

God's True Light
John 8:12-38

By Dave Urbanski

In our continuing study of John's Gospel, Pastor Don on Sunday led us through most of chapter 8 during which Jesus is teaching and describes Himself as the light of the world, telling his listeners (and us!) that if we allow our lives to be illuminated by Him, we will never walk in darkness — no matter how dark it may appear around us.

But the Pharisees weren't truly listening to what Jesus was saying — and as usual, they only were about trapping Him and discrediting Him so they could hold on to power, as they viewed Jesus as a threat to their authority. "Your testimony is not true," they told Jesus in verse 13. "Where is your Father?" they asked him verse 19. But as usual, Jesus — knowing His enemies inside and out — rebuffed their ploys and further illustrated the gulf of truth separating them from Him.

Further in the chapter, Pastor Don explained that the religious leaders began to get testy and combative with Jesus — no surprise as He told the Pharisees they would die in their sins, which isn't something they're used to hearing, as they lived life to not violate one single letter of the Law. (Problem was that the Law is impossible to maintain perfectly, which is what the Lord requires ... and their hearts were filled with pride instead of love.)

Worse still for the Pharisees, Jesus continued pointing to Himself as the answer: "... for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins." (verse 24) The Pharisees wanted the people to look to THEM instead of a poor carpenter from Nazareth who never sat at their feet and received their formal religious training. Bottom line: They didn't want Jesus, despite His warnings — even about what will transpire upon his death on the cross.

Pastor Don reminded us that in this passage Jesus is speaking to us, too, and that He still speaks to our world through the voice of the Scriptures — and that once the light leaves, there's no getting it back. So many people seek meaning in life through every avenue — except the one marked "Jesus." That's what it means to be blinded by darkness.

The passage tells us that despite the fight the Pharisees were putting up, many believed in Jesus through the words He was speaking — and He then pivoted to those who believed and told them, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." But even those who believed were slow to understand, answering Him, "We are offspring of Abraham and have never been enslaved to anyone. How is it that you say, 'You will become free'?"

Jesus, of course, wasn't talking about physical slavery to an evil despot — but spiritual slavery to sin: "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not

remain in the house forever; the son remains forever. So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Pastor Don asked us to consider how we may still be enslaved to sin — in whatever form it may take. What are we hooked on? What robs us of time to listen to the Lord and do his will? What calls out for our attention so loudly that we can't ignore it? What voices do we heed over the One True Voice that should reign in our lives?

May Jesus help us to take an honest look at our hearts and shine His bright light upon us so we may know the things that still enslave us — and then may we allow Jesus to cast them away so that we may be free in Him.