

EVERY ONE'S ONLY TRUE LIGHT

John 1: 6-13 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

The only true Light of the world exposes us all as phonies until we get dead honest with God, the Word, with ourselves, and with others. Until we repent before the Lord, the only true Light, each of us are living phony lives. Warren Wiersbe tells an interesting story on page 481 of his last NT commentary about a group of church members who were all discussing their new pastor. One man said, “I don’t feel at ease with the man. I know he is a good man, all right, but something stands between us.” Another member replied, “I know what you mean. I used to have the same problem with him, but now I don’t have that problem anymore. I have great fellowship with him. The first man said, “What did the pastor do to make things better?” The other man replied, “Nothing. I did the changing. I finally decided to quit trying to impress him, and just be open and honest with him, the way he is with all of us. There has been so much pretending in my life, that we just couldn’t fellowship together. He could tell I was dishonest, that I was a phony, which I knew I have been. I repented of my hypocrisy and decided to live an honest Christian life. Since then, we are best of friends.”

Abraham Lincoln used to say these words about truth and lying. “If any of us are going to be liars, we had better have a good memory! When a person uses up all their energy in pretending, they have nothing left to give in living. Their life becomes shallow and tasteless. People who pretend not only rob themselves of reality, but they keep themselves from growing, because their true self is smothered under the false self.” Our former president hit the bullseye.

When I was a boy, I remember well Mom reading us as a family, stories from a book entitled, “Birdlife in Wington,” by John Calvin Reid. The stories are parables written in 1952 about bird characters belonging to the First Birderian Church of Wington. The chapter I can’t forget is entitled “Moonstruck.” I’ll tell you the reader’s digest version of this children’s story. Bill Whipporwill and Boohoo Owl were moaning and groaning to Dr. Snowbird in hospital in Wington. Both of Bill’s legs were broken, and Boohoo Owl had a fractured skull and a broken wing. They told Dr. Snowbird how they got to the hospital. It all began one night as the big moon came over the rise of the hill. Boohoo told Bill that they should go catch the moon, and Bill Whipporwill thought it was a great idea. Their moms and dads told them the moon weighed millions of tons and it was too big and too far away to catch. Yet, if they tried to catch the moon, they said it was too dangerous to think about, even though it looked doable as the moon was just over the hill. Both Bill and Boohoo decided their parents were just old fogies.

The next evening, they decided to deceive their parents, and fly without asking up to the rise of the hill, to prove their parents were wrong, deciding to catch the moon and carry it back home. There they sat on the rise waiting for the moon to come up. “Parents don’t know everything,” they reasoned. Then quickly the moon came up and it was moving towards them rapidly. Boohoo yelled, “It’s double tonight, Bill. I’ll take the left moon and you can take the right moon.” And that’s

how they wound up in the hospital. The driver of that “two-mooned” car was going home late, but he never knew what hit his windshield, “Thump, thump.” Now Bill and Boohoo were telling Dr. Snowbird about their deceit and disobedience, and they were remembering their Sunday School memory verse, “Honor your father and mother that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” Beloved, there are a lot of lights in this world, but Jesus, the word, the Zoe, the redemptive life, is also, the only true light, and we each can have Him living with us in our hearts and lives.

Millions today are following the wrong light, and they will wind up in eternity, without God and without hope, not just patients in the hospital, but lost in hell forever. Every man, woman, boy, and girl has only one true light, the Lord Jesus Christ. In our text, John 1: 6-13, John describes for us 4 aspects of the One whose light we bear as believers. What are John’s 4 descriptions of our only true Light?

LOOK AT THE LORD JESUS’ TRUE LIGHT REFLECTED. (I.) v. 6-8.

Let’s look at 4 ways the Word, the Lord, the Life, and Light was and is reflected.

Who was the reflector (1) of the true light? (v. 6) We read, “There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.” In verse 5, we were told, “This light of this redemptive life, zoe, shines—present tense, and it keeps on shining. Thus, John the disciple, is speaking here of John the Baptist who is here introduced as an example of the constant shining of this only true light. Commissioned by God’s Holy Spirit to be Jesus’ forerunner, and His light-bearer, this man, chosen of God named John the Baptizer’s name means “Jehovah or Yahweh has been gracious.” What the moon is to the sun, John the Baptist was to Jesus, His reflector of Gospel light.

What was John the Baptist’s work (2) as Jesus’ reflector to be? (v. 7) We read, “He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.” John the Baptist came to speak out as Isaiah prophesied in Isaiah 40: 3, saying, “A voice cries. In the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” John the Baptist came to witness, marturia meaning to testify or witness, to give competent testimony concerning that which one himself has seen, heard, or experienced. Let me read v. 32-34.

How did John the Baptist (3) reflect the true light? (v. 8) We read, “He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.” God’s agent to reflect Christ’s light, compare with me the description of Jesus and of John the Baptist. John is stating emphatically, “He was not the Light.” Notice the comparisons (1) Christ was from all eternity-v.1. John came in time. v.6. (2) Christ is the Word (the Logos-the Christ) v.1, and John was a mere man. v.6. (3) Christ is Himself God, v. 1, and John was a man commissioned by God. v.6 (4) Christ is the real true light, v.9 and John was not the light but sent to testify of the light. v.6. Christ is the object of all trust, v.9, and John is only the agent through whom all people saw the Light of Jesus reflected in his day. No doubt some people thought too highly of John, thinking he was Messiah, the light. Don’t think too highly of John. As with John, any of us can be is an agent or a witness reflecting Jesus to others.

Why was John (4) reflecting the true light? v. 7b states the reason, “that all might believe through him.” The “him” in “through him,” is John the Baptist, as God also uses you and me. Jesus is not the agent to reflect His own light. Jesus rather is always the object of our faith, thus making John the Baptist here, the agent through whom Jesus would be believed in. Beloved, like John, Jesus’ forerunner, here in Sweetwater County, God means for us to be His witnesses, His agents to reach out to people from every tongue and tribe and nation to come to believe in Him through us. John G. Mitchell, the Founder of Multnomah School of the Bible in his commentary on John, told a story about a friend coming to him and saying, “Pray for me that I can find another job.” John said, “Why do you want another job?” The man replied, “Well, I am the only Christian in our plant.” John replied, “I am going to pray that you will stay.” He said, “Don’t pray that.” John replied, “What would you want instead?” The man said, “I want a job where there are other Christians.” John said, “That might be wonderful, but why do you suppose God put you there in that particular plant? You are His only light there.” The man protested, “But I am a very, very small light.” John said, “Yes, but if you go into a dark room, and strike one little match, that match will light up the whole room. Beloved, like John the Baptist, God wants us as His reflectors to strike a match for Him and shine. Secondly,

LOOK AT THE LORD JESUS’ TRUE LIGHT REVEALED. (II.) v. 9-10a. We read, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world.” Let’s look at four ways Jesus’ true light was revealed.

Jesus was revealed as coming (1) into the world. v. 9a When John the Baptist was testifying of the true light, the Savior was on the cusp of entering His public ministry. He was in the first stages, coming into the world for His public ministry.

Jesus was and is the illuminator (2) of all men. v. 9b states, “which enlightens everyone.” This Greek word enlightens is photidzo. This is our root word for photography. It means to shed light rays, to brighten up, to give light, to illuminate, to make to see, to shine upon, to bring to light. John used the word “everyone,” not to say all will be saved, but that everyone who is saved or born again will only be saved through Jesus’ light. The idea that everyone is going to heaven is negated in verse 5, saying, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” There is much spiritual darkness in this world. No one can possibly be spiritually illumined by any other light, and those without Jesus’ light remain in darkness. This light is available for all to receive, but yet, v. 10, the world as a whole does not know the Lord. Augustine explained this verse, illustrating by speaking of a teacher in a city, that everyone must go to him to be instructed, but not all do, but all who are instructed must go to this teacher and him alone.

Jesus was and is present (3) in this world. We read, v. in vs. 9-10, “The true light was coming into the world.” The Greek word for world is kosmos. This word kosmos has 6 different meanings, (1) the universe, (2) the human inhabitants of earth, mankind, (3) the general public, (4) mankind alienated from God and in need of salvation, (5) sin-laden mankind, and no distinction made with respect to

nationality or race, but those people from every tongue and tribe and nation, and (6) the realm of evil. John uses the word, **world** in verses 9-10 –3 times, and it is plain in John’s Gospel that **kosmos** means the world of mankind alienated by sin and in need of Jesus’ salvation. Listen to John 3: 16.

Jesus was and is the Creator (4) who made the world. We read in verse 10, “and the world was made by Him.” If we compare verse 3, we read, “All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made.” John here is also referring to this world full of mankind who are alienated from God and in need of the true Light. Would you call someone a fool who stood outside on a sunny day and yelled, “Look at the sun. Do you see it up there? That is a light.” You would say that person is stating the obvious. Everybody knows the sun is shining, and they recognize the sun as light. But mankind today is living in such moral and spiritual darkness that God had to send a messenger back then to bear witness to the light, to reveal His light. And today God still needs you and me to be His light-bearers to bear witness to the light in our dark world. God needs people like you and me to say, “Without Jesus’ redemptive life, you have no spiritual life. You may be good, moral, religious, wonderful, but unless you are in Christ, you have no life, and you are in darkness; you have no life. Thirdly,

LOOK AT THE LORD JESUS’ TRUE LIGHT REJECTED. (III.) v. 10b-11. We read here, “Yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him.” Let’s look at two ways Jesus’ light is rejected:

The true Light is rejected (1) by the world as a whole. Notice verse 10. “The world did not know Him.” This again speaks of our world as all mankind alienated from God and in need of salvation. John is saying that since Jesus made the world, and is present in this world, this world of alienated people should have recognized Him and worshipped Him. Yet, the tragic truth is that the world as a total world does not **know** Jesus. Literally, the world disowned Jesus utterly. The same Greek verb form for know is found in Matthew 7: 23, where we read, “And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.” Literally the whole world as a body or a whole, do not know Jesus.

The true Light has been rejected (2) by the Jews as a nation. Notice verse 11, “He, Jesus, came to His own and His own people did not receive Him.” Creation and all mankind, belong to the Lord who created us all. Jesus has not left the world unvisited by Himself. However, in the world, and in all humanity, there is one spot and one people who are and have been in a peculiar since devoted to Him. The land of Israel was Jesus’ own people. Disowned by the world, Jesus came incarnate into a Jewish home, born of the virgin Mary, Jesus came incarnate to His own people, to His own home and nation. But what happened? Jesus’ own people as a nation did not give Jesus any special reception other than hatred, persecution, and crucifixion. There was no Jewish welcome. Do you see how personal is the coming of the Word, the Life, and the Light? It’s one thing for the world created by the Word to not recognize Jesus, but it’s quite another thing, to say that Jesus’ own people did not welcome or receive Him, but they rejected Him.

John's description and acknowledgement of Jesus' rejection by His own people anticipates the drama and agony of Jesus going to the cross. But lest any of us imagine it was only those Jewish people back then who rejected Him, we need to take stock of our own lives and the many ways that we refuse to welcome Jesus or recognize His Word. In our sins of commission, what we do to hurt each other, and ourselves, and in our sins of omission, what we do not do that might have helped each other, and ourselves, when we continue to refuse to accept God's Word and its place in our hearts and lives, then we continue to reject Jesus. Fourthly,

LOOK AT THE LORD JESUS' TRUE LIGHT RECEIVED. (IV.) v. 12-13.

We read, "But to all/as many as received Him, who believed in His Name, He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Two thoughts here will help us:

The only true Light is received by individuals (1) who are then given the right to become children of God, after believing in Jesus' Name.

This means each and every believer in Jesus, omitting none. (As many as) includes Jews and Gentiles, men and women, and slaves and free. Since Jesus has been rejected, denied, and disowned by the world as a whole body and by the Jews as a nation, the matter of receiving Jesus is an individual matter, not a corporate matter. America is still at times called a Christian nation, but the majority of our citizens are not saved, born-again believers. The Greek word **receive, lambano**, means to take, to embrace and possess. The Jews in Jesus' day supposed they could belong to God's children because they were physical children of Abraham, Jews, and not receive Christ. They could not, and no one can yet today. It is the instant when we repent, believe, and receive Jesus, when we are born-again, regenerated, redeemed, and adopted into Christ's household as His bride. To be a part of God's human race is not enough. There can be true connection with Jesus without receiving Him. We can attend church that preaches the truth of the Word of God without becoming disciples and students of the Word. We can acknowledge God is our Creator, but if we fail to receive Him as our Redeemer, we are not His children.

The only true Light is received by believers (2) who are born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but those who are born of God.

We're not born into God's family by descent, bloodlines, desire, natural fleshly urges, human power, or the will of rational man. John was making it clear that physical sons of Abraham are not automatically saved any more than those who go to church or those who grew up in a Christian home, or those who say a prayer of salvation, but never truly repent, believe, receive, and give their hearts to the Lord. It is so wonderful to know our legal standing with God as a believer is that "We're sons and daughters of God, we're heirs with God, joint heirs with Jesus Christ." Today, I rejoice in the endearing term John used to speak of believers as **children, technon**, of God. P.P. Bliss wrote a hymn, "Children of God, O glorious calling, surely His grace will keep us from falling." But the author that pictures my joy best is Harriet E. Buell, who wrote, "I once was an outcast, stranger on earth, a sinner by choice and an alien by birth, But I've been adopted, my name's written down, an heir to a mansion, a robe, and a crown. I'm a child of the King... Amen!!!