

# John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

## La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

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[A lightly edited transcript]

Happy Father's Day – it's a great day to celebrate and be thankful for our fathers, grandfathers and all the men who have been like fathers to us. We love and honor you all here today!

Also, on this day I want to say, Happy Anniversary to our favorite Hockey loving, Beach exploring couple – Pastor Joe and Rachel – celebrating 17 years today! We love you both!

And while we're celebrating a happy shoutout to Mr. and Mrs Daniel and Abigail our newest newly wed couple who got married just yesterday!

We're so thankful for you both and happy for you! Happy Father's Day, Anniversary, and Happiness to our newliweds!

We're continuing today in our series "Believe" through the gospel of John. You can open your Bibles and get ready for chapter 8 and while you're getting there I have a question for you,

What comes to your mind when you think about darkness?

Last July on one of the hottest days of the year Glen and I along with Pastor Joe, Rachel and the kids all escaped the heat in the most incredible way – we climbed down a spiral of 235 stairs into the deepest cavern in California – 16 stories down into the earth.

The Moaning Cavern in Calaveras County is pretty incredible and my inner history and geology nerd were definitely geeking out not to mention being somewhere that's 40 degrees cooler than up top is super – well, cool – but a question I think everyone was curious to experience was, "How dark is this going to get and how is that going to feel?"

You begin in full daylight and then descend first wooden stairs then a narrow metal spiraling staircase for the remainder of the 165 feet plummet winding down to a metal platform.

That's when our guide gathered the 20 or so of us on the tour to her and told its history and then one section at a time, began turning off the lights. The upper strings went out, the middle section of lights around the stairs turned off, then the platform area – she shut down all the lights until she was only holding her dim flashlight and it was dark. Dark.

And she talked about the features of the cavern – the formation of one area that looked like a shark, another like curtains, and then she began shutting down sections of the lights letting our eyes adjust and we kept being able to see the cavern in shadows and light reflecting making it look creepier and cooler.

But, then she lit a small candle, turned off her battery light and talked about how the first explorers would have only had a flickering candle to light their way as they hung on a rope with none of the convenience of staircase we had just come down. Then, and the moment we could feel her building to, she warned us she'd extinguishing that final candlelight and encouraged us to keep our hands on the metal railing framing us in around that platform. We did, and with a puff...

the flame went out and the place went silent and the darkness which we could up to that moment feel creeping around us

completely seized the space and became a thing. I couldn't see my hand, I couldn't see Glen's face, Rachel's, the kids', of Joe's – not even the reflection of a rivet on his Angel cap – it was all the clichés I've ever heard about that kind of darkness – you can't see your own hand in front of your face, it's so dark you can feel it, you become almost instantly disoriented and thankful for the advice to hold the railing and even more thankful that it was temporary.

When you think of darkness, what comes to mind? Well, we're in church so you will likely think not only of physical darkness but of spiritual darkness and I imagine you feel it in our world today.

# John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

## La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

We live in a dark world. No news flash there so the opening of John's gospel is hopeful news:

*"In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it."*

*John 1:4-5*

As John wrote his account of Jesus' life he must have been excited to make sure we – all who would read and hear would grasp this great news – because he writes about Jesus being the light more than any other New Testament writers -

What is the answer to the darkness around us? The darkness even within us? Jesus.

We've been with Jesus in Jerusalem during the great feast of Tabernacles also called Sukkot. One of 7 feasts that have been part of the rhythm of life for the Jews for over 1500 years. When God delivered His people from darkness and slavery in Egypt what was the first thing He gave them?

A Calendar

God's Calendar of feasts for His people – to look back on what he had done for them and look ahead to what he would do – and every feast will be fulfilled in Jesus. Here's the feasts with today's dates and you can see that just this past week was Shavuot – that's Pentecost – next up will be Rosh Hashana then Yom Kippur or Day of Atonement and the final of the 7 is Sukkot – Feast of Tabernacles and that's where we are with Jesus in chapter 8.

I hope you are seeing that Jesus keeps triggering in their minds the ways God has provided for them for 1400 years and saying – remember how God provided bread for you in the wilderness? That's me. Remember how he poured water from a rock? That's me. With the woman caught in adultery – like the entire nation of Israel had done for centuries – that woman was brought to her knees by the law and offered only condemnation – but Jesus doesn't condemn her and instead releases her to live and stop sinning...Do you see what Jesus is going again and again?

He's walking them from slavery and darkness of Egypt through the wilderness and every calendar appointment and saying – for all this time I have been preparing your hearts to receive your ultimate delivery and every calendar appointment you've had, all those moments in the wilderness, they served to remind you that I am your hope, your bread and water and very life.

The water ceremony was a daytime celebration during Sukkot – and this feast had a nightly ceremony as well –

Lighting four 75 foot tall lampstands. The light from these flames filled the temple courtyard and beyond because they were so tall.

If the water pouring ceremony reminded the people of God providing water in the wilderness, what do you think the lampstands reminded them of?

The pillar of fire - God leading the people through the darkness.

Imagine four towering lampstands burning through every night of Sukkot for 7 nights. Sukkot is now over, the temporary booths the people have built are down, the celebration is wrapping up and Jesus steps into the courtyard. It's not loud like it was when he cried out earlier over the noise of the water pouring – this is a more solemn moment and John records it like this

*Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."*

*John 8:12*

This would have gotten their attention because Jesus didn't point to the temple lampstand and say, I am like a light.

No, I am the light of the world – Let's be clear – this was a claim to be God himself.

## John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

### La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

Who led them in the wilderness? God.

*the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them along the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night.*

*Exodus 13:21*

Who led them in the pillar of fire? The LORD God. Who gave them light to travel by? The LORD.

Here's Jesus in the courtyard where the lights that have been blazing throughout this feast and I imagine he stood calmly and spoke these incredible words.

You see that light? You remember what these lampstands all remind you of – the pillar of fire that you followed through the wilderness? That's me – follow me.

I'm the Light – but not like these towering lampstands standing 75 feet tall lighting the courtyard of this Temple – I'm the light and I'm on the move. Darkness is coming to this courtyard – imagine the final moments as each lampstand is extinguished and 8 days of Sukkot ended. Life is returning to normal – these lights are going out. Darkness follows ...so Follow me and you'll have the light of life.

Wow.

Only God gives light to the world. Only God can give light to the eyes. Only God can bring light to the heart. Only God can speak light into existence. Jesus is claiming to be that very power – that light.

Which means he's also declaring that he is the messiah – the one who was promised to come.

Jesus is the light for the world and He's declaring what the faithful already know. Jesus didn't claim to be **a** light – hey, follow me, I'll show you the way – any good teacher could talk like that. He said, "I'm the light and not just of this temple courtyard or Jerusalem or even all of this region – I'm the light of the World –

but the Pharisees will not accept this and begin to try to discredit Him in three ways. First by discrediting His witness:

*"You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true."*

*John 8:13*

The Pharisees are using the law of two of more witnesses and saying you have no witnesses – you're just you. You have no proof.

But Jesus' words and signs have been his proof all along and now he's not messing with them and their refusal to believe.

Those who want to know have hope. They are like any of us in a dark cavern waiting for the light to come on and hoping it will.

The pharisees are not waiting for light to come they are waiting to trap those who bring light and worse they are manipulating God's law to do it – like their attempt to kill the woman caught in adultery they used the law to kill and destroy and now instead of humbly joyfully seeing the Light standing, speaking, teaching right before their eyes they throw the law at Him – you can't claim to be the Light – you don't have a witness.

But Jesus has already shown more than one witness – He's shown them 5 Back in chapter 5 – which makes it easy to remember He said

## John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

*"If I alone bear witness about myself, my testimony is not true. There is another who bears witness about me, and I know that the testimony that he bears about me is true... **John**, and he has borne witness to the truth... the very **works** that I am doing, bear witness about me... And the **Father** who sent me has himself borne witness about me....[but wait there's more]... and it is [the **scriptures**] that bear witness about me... if you believed **Moses**, you would believe me; for he wrote of me."*

*John 5:31-46*

If you wanted to believe you would. I have met and exceeded every requirement of the law.

So Jesus schools them on this law:

*Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.*

*John 8:14*

This time Jesus simply points out that his testimony is true because he is telling the truth. There has been nothing false in his words. There has been no reason for not believing what Jesus is declaring.

These are the only two witnesses that are needed – Jesus and the Father.

What's their issue? Judging wrongly. how do they judge wrongly?

*You judge according to the flesh;*

*John 8:15a*

This is a chronic issue with anyone who insists on not seeing the light – judging wrongly – in particular by physical appearance, lacking faith, looking on the outside. The Greek word is "sarks" and your translation the NIV or the NLT might have taken that word and done some interpreting for you – "human standards' . Later, Paul a Pharisee also, will write, that this was his problem too:

*we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now!*

*2 Corinthians 5:15 (NLT)*

How differently we know Him now...so beautiful.

The Pharisees had this week-long festival recalling and celebrating that their God had brought them through the Wilderness, gave them bread, shelter, water, light...

But they refuse to accept that their deliverer stood before them...instead they continue to judge stubbornly in the flesh.

and Jesus says,

## John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

### La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

*I judge no one – not that way like you do Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone who judge, but I and the Father who sent me.*

*John 8:15b-16*

And of course, Jesus will one day judge. but that's not what is at issue here, not yet. There's still time for them to believe and not have that final judgment and

remember this – it is not Jesus' mission to humiliate anyone. Jesus is there to bring life, to bring all to the Light and truth.

If it were me I might have gotten short and annoyed with the pharisees and enjoyed the moment making them feel uncomfortable, that's not Jesus. He doesn't want anyone to remain in the darkness.

*In your Law it is written that the testimony of two people is true. I am the one who bears witness about myself, and the Father who sent me bears witness about me.*

*John 8:17-18*

There. There's your two witnesses. Me and the Father.

So the Pharisees slap back with their 2<sup>nd</sup> attempt to discredit Jesus with ancient Hebrew version of "Who's your daddy?" a mocking, attempt to slam Jesus, take the attention off themselves and their failure to believe and try to turn the crowd against Him

*"Where is your father?"*

*John 8:19a*

If they really knew who Jesus was, then they would know exactly who the Father was but. And this is exactly their problem. Jesus says:

*You know neither me nor my Father. If you knew me, you would know my Father also."*

*John 8:19b*

What a rebuke. You don't know me – and why? Because you don't know my Father.

They say they know God, they press Jesus about Him but they have no idea. The God they have is a God of their own imagination

But, this is why people don't come to Him or to the light – deliberate refusal to let go of their own image of God and hold self-righteously to their own understanding.

It's interesting then that right here John describes where this confrontation is taking place.

*These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple; but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.*

*John 8:20*

He's in the Temple and not just any area – He's in the area called the Treasury – this would have been open to men and women of all ages to bring their offerings.

In other words, this isn't an off road out of the way encounter – it's public and even though the leaders may have wanted to – they didn't arrest Him – His hour had not yet come.

Jesus is on God's calendar not theirs. And He explains what's going to happen when His hour does come:

## John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

*"I am going away, and you will seek me, and you will die in your sin. Where I am going, you cannot come."*

*John 8:21*

Jesus has already predicted that He'd be leaving. Back in chapter 7 He said "I will be with you a little longer, and then I am going to him who sent me."

And now He speaks three more prophecies:

- 1) You will seek me – they are seeking Him now for sure – they are seeking to trap Him, insult Him, discredit Him, arrest and even kill Him – and they will continue to seek Him even after He goes but
- 2) You will die in your sin – the kind of seeking they are doing is not the kind that will lead to life – they will die and they will die in their sin –
- 3) You cannot come where I am going – for the reasons He's stated – they are not qualified to go

And again a deliberately obtuse, sarcastic, and mocking response:

*"Will he kill himself, since he says, 'Where I am going, you cannot come'?"*

*John 8:22*

Instead of taking to heart what should have been a terrifying idea that they would die in their sins, they become more absurd implying that Jesus will commit suicide.

The Jews believed that the darkest place in the afterlife was for those who killed themselves.

Of course, they thought they were going to heaven. So, their insult was saying, since we're obviously going to heaven you must go to the darkest place below.

But Jesus brings out the Uno reverse card and turns their words back on them. It's not me but you.

*You are from below; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world. I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.*

*John 8:23-24*

What was the first thing God gave His people when He delivered them out of the darkness and slavery of Egypt? A calendar. God's sacred times set apart His people.

But something else sets the people of God apart. Do you know what that is? Sacred places.

And these people - the ones who sit as if on high judgment over the people - are not so high. They are from below. You think you are high up because of your location here in Jerusalem? No. You are actually from below. You are of this world and I am of above – sacred space.

You cannot belong to this world and belong to the Father.

There is no wiggle room in Jesus' words – if they – anyone – does not believe what will happen?

"You will die in your sins." Three times He tells them in this short time – you will die in your sins.

Jesus just said they must believe that "I am he." The Greek reads simply "ego eimi" "I am" and the "He" is implied. I am all that I've testified and declared to be. I am all that the witnesses have testified.

## John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

### La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

We're going to die in our sins? We are from below? You're from above? We have to believe that you are who you say you are? So, they said to Him:

*"Who are you?"*

*John 8:25*

Who are you thinking you can tell us what to do, how to live, and that we are going to die in our sins without believing in Him – this guy who can't even produce a father and threatens suicide?

This is the same problem people have today with Jesus. Most don't want a Jesus that tells them what to do. Die in sin? Not me. I may not be perfect, but I'm not that bad.

People can't imagine a Jesus who wouldn't affirm any form of self expression and lifestyle. Love is love. I'm not hurting anyone so Jesus would hardly have an issue with me let alone tell me I'm dying in my sin.

But the pride of the Pharisees denying Jesus, is no different than the pride of any one of us holding to our own pet sin and definition of what is right in our own eyes.

And in spite of how frustrating their stubbornness is or how prideful their tone, instead of turning over some tables, or bringing out another homemade whip, listen to Jesus' patient response: *Who am I?*

*"Just what I have been telling you from the beginning. I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have heard from him." They did not understand that he had been speaking to them about the Father.*

*John 8:25-27*

Jesus declared from the beginning who He was, His Father and the Holy Spirit did as well – Jesus has been certified true – at His baptism the Spirit descended on Him and the voice of God declared,

*"This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."*

*Matthew 3:17*

But they still didn't grasp that He'd been speaking to them about the Father.

So Jesus said to them – really spells it out...

*"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own authority, but speak just as the Father taught me. And he who sent me is with me. He has not left me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to him."*

*John 8:28-29*

What language is the new Testament written in? Greek. Right, the Greek word translated "lifted up" is "hupsos" it literally means exalted, which is what you do when you lift someone up – you exalt them – but it also means – literally lift up like Moses did when he lifted a bronze serpent up for the people in the wilderness to look at and be healed –

He will be lifted up and we know that He meant the cross – but guess who also knew? Anyone living in 1st century under Roman rule – the cross was where criminals were lifted up. Jesus is deliberately making a connection to being exalted by His Father through the crucifixion.

## John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World

### La Mirada Christian Church: "Believe" Sermon Series

---

I'm always doing what is pleasing to my Father. He says.

I'm not of this world, but I'm not alone here. I'm on my father's time and at the right time – as I've said before – I will be lifted up and that's when you'll know that I am He – "ego ei-mee"

Pause and let's go back to where this moment began. It's Jesus, in the Temple treasury area, at the close of the 7-day Feast of Tabernacles – the sukkot - temporary homes - have been taken down, the flaming lights that had filled the temple every evening have been extinguished, and Jesus, maybe standing in the shadow of one of the towering lampstands says:

*I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*

*John 8:12*

"I am the Light of the World." That's what started this entire conversation – I am the light of the World – who ever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life"

They are in darkness. Their opening accusation - You're a liar. You have no witnesses to support your claim.

Their mocking slam looking for His Father reveals their darkness.

Their final question, "Who are you?" reveals exactly how in the dark they are.

And now, where does the Light of the World point them to? the cross...

*"When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He..."*

*John 8:28*

On the darkest day of history you will know – everything I've been saying – I am the Light of the world – is true.

And here's something exciting –

*As he was saying these things, many believed in him.*

*John 8:30*

Do you know what we're all aware of? Darkness. You know what we are all longing for? Light.

Not a distraction from the darkness – a shiny object placating our sadness, lostness, and darkness – but light. True light.

To be in that cavern consumed by darkness and then see the light. It's a relief. It's reorienting. It's knowing I'm not condemned to live fumbling around hoping I make it out.

The greatest news doesn't come by denying the darkness or playing down how evil things are. The greatest news is that Light has come to the very dark world.

Three times Jesus said "you will die in your sins." Three times He made it clear, you will die in darkness.

He didn't minimize their problem, He maximized the solution and they believed Him.

In the beginning...God said, Let there be light and there was light and what did God do?

He saw that the light was good and separated it from the darkness – evening and morning, the first day.



**John 8:11-30 || I Am the Light of the World**  
La Mirada Christian Church: “Believe” Sermon Series

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In the end the very end what does God’s word promise?

*“...night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.”*

*Revelation 22:5*

Today Jesus stands in between – the Alpha and Omega/ beginning and end and says...

*“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”*  
Follow me – the Light and you’ll won’t die in your sins – you’ll have the light of life!

The Feast of Tabernacles was over. And some of those who had come to Jerusalem had walked there in darkness and are now, because they believed in Him, heading back home in the light.

That’s me, that’s you, without Jesus we are walking in darkness – but we can head home in Light. As we take communion together and continue in worship, let’s pray and like those around Jesus that day, believe and be renewed in our trust in what He did for us – His body broken, His blood shed so that we would not die in our sins but have the light of Life in us.

Let’s pray: