

Jesus is the Light of the World. Whoever believes in him will never walk in darkness. Amen.

³ And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. ⁴ The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. ⁵ For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. **This is God's Word for our meditation.**

Dear Children of the Light,

Is there such a thing as darkness? I would bet that your first impulse would be to say, "Of course." But how would you describe darkness? If you look it up in the dictionary you will find that it is a noun – a thing – but is it really a thing which we can define? When you get right down to it, darkness is the absence of light. You can vary the amount and degree of light but darkness is only what you have left when the light is gone. Thus darkness is really nothing. You can't make darkness darker. The only thing that changes darkness is light.

The idea that darkness is the absence of light fits well with our sermon text today. Paul says, **"Let light shine out of Darkness."** As we consider the words before us, we will see that, **"The gods of this world cause spiritual blindness - darkness," "While the true God reveals the light of salvation."**

I. A veil is a piece of cloth that covers or hides one's face. People in our country don't wear a veil much anymore but Paul uses that idea of covering or hiding something to describe how the gospel is covered or hidden from those who are perishing. It's not because the gospel itself is hidden but Paul says, **"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."**

If a blind person does not see the sun it is not because the sun is not there or because it is not shining. It is because they are blind. In the same way, if those who are perishing in their unbelief do not believe the gospel, it is not because the gospel is untrue or lacks power but it is because the god of this age has blinded them to this message. The message is there but they can't hear or see it. What are some of those "gods of this age" that try to blind us to the gospel?

The idea that I don't need God's Word every week is a veil that can come between us and God. I can miss church for a week or two but that very easily can turn into a month or two and before you know it you haven't heard God's Word for months. That's not what you intended but it just sort of happened. The god of human logic or laziness has come between you and God.

When Moses would talk to God his face would glow with the radiance of God's glory but over time that glory would fade. It's the same when we don't hear God's Word. The glory of God's grace and forgiveness fades from our lives. It grows weaker – not because God's grace has changed but because we are distancing ourselves from his grace.

And when we let God's glory fade from our lives something else usually fills the gap – some of those other gods of this world. Human logic is one of those gods that can keep us away from the true God by convincing us that if we pray every day we are staying close to God. After all prayer is a conversation with God and that sounds pretty good. But many times that prayer is a one way conversation. People talk to God but they don't let him talk to them through his Word. Prayer is good and an important part of our spiritual life, but make sure it's a two way conversation with God.

Some of the other gods of this world Satan uses to keep us away from the one true God are the desire for wealth or the fact we have a busy life or work or hobbies or our kids activities or sports and the list could go on and on. All these things by themselves are fine but it is easy to get carried away and before we know it they become the number one priority in our lives (a kind of god of this world) and a veil that separates us from the gospel. It's so easy to lose sight of God's grace and mercy by the things of this world – even to the point that after a while we don't see our need for God's mercy. We think we can handle life on our own but we are really perishing.

In the gospel lesson we heard of how Jesus gave his disciples a glimpse of his glory and Peter's comment was, **“Lord, it is good for us to be here.”** It is good for you to be here today too. To hear about God's glory as it is revealed to us in his Son Jesus Christ. Jesus met God's demand for perfection by living a perfect life for us. Each one of us deserves the punishing torment of the cross because of our sins – our disobedience to God's Word – but Jesus took our place on the cross. There we see his perfect love as he paid for our sins with his holy precious blood. That doesn't sound too glorious to us, but God's glory was evident to Satan, as Christ crushed the head of the serpent by paying for our sins on that cross.

It's good to be here every week to hear about Jesus and to hear about God's love and forgiveness for each and every one of us. That's the peace and comfort God wants us to have to carry us through the week. Jesus Christ is the light of salvation that God reveals to us in his Word – the light that replaces the darkness of sin in our hearts.

II. That's why Paul wrote, “For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ⁶ For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.”

It's not about the preacher but the content of what is being preached. There are plenty of motivational speakers out there. Some of them are pretty good and entertaining to listen to but in the end every motivational speaker puts the responsibility back on to you. It's all about what you do – you are the master of your own destiny – the master of your own fate. There are a lot of preachers that preach a similar message. But Paul's message, and my message as well, is all about Christ Jesus. Salvation doesn't rely on me and it really doesn't rely on you. It relies on Jesus, our Lord and master. **“But no one can say, Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.”**

Remember how we said that darkness is the absence of light. Well the Holy Spirit plants the seed of faith in your hearts. You might think of that seed of faith as a tiny bit of light – a tiny bit of Jesus – planted in a heart that is dark. It's dark because it is ruled by sin. But The Holy Spirit

plants that seed of faith by working through the Word. Paul said that **“Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.”** (Romans 10:17). The message of Jesus is forgiveness and forgiveness takes away the darkness of sin and replaces it with the light of salvation – the light of Jesus – the light of forgiveness.

The more you hear and read the Word, the brighter that light grows in your heart. It creates an inner warmth – an inner peace that can only come from God and it does more. Just as God’s glory was visible on the face of Moses, so the light of our Savior becomes visible in our lives too. It guides us in our decisions and we reflect the love of Christ in our relationships with others. But that’s only possible with Christ in our hearts. With Jesus at the center of our lives.

That takes us back to the cross. That is where we see God’s glory as Jesus defeated Satan, the one who wants to blind us from seeing the light. As we keep the cross in focus, it helps us to push back the temptations that Satan throws our way. And when we fall short, when we give into temptation, the cross reminds us that we are forgiven.

Our lives depend on God’s Glory as seen in his Son. It is the light of God’s glory that shines in the heart of believers – that shines in your hearts today. Remember that darkness is really nothing but you have everything in Jesus – the light of salvation. Listen to him through his Word and keep him at the center of your life. Let the light of Jesus shine in your lives today and always. Amen.