

Light is such an important element of life. Without light we would find it difficult to navigate our paths when it is dark. Imagine trying to drive your car at night with no street lights and no head lamps. It would be disastrous if all the cars were like yours. We would not be able to see each other and it would be too late to jam the brakes by the time we can actually see each other. Light dispels darkness. It shows us the way forward and it illuminates places where there is darkness. Our theme for this morning is "Christ is the light of the world."

In John's gospel 1:4, John reminds us that Jesus was the light of all mankind. This light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. John identifies himself as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. John says that Jesus was the true light who was coming into the world, and when he came, though the world was made through him, the world did not recognise him. So in the opening chapter of John's gospel we see John clearly laying out that Jesus is the light of the world.

John continues to elaborate on this theme of Jesus as the light of the world through the discourse in chapter 8 and the sign through the healing of the blind man in chapter 9. Jesus claims "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." The Pharisees were in no mood to listen to Jesus because of this radical claim. They are upset that Jesus claims God to be his Father. Jesus also tells them that if they knew him they would know his Father as well. The Pharisees don't give up and they claim that Jesus was demon possessed. In the end they were so frustrated with Jesus that they picked stones to stone him, but Jesus hid himself, slipping away from the temple grounds.

In chapter 9 we see another sign- the healing of a blind man through which Jesus shows that he is indeed the light of the world. The healing of a blind man takes place at the Pool of Siloam. We are told that this man was blind from birth. His disability cut him off from normal life and so he was forced to beg for his living. When the disciples see him they ask a question with a popular assumption that all sickness was due to sin. So they asked Jesus whether this man's blindness was the result of his own sin or that of his parents.

Jesus corrects that false assumption that all suffering or sickness is due to sin. In this particular case the man was born blind so that the glory of God will be seen. The miracle of the healing of the blind man would bring glory to God. Jesus then reiterates saying, "While I am in the world, I am the light of the world." After this he spit on the ground, made some mud with the saliva and put it on the man's eyes, asking him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. As soon as he did this the man was able to see.

The healing of the blind man brought about some very interesting conversations. Some were amazed that the blind beggar could now see, others believed that he was simply a look alike. The blind man identified himself saying that he was indeed the blind beggar who was healed by Jesus. The healing of the blind man was a demonstration of Jesus' power as the light of the world. Physical sight serves as the symbol for the spiritual eyes to be opened in order to receive eternal life.

The Pharisees who heard about this miracle begin to cross examine the man and his parents. They conducted a formal investigation because the healing took place on a Sabbath. The man gave a truthful account of what had happened. The Pharisees said that a Sabbath breaker could not be sent by God. Others were confused as to how a sinful man could perform such wonderful signs. And so they go back to the man's parents who diplomatically just affirm that he was born blind and can now see. They refused to answer any other questions and tell the Pharisee to ask the man himself as he was an adult.

So the Pharisees see the man a second time and try to investigate about the incident. They want the man to narrate the sequence of events again. The man is irritated and says, "I have told you already and you did not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you want to become his disciples too?" The Pharisees were angry and they hurled insults at him. The man said that if Jesus was not from God he could not have healed him. For this answer the Pharisees threw him out.

The man meets Jesus again and Jesus asks him, "Do you believe in the Son of Man?" The man says, "Tell me so that I can believe on him." Jesus says that he is the one who was speaking with him. The man said, Lord, I believe, and worshipped him.

Jesus came into the world as the light of the world. The contrast in this incident is that the Pharisees who claim to be bearers of the light were actually blind and the blind man who had now come to the saving knowledge of Jesus as the light of the world was able to see. We too are challenged this morning by the Light of the world. We can choose to continue walking in darkness or to walk in the light. May God help us to be children of the light and walk in his ways.