

6 Reasons to Love the Dark

(John 8:12-30)

(preached 11/25/18; Pine Grove BC Sun AM)

Introduction

Take your Bibles and turn with me to John 8.

We are working our way through John's gospel verse by verse and we come to one the more well known passages in it this morning..

Let me read it for us.

John 8:12-29..

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not [b]true." 14 Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is [c]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. 15 You judge [d]according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. 17 Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is [e]true. 18 I am He who

testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” 19 So they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.” 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

21 Then He said again to them, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” 22 So the Jews were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?” 23 And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. 24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that [f]I am He, you will die in your sins.” 25 So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “[g]What have I been saying to you from the beginning? 26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” 27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that [h]I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He [i]has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.” 30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

Let us pray.

Nyctophobia is a extreme fear of the dark.

Every night when the trash needs to go to the dumpster, I come down with Nyctophobia.

In all seriousness, it is a real phobia that people suffer with in the world.

In fact, 11% of the US population suffers from this fear of the dark phobia, making it the 4th most common phobia behind public speaking, death, and spiders.

Now understand that this 11% are not just afraid of the dark, they actually suffer physical effects from their phobia.

Many won't leave their homes after sunset.

Most even have difficulty sleeping at night.

Now everyone has a little apprehension in the dark, and it has been shown that most kids begin to fear the dark between age 2 and 3.

For some the fear goes away over time, but researchers say that some people have a more difficult time overcoming this fear.

In fact, 17% of Americans sleep with a night light on, and get this...

22% close closet doors and do a check under their bed every night before going to sleep..

According to researchers, the issue is not the darkness, it is the uncertainty of what the darkness hides..

And that is real issue of darkness, it is uncertainty and anxiety that it brings...

Well, the Bible speaks of darkness and light..

You may remember that God said let there be light in the beginning of creation..

And then he separated the darkness from the light...

You may also remember that God often appeared in the Bible in the form of a blinding light..

In the life of Jesus, we read that he took a few disciples up a mountain and uncovered his glory to reveal a blazing light..

We also see that Jesus paid a visit to John in the book of Revelation as a man wrapped in a brilliant light...

It seems that God wants to make clear that he is light...

His truth is light..

His Word is a light to our feet..

God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all is how John will describe this idea in 1 John.

So it is no wonder that when Jesus arrives on earth, he is described as light in the world...

You may remember what John wrote in chapter 1 of this gospel..

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 [a]He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. 5 The Light shines in the darkness,

But then notice how John finishes verse 5...

and the darkness did not [b]comprehend it.

The incredible reality is that the light of Christ came but men loved the darkness more than the light..

Look, when we walk into the parsonage at night, the first thing I do is flip the light switch..

That is the very first thing I do...

Yet, the truth about the majority of people in the world is that they prefer to walking and living a dark life in a dark house..

They prefer driving with their car headlights off..

They prefer reading and playing and studying in dark rooms...

This is the reality of most people in the world..

But why do they love darkness?

Why do they hate the light of Christ?

Well, John 8 is going to give us some insight in to why people prefer darkness over light...

In fact, we are going to see 6 reasons why people love darkness rather than light in John 8:12-30...

And the purpose of this is not to convince you to love spiritual darkness...

The point of looking at people in spiritual darkness like the Pharisees and scribes is to encourage you to leave the darkness and come to the light of Christ..

And the point of hearing these reasons is simple..

In fact, take note of John 8:30, which is the last verse of this passage..

As Jesus spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

The odd reality is this..

The more Jesus talked about the religious leaders loving the darkness, the more people began to believe in Him and come to the light of salvation..

So let us today, look at 6 reasons to love the darkness..

Look if you prefer hell to heaven, here are 6 ways to guarantee that you will miss out on eternal life..

Maybe we should even call these 6 fringe benefits of unbelief...

We will begin in verses 12 and 13 with the first reason to prefer darkness over light..

I. Darkness Believes Nothing (12-13)

Let's read verses 12 and 13 again...

12 Then Jesus again spoke to them, saying, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life." 13 So the Pharisees said to Him, "You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not [b]true."

As we return to John's gospel, it is the final night of the feast of Tabernacles...

We have been with Jesus in his next to last Jewish festival, the feast of booths or tabernacles, for the past month..

Chapter 7 began with his brothers inviting him to travel to Jerusalem with them for this fall festival..

As we have said before, Jesus never broke the law, and the law required all Jewish to be in Jerusalem for 3 festivals each year.

The Passover was the spring festival celebrating God's protection of Israel in Egypt.

As the final plague struck the land of Egypt, the angel of death passed over any Jewish family that had their door covered in the blood of a lamb..

So each year, Jews gathered in the spring to celebrate the Passover..

The next festival was Pentecost which was 50 days past Passover..

Pentecost was a harvest celebration of the wheat harvest and an expression of thankfulness for God's provision.

Then each fall, all Jews gathered in Israel for the feast of booths, which celebrated God's protection and provision while Israel wandered in the wilderness after they left Egypt and headed to settle the Promised Land..

This feast of booths was the most joyous of all 3 festivals and Jesus never missed one as required by the law..

So he is here at his next to last festival.

It is October.

In 5 months, it will be March and he will go to Jerusalem for the Passover, where he will become the ultimate Passover Lamb, as his blood provides us with protection when the angel of death heads our way..

Now we have a lot about this festival...

We have seen that the center of activity was the temple..

1000s of Jews would gather there as you would at any festival..

There would be food, drink, fellowship..

And we have seen that there was rituals that accompanied the festival.

The priest would gather water and pour it out on the altar to remember that God provided water for them in the wilderness..

It was during this water ceremony where Jesus stood up and shouted, “if anyone is thirsty, let him come to me.”

“And I will make him a river of living water that flows into the world.”

You see, Jesus always knew how to take the ritual, the ceremony and put the focus on Himself..

You see, rituals are empty...

Ceremonies are meaningless without Christ at the center...

This is why your singing is in vain, your giving is in vain, your attendance is even in vain if Christ is not the focus of them..

So Jesus was trying to show the Jew there that a water ceremony was fine but if they missed the water of life that he offered, all their rituals and ceremonies were of no use..

Well, on this final night of the Feast, Jesus once again takes advantage of his surroundings and the festivities to call people to Himself..

Let me show you an artist rendering of the temple in Jesus' day during the feast of tabernacles..

You see, the festival didn't end at sundown each day.

Instead, they were 4 large candleholders there in the courtyard of the temple, and Jewish historians let us know that these 4 menorahs were lit each night...

Or it is also possible that they burned all day as well, similar to the Olympic flame..

And the reason for that was twofold..

Number one, the light helped activities to continue into the night...

But number two and most important, the fire was a reminder to Israel that God guided them out of the Promised Land as a pillar of fire during their travel at night...

And since the festival celebrated God care of them in the wilderness, the huge flames in the temple during the festival were a constant reminder of that..

Needless to say, the lighting of the temple was an incredible sight to behold..

But on the final night of the feast, the flames were extinguished as people prepared to leave the next morning..

It is most likely at this point where the flames are about to be extinguished or maybe right after they go out, that Jesus stands and offer this final invitation in his final Jewish festival..

And that invitation is simply what you read in verse 12...

“I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

This is a powerful invitation in a powerful setting where physical darkness is about to set in..

And Jesus simply says...

If you come to me, you won't walk in darkness..

Very similar to what he said when he told the crowd earlier in the day that if they came to him, they wouldn't thirst anymore...

This is the Jewish Messiah pleading with the Jewish people..

He loves this nation...

He came to deliver them from their false religion.

He came to put away their sins once and for all..

He came to end their priesthood, their sacrificial system..

He came to be their Savior..

He came to offer light in the darkness of what the Jewish religion had become..

Yet, what is the reaction to his pleading, to his preaching, to his invitation of eternal life?

Simple.

Men and Women preferred darkness to light...

Look at verse 13...

13 So the Pharisees said to Him, “You are testifying about Yourself; Your testimony is not [b]true.”

Benefit #1 is loving the darkness more than the light is that you don't have to believe anything or anyone..

The Pharisees rejected his call because they rejected his testimony about Himself..

And since they did, they were free to believe what they wanted and better yet, they were free to behave like they wanted to behave..

Look, some of you don't come to Christ because you don't want to admit that you don't know everything..

You don't want to admit that there is truth out there that exists regardless of whether you believe it or not..

So the easiest thing to do is simply refuse to believe in anything because the moment you do, you admit that you aren't in control anymore..

These Pharisees love their own words too much to believe Jesus' testimony about himself.

One benefit of darkness is that you can believe what you want or you don't have to believe in anything or anyone other than yourself..

Sadly, that way of thinking, that unbelief only sends you further into darkness...

A second benefit of darkness, a second reason to love darkness is found in verses 14-20..

II. Darkness Mocks the Supernatural (14-20)

Verse 14..

14 Jesus answered and said to them, “Even if I testify about Myself, My testimony is [c]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. 15 You judge [d]according to the flesh; I am not judging anyone. 16 But even if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone in it, but I and the Father who sent Me. 17 Even in your law it has been written that the testimony of two men is [e]true. 18 I am He who testifies about Myself, and the Father who sent Me testifies about Me.” 19 So they were saying to Him, “Where is Your Father?” Jesus answered, “You know neither Me nor My Father; if you knew Me, you would know My Father also.” 20 These words He spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one seized Him, because His hour had not yet come.

For the Pharisees, the greatest hindrance to coming to light of Christ was that they couldn't accept that Jesus was the Son of God..

Over and over, Jesus testifies that God was his Father.

Right here, Jesus is telling the Pharisees that He and the Father give testimony to Jesus' identity..

Remember at the baptism, the Father spoke and identified Jesus as His son with whom He was well pleased...

Jesus said he was the Son of God..

The Father said that He was the Son..

And the Jews should have accepted that testimony, but they reject it over and over...

And the simple reason is that they couldn't accept the supernatural nature of Christ..

They couldn't accept that their Messiah had come from heaven via Galilee and a manger..

In verse 19, they ask Jesus where is his father, meaning where is your earthly father...

They simply couldn't accept that their God would come in flesh and was standing before their eyes..

If they had accepted the supernatural nature of Christ, they would have been on their faces here instead of rejecting Jesus' claims to be the Son of God..

Look, if you live in darkness, you don't have to believe in a supernatural God seen in the three persons of the Trinity..

You can simply stick to what you understand and reject anything that a you can't fully explain..

When you don't understand how Jesus is both Son and God eternal, you can back to your darkness and find comfort in it..

A third reason to live in darkness is found in verses 21-22..

III. Darkness Loves Self - Righteousness (21-22)

In verse 21, Jesus repeats something that he has already told the Jews a few verses back..

Verse 21..

21 Then He said again to them, “I go away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin; where I am going, you cannot come.” 22 So the Jews were saying, “Surely He will not kill Himself, will He, since He says, ‘Where I am going, you cannot come’?”

Verse 21 is simply the sentence of unbelief..

If you reject Christ and his invitation of salvation, he wont force you to spend eternity with him..

And that is exactly what Jesus is telling the religious leaders here..

Look, I am going away and you can’t come where I am going..

In other words, heaven is closed to unbelievers..

Yet, the Jews mock him here by saying that if he is going away via suicide, they certainly wont be joining him there..

Like many people wrongly believe today, the Jews also believed that suicide was a ticket to hell..

So if Jesus was leaving by killing himself, they certainly were going to ever see him again since they were CLEARLY going to heaven..

This is the sin of self-self-righteousness..

Self-righteous people see heaven as a reward for good works..

Self-righteous people see themselves as worthy of heaven since they are better than most people..

Here the Pharisees think they are heaven bound and Jesus is hell bound but the opposite is actually true..

A benefit of living in darkness is that you can be self-righteous..

A benefit of living in darkness is that you can try to work your way to heaven by being better than your neighbor..

A third reason to love darkness is that it will enable you to love how much of a good person you are...

A fourth reason to stay in darkness is found in verse 23...

IV. Darkness Focuses on the World (23)

23 And He was saying to them, “You are from below, I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world.

One fantastic benefit of living in darkness is that you can focus on the things of the world..

You can make the most of the lust of the flesh, the lust of your eyes, and the pride of life..

You can set your sights on making this world heaven on earth because I assure that there wont be a heaven after earth...

The Pharisees couldn't see Christ in his glory because their eyes were looking around them instead of over them..

They couldn't see Christ because they loves the attention of men, they loved looking super spiritual in their robes and special seats in the synagogue..

They love the power they were given and they loved the money that poured into the temple treasury.

You see, the people thought these men had a hunger for heaven, but the reality is that they had a hunger for the things of earth..

And there were so focused on the earth that they missed the King of heaven..

If you love darkness more than light, you will love this world..

And you will be able to spend your time laying up treasure here..

A 4th reason to love darkness is that...

IV. Darkness Refuses to Budge (24)

If you like to be your own boss, you prefer darkness to light.

If you don't like anyone telling you what to do, darkness provides that benefit..

In verse 24, Jesus reminds these Jewish leaders of their stubbornness..

24 Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that [f]I am He, you will die in your sins."

Some people will not budge in what they believe.

You can talk to them until you are blue in the face.

You can plead with them to see the truth.

But in the end, "ain't nobody telling them what to do."

Jesus had told these men over and over of the need to move from unbelief to belief in Him.

Yet, they refused to respond to His authority.

Even in the face of death, some people simply won't give in.

If that is you, I will tell you the same thing that Jesus told these men..

You will die in your sins unless you believe in Christ..

If you prefer our way to Christ's way, then darkness is for you.

And that resistance and refusal to budge will be your badge of honor in the lake of fire..

A final reason to prefer darkness to light is found in verses 25-30....

V. Darkness Rejoices in Ignorance (25-30)

25 So they were saying to Him, “Who are You?” Jesus said to them, “[g]What have I been saying to you from the beginning? 26 I have many things to speak and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and the things which I heard from Him, these I speak to the world.” 27 They did not realize that He had been speaking to them about the Father. 28 So Jesus said, “When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that [h]I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. 29 And He who sent Me is with Me; He [i]has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.”

The question of verse 25 is absolutely astonishing..

So they were saying to Him, “Who are you?”

Here we are 3 years into Jesus’ ministry on earth..

3 years into his miracles, his healings, his teachings, and yet they are asking Jesus who He is..

Look, Jesus had clearly stated from day 1 of his ministry who he was.

He was God in the flesh.

He was one with the Father.

HE was the Son of God.

HE was the Messiah.

He was the Christ.

He had testified over and over jut exactly who he was..

Yet, the leaders ask him again...

Who are you?

This is a ridiculous question.

Yet, those in darkness are ignorant to the truth..

For some people in the world, they rejoice in their stupidity..

They parade their lack of knowledge and even use it to their advantage...

I am sure that some people will face God and tell him, in their best whiny voice, "Well, I never knew there was a Savior."

Look, I understand that many are blinded to truth by the god of this world..

But I also know that some live in willful ignorance of Christ.

They have been exposed to Him, but they claim that they aren't smart enough to understand everything they need to be saved..

Look, you dont need the education of a seminary professor to be saved, you need the faith of a child..

But if you like living in ignorance, then will love living in darkness..

Darkness allows you to avoid studying and growing in knowledge...

And ultimately darkness allows you to avoid coming to Christ..

If you stay in darkness, you can gladly live in ignorance...

Conclusion

There you go, maybe my worst sermon ever because I have given 6 reasons not to believe in the gospel...

I have essentially pointed out 6 benefits of staying unsaved..

#1 - You are free to never believe in anyone or anything.

#2 - You can make fun of supernatural truths like the fact that Jesus is both Son and God.

#3 - You can love your good works and pat yourself on the back at how good you are and how much you deserve heaven.

#4 - You can focus on this world and all the things it offers..

#5 - You can stay stubborn and do what you want to do.

#6 - You can ignore the truth and live hoping that God will excuse your ignorance of Christ..

Yet, I would remind that Jesus preached this same sermon, and what does verse 30 say..

30 As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.

Look, let me give you a basic truth of salvation..

You can't talk anyone out of being saved...

If God is calling them to the truth of the gospel, man is powerless to stop them..

Clearly, my hope is that you will come to Christ despite all the apparent benefits of living in darkness...

My aim is not to persuade you to follow the world.

My aim is to persuade you to Christ..

I will tell you from someone like myself in darkness for 23 years..

The light is much better than the darkness...

In fact, for those who come to the Light of the world, they will never walk in darkness again..

Don't be like these people in our passage who looked in the face of the light of Christ and went back to their dark lives..

Come to the light of Christ and leave the darkness behind..... LET US PRAY.