartial justice. It shows the tendency to single others out by making them look so bad while taking a pass on things we struggle with. Adultery is sin; but so are pride and greed, anger, and lust. These self-righteous men were acting as judge, jury, and executioner. Their concern was not about the woman, but was an attempt to trap Jesus on the horns of a dilemma: Should she be stoned to death as the Old Testament taught (would lose popular support from the people), or should we go easy on her and forgive her (seemingly ignoring the teachings of the Old Testament)?

Matthew 7:3-5 *"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

Jesus told them: “Whoever is without sin cast toss the first rock.” After they left, Jesus told she was forgiven, but she also was instructed to live in a new way. Forgiveness, according to Jesus, is for the purpose of Transformation!

II.) **Walk in the Light of life.**

A.) He invites us to **receive** the light. Darkness = the absence of light. It’s nothingness. Cold is the absence of heat, so darkness is the absence of light. The first thing God did in creation = to bring light.

Colossians 1:12-14 *giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*

B.) We are to **Witness** to it. Matthew 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."* This is interesting, in that this in all of the other “I AM” sayings, Jesus makes claims about Himself. Only when it comes to witness does He switch and say “**YOU ARE** the light of the world.” We are the light of the world – we don’t need to blind people with it or beat them over the head with it, but we need to illuminate it. If we profess, our practice is being watched by others. Some are going to judge the Christ by the way we live. That’s a privilege, but it’s also a responsibility. Not doing certain behaviors (cursing, treating people in detrimental ways, etc.). A lot of this is built-in, default setting.

C.) We are to **Live** in it. He tells her: *"Then neither do I condemn you. Go now and leave your life of sin."*

Ephesians 5:8-19 *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: "Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Be very careful, then, how you live — not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit."*

1 John 2:9 *Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.*

Is the light convicting you of some behavior or attitude? Are there area(s) of darkness you need to recognize & repent from? Is there some work you need to do?

Are you, in any way, "living in sin?" Are you violating in any way the Biblical commandments? Is there sexual sin in your life? Are you breaking any laws?

Maybe you are living in a righteous way. That's far better than living in an unrighteous way. But is your attitude that of being mean, judgmental, critical, harsh, unloving, or unkind? Is your life full of pride because you see yourself as such a wonderful example of humanity? Is there a basic humility and spirit of gratitude you live with?

Part of living in the light is to continually expose ourselves to the light. There are shadows and places of darkness all around us. We can deny, hide, or decide to shield our eyes from the light. We all digress. We need to continually redirect ourselves. Let's not be deceived!

We're no longer condemned. All of us have been forgiven beyond our ability to comprehend. We are set free. Now be empowered by the Holy Spirit to live a new life. Walk in the light you have. Do what you have now. Like driving at night – the whole path isn't lit, but you have enough visibility to complete your trip.

God is going to set all things right in the end. We rejoice in this final note of triumph.

**Consummation of the ages:** Revelation 21:23-24 *The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it.*