

Straight from the "Hart"

August 28, 2022



Welcome to the Hartland UMC worship service script. Last week we talked about Jesus as the **bread of the world** and how his presence within us is the key ingredient to full life and to eternal life. This week we will look at him as the **light of the world**, and discovering a deeper insight into who he is and how we follow his will for our life.

Apostle's Creed

Opening Prayer Lord, we give resources and ourselves because we want the light of the glorious gospel of Christ to shine on our blind spots, and on all who are blinded by dark doubts or disbelief. We gather so that we all may live and teach each other with integrity and that others will come to know in their hearts what kind of people we are before God. (Inspired by 2 Corinthians 4:2-4)

Call to Worship

Lay Reader: We come not only for our own sake, but as servants of others and for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. For the same God who commanded light to shine out of darkness has made his light shine in our hearts. He enlightened us to his glory through the life of Jesus Christ. We have this treasure, this excelling great power from God. We know it is from God (and not from us) because it is contained in our frail bodies, earthen vessels like clay jars... This is why we gather under God's mercy and don't give up doing the work he gave us to do. (Based on 2 Corinthians 4:5-8,1)



Music We don't give up because God is both our intimate covenant friend and the majestic, transcendent holy One --- (the one who goes beyond all ordinary limitations – who is completely other) --- the great I AM who created and runs the Universe. A Jewish prayerbook captures this tension when it writes: "O God, how can we know You? Where can we find You? You are as close to us as breathing, -- yet you are farther than the farthest star." Our first song emphasizes this

otherness through the metaphor of light, which both hides, and yet enlightens us as to God's true glorious nature. Let's sing...

Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise

1. Immortal, invisible, God only wise,
in light inaccessible hid from our eyes,
most blessed, most glorious, the Ancient of Days,
almighty, victorious, thy great name we praise.
2. Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light,
nor wanting, nor wasting, thou rulest in might;
thy justice like mountains high soaring above
thy clouds which are fountains of goodness and love.
4. Thou reignest in glory; thou dwellest in light;
thine angels adore thee, all veiling their sight;
all laud we would render: O help us to see
'tis only the splendor of light hideth thee.

Theme God is so far beyond us in his limitlessness that the only way we know anything of him is because he has graciously chosen to reveal himself to us in ways that we can understand. As we will learn today, light and sight have more to do than only physical seeing but has to do with insight and understanding that is revealed to us. Unlike this humorous story about the rainmaker.

Once upon a time, a young lady craved knowledge. She cleaned the building where the king's advisors met. When they held meetings, she would listen through the keyhole in order to learn. Then after work, she went to the library and read every book on the topics the advisors had talked about and checked out other books too in order to be wise in things they did not discuss.

Meanwhile, the country experienced its first drought in decades. This was a new experience for these advisors. They weren't sure what to advise. But the wise young lady had read a great deal on the topic and invited herself into the room and suggested some solutions.

But they didn't know her and they didn't trust her, so they ignored what she said. She went home and developed her own rainmaking machine. She showed the king her invention. It had lots of buttons and blinking lights and a tuba sticking out the top. She called it a cloud squeezer and promised it would end the drought.

"Hmmm," said the king. "How does it work?"

The girl whispered something into it and the machine whirled and transformed the words in some strange deep noises that came out to the bell of the tuba.

Outside, it sprinkled for a minute and then stopped. The king called all his advisors to look at the still active machine, and they went into deep discussions about how it could possibly work. The longer they talked and the more they theorized, the louder and more intense the sounds came out of the machine's tuba bell – and the harder it rained outside. It rained so much that they finally told the girl to turn off the machine. She did. Then she explained: "It is just a simple translator. The clouds have a great sense of humor. Every time they hear a bit of foolishness, they laugh, and the more they hear, the more they laugh – they laugh so hard that they cry.

The advisors were embarrassed when they realized all their deep thoughts and smart theories were seen by the clouds as laughably silly. But the king determined to leave the machine on all the time so that the advisors would learn their lesson and begin to learn things more and more so they wouldn't make the clouds laugh and would give good and wise advice to the king.

(Adapted from *The Cloudsqueezer* by Pedro Pablo Sacristán)

The Bible says God's ways are so much wiser than the best of our human wisdom (See for examples, 1 Corinthians 1:20 ff, 2:1-13, 3:18-20, Isaiah 40:13, Romans 11:34) -- but it also says he has revealed his ways to us so that we can understand at least a bit about who he is and how much he loves us and wants what is best for us, and that we should follow in his light and in his ways. Read responsively...

Responsive Reading (L – Lay Reader, C – Congregation)

L: The Word gave life to everything that was created,

C: and his life was the light for humanity.

L: If anyone claims, "I am living in the light," but hates a brother or sister, that person is still living in darkness.

C: Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

L: Walk in the light while you can, so the darkness will not overtake you. Put your trust in the light while there is still time, then you will become children of light.

C: Anyone who loves a fellow brother or sister is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble into sin.

L: You are the light of the world —

C: like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden.

L: No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand,

C: where it gives light to everyone in the house.

L: In the same way, let your light shine out for all to see. for the way of those who do right is like the first gleam of dawn, which shines ever brighter until the full light of day.

C: Then everyone will praise our heavenly Father.

John 1:4, 1 John 2:9,11b, John 12:35b-36, 1 John 2:10,
Matthew 5:14-16a, Proverbs 4:18, Matthew 5:16b (NLT, NIRV, NOG)

Music Light can be blinding or illuminating, depending upon how we respond to it and project it. Our desire is to discover God's enlightening message about who he is and his love for humanity, but not only to know it, but to reflect it in our attitudes, words, and actions. The Bible calls this walking. Let's sing of our desire to walk in God's ways... **I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light.**

1. I want to walk as a child of the light. I want to follow Jesus.
God sent the stars to give light to the world.
The star of my life is Jesus.

Refrain

In him there is no darkness at all. The night and the day are both alike.
The Lamb is the light of the city of God. Shine in my heart, Lord Jesus.

2. I want to see the brightness of God. I want to look at Jesus.
Clear Sun of Righteousness, shine on my path,
and show me the way to the Father.

Refrain

Music And one of the clearest way God lights our path is through inspiring prayerful Bible reading Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing...

Thy Word

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.
When I feel afraid, think I've lost my way, still you're there right beside me,
and nothing will I fear as long as you are near.
Please be near me to the end.

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.
Now I will not forget your love for me and yet my heart forever is wandering.
Jesus, be my guide and hold me to your side, and I will love you to the end.
Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path.

Pastor's Prayer Lord of light, illuminate our path so we can walk steady and true.
You have called us to reflect your light, that those walking in darkness may see

your great light. Open our awareness of you through the gift of nature's order, through the witness of words and deeds of others, but especially by the gift of your Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, and the Word you have given us. We ask that you enlighten our hearts, because there may be areas of our life to which we are not paying attention, or like the king's advisors, we think we understand, but we don't. Grace us with open hearts that you may continue to teach us your ways, for we do want to walk as your children. We do want to live lives in pursuit of what is pleasing to you, that our hope may remain steadfast and our inheritance in you secured. It is our confidence in you that encourages us to lift up our praises, and our needs and concerns. **Praises and Petitions** Specifically, today we lift up * Pat Schleh's friend Makayla, a 16 year old whose cancer has recurred, * for Jan Martin's grandson's friend's family who recently totaled their car, and now the father, Chad Heathcock, who died from cancer this past Friday, * for Mike Kenel, who is being scheduled for open heart surgery at a yet unknown date, * and for someone's friend who has pain and stomach problems *, We continue to pray for Cheri's neighbor Joyce, recovering from surgery, * for Fran Warthman, now home as she recovers from a stroke, * Ann Martin and * Bill Wyckoff, both recovering from surgeries, * And there are some who are not feeling well, and there are some unspoken needs among us as well, and some who were not mentioned out loud but are still on our minds. We ask that you intervene in all these situations.... Now let us reflect your life as you enable us to live as you have called us to pray:

Lord's Prayer

Special Music

We will soon hear a story of physical blindness being healed. Implied in the aftermath of that story, and as we



already heard in the responsive reading, there is also a spiritual darkness / blindness that Jesus wants to heal with increasing insight...This special music invites us to allow Jesus to remove whatever our blind spots may have as we see Jesus rise in us in ever new light.

The Light of the World is Jesus

1. The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Like sunshine at noonday, His glory shone in;
The Light of the world is Jesus!

Refrain

Come to the light, 'tis shining for thee;
Sweetly the light has dawned upon me;
Once I was blind, but now I can see:
The Light of the world is Jesus!

2. No darkness have we who in Jesus abide;
The Light of the world is Jesus!
We walk in the light when we follow our Guide!
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Refrain

3. Ye dwellers in darkness with sin-blinded eyes,
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Go, wash at His bidding, and light will arise;
The Light of the world is Jesus!
Refrain

Introduction to Bible Reading

A text coming out of the “Discipline” of the Qumran community (from where John the Baptist came) states that forgiveness of sin is a prerequisite to seeing the light of life. It is interesting that following the near stoning of a no longer condemned sinner (thanks to Jesus’ intervention) that Jesus then says, “I am the light of the world. So if you follow me, you won’t be stumbling through the darkness, for living light will flood your path.” (John 8:12, ff (TLB)) Then after a long argument with the Pharisees, Jesus and disciples were walking along and see a man who had been born blind. The disciples demonstrate the common theological thinking of the day when they ask,



Bible Reading

“Rabbi,... why was this man born blind? Was it his own sin or that of his parents?”

“It was not because of his sins or his parents’ sins,” Jesus answered. “This happened so the power of God could be seen in him. While it is daytime, we must continue doing the work of the one who sent me. The night is coming, and no one can work at night. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world.”

Then he spit on the ground, made mud with the saliva, and spread it over the blind man’s eyes. He told him, “Go wash yourself in the pool of Siloam” (Siloam means “sent”). So the man went and washed and came back seeing! (John 9:2-7) (NLT, ERV)

Music We will see that our understanding of God’s revelation of himself increases as we look at the life of Jesus, and as we choose to follow him each day. Let’s stand before the sermon and stretch and sing...

We Would See Jesus

3. We would see Jesus, on the mountain teaching,
with all the listening people gathered round;
while birds and flowers and sky above are preaching
the blessedness which simple trust has found.
4. We would see Jesus, in his work of healing,
at eventide before the sun was set;
divine and human, in his deep revealing
of God made flesh, in loving service met.
5. We would see Jesus, in the early morning,
still as of old he calleth, "Follow me!"
Let us arise, all meaner service scorning;
Lord, we are thine, we give ourselves to thee.

Sermon I Am... the Light: They Couldn’t See

Jesus’ opponents physically saw Jesus, but they couldn’t see who he was - and they certainly weren’t about to give themselves to following him. Even his own disciples were still unaware of all the radical new ideas that Jesus was introducing to the world. We heard mention of their traditional understanding of disabilities – that it was the sin of parents or of the child in the womb that *caused* them. Jesus answers “No. It was so God’s glorious power could be revealed.” Don’t get hung up on that phrase, Jesus is not saying God made this man blind so that he could later be healed so that God could show off to everybody. That is not what it is trying to say.

Jesus was saying, “You are worried about the man’s past in order to blame or condemn, but by God’s grace, we only need concern our-

Do we focus on what is wrong or on what can become?



selves with his future from this day forward.” He says he is the Light of the world, and we need to be about reflecting that light while we still can. Stop focusing on what is wrong and begin dreaming what we and others can become. That is why in Matthew (See 5:14 ff), Jesus preached that what we become is the light of the world, like a city or a

lamp, which can’t help but light up the area or the room. What do we reflect to others about our faith in Jesus by our daily lives?

What do I reflect to others by my daily life?

Jesus then makes some mud with his spit and put it on the blind man’s eyes and told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam. Siloam’s water was used for purification rites. It was water from this pool that was brought to the altar during the feast of Tabernacles. It was remembering God’s provision of water in their wilderness while they were traveling to the promised land. It was at the end of this feast that Jesus stood up and invited everyone who was thirsty to drink from him and they would have an eternal supply of “water” within them. (See John 7:37-39) The man returns from the pool healed.

This is when the story gets interesting. If we were there that day, probably the only thing we’d remember was the healing. Right? [Yes]. Everything else would just kind of fade into the background. But the book of John has a knack for connecting events in the life of Jesus and using them as a launching point to talk about deeper spiritual truths. He does this as he records the aftermath of that healing.

The now fully sighted man is walking around, and even though he was saying, “It was me! I was the one blind from birth and now I can see!” He was telling this to everybody and yet the people were divided about whether this was actually the blind beggar or just someone who just kind of looked like him. They launched an investigation. They cross examined him – “How did it happen? Who did this? Where is this Jesus?” And then they brought him to the Pharisees to be *officially* cross examined. This was not an excited encouragement -- “You need to go to the “church” and say you had a God-moment (testimony)!” This is not what they were

trying to do. This was a “We need to take you to the leadership to figure out how to deal this -- *problem*.” He can see for the first time in his life, and everyone around him sees it as a problem. Can you imagine? If we believe the miracle is true – you’d think that would be the focus – but these people, even IF they allowed it was a legitimate healing, they were even more concerned about what they considered God-given rules of faith and life.

You, see, the problem was amplified because Jesus violated four Sabbath laws in healing him: Only medical emergency treatments were allowed on the Sabbath, He “worked” when he made the spittle, anointed the eyes and putting spittle on the eyes were also Sabbath violations. Therefore, “this clearly couldn’t be God’s work”. And they believed this was possible because not all miracles require divine blessing. Pharaoh’s magicians did signs almost equal to the miracles God did through Moses. Even Jesus said many false prophets would perform signs that would turn our heads.

An exciting miracle has quickly turned into an official religious trial. “How did you receive your sight?” He retold his story again – Jesus put mud in my eyes, I washed it off, and now I see.” Since he was the one who was healed, they asked him his opinion of Jesus. “He is a prophet.” Most prophets did not perform healings. Elijah and Elisha did, but most did not, or at least they were not recorded. So he may have been referring to these two prophets, or he may simply meant that Jesus was able to channel God’s power and message, and “prophet” is the best label they had for that kind of extraordinary person.

They didn’t like that answer. Just like modern politics, when you don’t hear what you want, you work to discredit the speaker. They decided to challenge the legitimacy of the healing by questioning the validity of the disability in the first place. They called for his parents. “Is this really your son? And was born blind? How is it that now he can see?”

They confirmed the first two questions. “Yes he is our son, and yes he was born blind. But as to how he can see -- we don’t know.”

John says they answered this way because there was already a rule that if anyone declared Jesus is the Messiah that they would be

Do we say what we truly know, or do we waffle based on what we think people want to hear?

excommunicated from the synagogue. The synagogue was their only connection to their faith, and they feared losing that connection to their faith family -- so rather than saying what they knew, they waffled as best they could by saying, “He’s of

age. You can ask him yourself.”

They were unable to find fraud in the disability or in the miracle. This was indeed the man born blind, and he could clearly see. They brought this formerly blind man back in front of them. They told him something similar to our court system where we promise to “Tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.” It was a rabbinic oath, and it comes in this form: “Give glory to God by telling the truth.” John quotes the oath as a play on words because in telling the truth, he will also literally be giving glory to God [not just by his honesty, but also about Jesus and the miracle].

But these leaders don’t want him to simply tell the truth. What they wanted him to say is *what they wanted to believe as true*. We’ve heard a

Do we listen to understand, or just enough to hear and answer what we already believe?

lot of that these years, haven’t we? They didn’t want an honest answer – an answer that may increase their understanding of God and his work in the world, they only wanted to hear and speak what they already believed. Therefore, as they ask the question, they indicate to him the answer they are looking for. “Swear by God to tell the truth!” (CEV) Now give God the glory and praise [for your sight]! We know this Man [Jesus] is a sinner [separated from God]. (AMP) (a wicked person). (AMPC) They are telling him exactly what they want to hear from him.

The healed man responds by simply saying the facts that he knows, “I don’t know anything about that, all I know is that I was blind and now I see.”

“So how is it that he healed you?” they asked him again. These leaders lived by the strategy that if you don’t get the answer you want, you just keep asking – badgering - until they give in and give them what they want to hear.

You can almost hear the irritation in this healed man’s voice, “I already told you! Weren’t you listening?” Then in what I am guessing was probably not a sincere question, but more of a sarcastic dig back to them, “Why do you keep on asking? “Do you want to be his disciples too?”

That escalated things into an even more heated argument. John says they threw insults at him and accused him of being Jesus’ disciple while “We are disciples of Moses!” (This is not a typical phrase of rabbinic scholars, but it was used of Pharisees in some oral traditions, but it was not common)... They were clarifying their connection with the ancient heritage of the faith. By comparison, they then say, “but we don’t even know where [Jesus] comes from.”

They knew Jesus claimed he came from heaven and from God the Father, but

they would not acknowledge *that* - in fact, they also heard he came from Galilee. The comment was trying to get at the fact of everything we heard at Christmas – that here is a young couple, not even married, and they had a kid. they were trying to make Jesus an unqualified to be a Messiah because of how he was born and came into the earth.

The more the man talks, the more his insight grows, He says, “It is interesting that you claim you don’t know where he comes from, yet I can see. You know that God listens to the righteous, but not to sinners, (Isaiah 1:15, 1 John 3:21) (by this is not meant somebody who commits a sin, but one who unwilling to be repentant and turn to God). He added that his kind of healing is a first -- no one else blind from birth had been healed in all of their records of Scripture (or anywhere else). “He could not have done that” the man says, “if he weren’t from God.” Notice how he starts, “I don’t know who he is, I only know is: I was blind, now I see. Then, he is a prophet, a messenger of God, and now -- he has come from God. Notice how his enlightenment grows as he is talking about the whole thing?

Do God’s interactions in your life bolster your confidence in who Jesus is?

Out of arguments, they again attack his character. Isn’t that still how it works? It seems these days the topic isn’t ever debated. Most often, responses to dissenting viewpoints are just an attack on the other person. The idea seems to be, *If we insult them enough, that will make them false.* Remember the disciples’ initial question in the reading -- as they were walking by the blind man? They asked, “Who sinned – him or his parents [that made him blind]?” And Jesus answer was neither. These religious leaders now come back to *that* thinking when they say ... They’ve already called Jesus a sinner born in sin, now they charge at this man with the same accusation “You were steeped in sin from birth.” (NIV) You’ve been a sinner all your life, so don’t start lecturing us!” Unlike the disciples who were willing to listen and were being corrected, these leaders grasped at old broken straws to maintain their viewpoint and discredit this man. They threw him out. They learned -- nothing.

The more the healed man discussed the situation, the more the light dawned on him. Supported by what Jesus had done in his life, he claimed what he knew. He was blind. He can see. As he was forced to ponder it more because of the questioners, and he realizes Jesus is at least a prophet, and as the argument got

more intense, he understands that Jesus has divine power, and that he came from the Father in heaven.

When Jesus heard he was thrown out, Jesus sought him out. Jesus is always seeking those who are receptive to him, and he intersects with their life's journey. Unlike the religious leaders, he promises that he will never drive them away (John 6:37). but always opens up for others a path to God.

Jesus asks the healed man if he believes in the Son of Man. The man replies, "tell me who that is so I can". At this point, he is so convinced of Jesus legitimacy he is willing to trust and believe him no matter what he says, and that is a good thing. And Jesus says, "You are talking to him."

And this is the primary point that John was trying to make through the aftermath of this healing. That the true purpose of *spiritual* insight enables us to see and believe in Jesus. And the man did what all his Old Testament training taught him to do. When a person senses that they are in the presence of God, they fall down and worship. And this is what this man did. From that day forward, (at least we hope – we don't hear about him again), God's love and grace moved him ahead in his spiritual journey.

Do we recognize God intersecting our life? How and when? Do we worship?

Jesus concludes this whole story by saying, "This is why I came". To those whose prejudice and determine to have their minds closed -- thinking they know it all [or don't want to know anything], justifying themselves with excuses and attacks of others – they will not be open to what God has for them and will not see him. It is a sad but logical consequence of that kind of attitude. Students who go into class and think they know more than the teacher don't learn a lot. Right? Employees who come in and think they know more than the boss does – they don't learn a lot either, right? To those who already have their minds made up, text books and manuals will not help. Nothing can be revealed before them. Their world is closed and gets smaller and descends into ever deepening darkness.

But to those who are willing to learn, more will be revealed and before them their world opens up and gets larger and ascends into ever brightening light. For those who have not closed themselves off because they know they don't know everything, and they want to know more], to these Jesus comes to connect with them along the path of life, to illuminate with insight, and show the ways in which we should live. Be that way! Let's pray.

Prayer Jesus we see you give sight, and insight -- to those who believe and are open to you. Empower us to always be open to your ways, sensitive to your leadership, more and more aware of how you connect with us in our world, in our church, in our homes, in our recreations, in our personal lives. We see you in the Bible stories while you lived among us on this world -- but now we pray you open the eyes of our heart even more --so that we can see how you are working today, in us and around us. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Music Let's stand and sing our desire to strive to walk in the light of Jesus each day and discover the joy of walking in his steps.

Stepping in the Light

1. Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Trying to follow our Savior and King;
Shaping our lives by His blessed example,
Happy, how happy, the songs that we bring.

Refrain

How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Stepping in the light, stepping in the light,
How beautiful to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Led in paths of light.

2. Pressing more closely to him who is leading –
When we are tempted to turn from the way,
Trusting the arm that is strong to defend us,
Happy, how happy, our praises each day.

Refrain

4. Trying to walk in the steps of the Savior,
Upward, still upward, we'll follow his Guide;
And when we shall see Him, "the King in His beauty, "
Happy, how happy, a place at His side.

Refrain

Blessing May the love of the Father embrace us with his strong arms, the wisdom of the Son enlighten us by his example, and the fire of the Spirit inspire us; that God's blessings may always rest upon us in every circumstance of life. Amen.

(Adapted from the Westminster Hymnal © 2000 Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc. in UM Worship and Song Leader's Edition)