

Theme: What Does this Text REVEAL About Jesus? – The Light of the World

Text: Matthew 4:12-17, 23 (EHV)

¹² When Jesus heard that John was put in prison, he withdrew into Galilee. ¹³ He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴ He did this to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

¹⁵ Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
along the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles,

¹⁶ the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light,
and on those dwelling in the region and the shadow of death a light has dawned.

¹⁷ From that time, Jesus began to preach: “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near.”
... ²³ Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people.

Have you ever thought about the importance of **light**? Have you spent any moments today being grateful for the existence of **light** in the world? Maybe you did. Maybe you woke up while it was still dark this morning and were grateful to be able to turn on a light to see where you were going. Maybe you were grateful this week for the prolonged stretch of sunny days after so many weeks of rainy, cloudy days (You know how we are here in California. Even two days without the sunshine and we begin to lose our minds! ☺). **Light** is important—in fact, light is essential. Yet, **light** is also so present in our lives that we often don’t think about it, don’t appreciate it, or maybe don’t even realize it’s there.

As we come to today’s sermon in our Epiphany season series on what various Gospel texts **reveal** to us about Jesus, we come to a familiar and very appropriate comparison of Jesus in the Gospels. In our text and in our Old Testament reading for today Jesus is prophesied as being “**a great light**” (v. **16**). In fact, in the Gospel of John Jesus is referred to as “**The Light of the World**” (John 8:12).

What does this expression and comparison of Jesus **REVEAL** to us about Jesus? Well, let’s think about a couple of important things that **light** does. First of all, **light** reveals things. It makes things able to be seen. That’s probably the first thing that comes to mind when we think about **light** isn’t it?

Well, the comparison works perfectly for Jesus. Jesus, the “**great light**,” “**the Light of the world**” reveals things to us. And so, as funny as this may sound, the first thing that this text **REVEALS** to us about Jesus is **1) It reveals that Jesus reveals!** He reveals eternally important things. He is the revealer of truth, the revealer of who God is, and the revealer of the way to eternal life. As Jesus said about Himself, **Jesus said to him, “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father, except through me” (John 14:6 EHV).**

Don’t we see Jesus doing exactly this in our text? Our text for today speaks of people who were “**dwelling in darkness**” (v. **16**). A “**darkness**” even deeper and more frightening than the darkest physical darkness we could experience: The “**darkness**” of sin, unbelief, and death. Our text also tells us that Jesus came—not as a “little light” that might be helpful and comforting in the midst of total darkness—but of a “**great light!**” (v. **16**). A Light that completely eradicated the “**darkness.**”

He came as **“the light of the world”** and tells us, **“Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12 EHV).** Again, think of what a great comparison **light** is to Jesus: Where there is light there cannot be darkness. When you walk into a dark room, no matter how dark it is, when you turn on the lights it is no longer dark. That’s what God did, in a sense, when He sent Jesus into this world. In our Gospel reading from the first chapter of John we read, **“In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. ⁵ The light is shining in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4-5 EHV).** Where Jesus, **The Light of the World** is, there can be no darkness. Jesus overpowers it! Where Jesus is there is forgiveness, healing, and life!

Jesus, the **“Light of the World”** came to spread His light and shine it upon all people—Jews and Gentiles alike. Our text tells us, **“From that time, Jesus began to preach: “Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near.” ... ²³ Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every sickness among the people.” (v. 17, 23).** Jesus preached **“repentance,”** a turning away from sins and a turning to Him for forgiveness and life. Jesus preached the **“gospel”**—literally, the “Good News”—**“of the kingdom”** of heaven. The “Good News” He preached was the truth that He was the Son of God who had come to be the Savior from sin—for both the Jews and the Gentiles. He would complete that “Good News” by later suffering and dying on the cross for the sins of all people and then rising victoriously from the dead three days later. Notice also that Jesus came to be a light for the people amidst the **“darkness”** of the physical effects that sin has brought into this world as well. The last verse of our text tells us that Jesus went about **“healing every disease and every sickness among the people” (v. 23).**

Those who know much more about science than I do have told me that **light** is not just important, it’s actually essential for life to exist at all. It is not surprising at all that the first thing God did in creation was to create **light (Genesis 1:3 - Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light).** And so, light not only **reveals** it gives life. Think of the sun in the sky and how essential it is to the life and growth of every living thing. This points us to the second thing our text **REVEALS** about Jesus: **2) It reveals that Jesus gives life.** Remember those words we read from the Gospel of John? **“In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind” (John 1:4 EHV), and [Jesus said] “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12 EHV).**

If you’ve ever been in a place of complete darkness before—and I mean complete can’t-see-your-hand-in-front-of-your-face darkness—you know how scary that can be. I can say with certainty that all of us here have. In fact, everyone who’s ever been born into this world has. All of us, by nature, are like the people of the region of Galilee described in our text. We were born as **“people dwelling in darkness...dwelling in the region and shadow of death” (v. 16).** We were born lost in the complete and utter darkness of sin and unbelief and headed for the eternal darkness of death in hell. That is until Jesus **The Light of the World** dawned on us! Jesus has taken us from the darkness of death and given us life in Him! He comes to us personally through the **revealing “light”** of His Word and calls us to repent of our sins and turn to Him for forgiveness. He comes to us in the miracle of His Sacraments: In the water and the Word of Baptism He makes us His own; in the bread and the wine He comes to us with His very body and blood reminding us, assuring us personally that your sins have been forgiven. He still heals us from our sicknesses and comforts our troubled hearts.

Now that we’ve had the rays of the S-O-N, **The Light of the World**, shine upon our hearts something amazing has happened to us who were once **“dwelling in darkness.”** Jesus has made us **“lights”** in this dark world! He tells us in Matthew’s Gospel, **“You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14).** Jesus wants us to be reflections of His **“Light”** that point people to Him **The Light of the World**.

I don't think I need to remind you just how "dark" a place this world is—spiritually and physically. It often feels much like the region spoken about in our text: "**darkness...and shadow of death**" (v. 15-16).

We can at times be overwhelmed by this great "darkness." We may even be tempted to despair because our light seems so small, both individually and as a congregation. But remember: In complete darkness even a little light makes a huge difference. That's when light shines the brightest; in the darkness. That is why God encourages us throughout the New Testament to let Christ's light shine in our lives. Jesus goes on to say in that same chapter of Matthew, "**Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven**" (Matthew 5:16). The Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians, "**For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light**" (Ephesians 5:8). And the Apostle Peter tells us that we have been "**called out of darkness into His marvelous light**" that we "**may proclaim the praises of Him [God]**" (1 Peter 2:9).

We all know people who are still living in "**darkness**" without **The Light of the World**, Jesus Christ, shining on them. In His grace Jesus has **revealed** the "**Light**" of His salvation to you and me. He wants us to share that "**Light**" and let our lights shine to His glory. Where Jesus is, there can be no darkness. Let's share and shine that **Light of the World** to the world! Amen.