

From the Pulpit of the Japanese Baptist Church of North Texas
July 30, 2017

The Light of Life

1 Peter 3:18-22

8:12 Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

The Sunday before VBS, I picked the verses for the worship service from the VBS lessons in the past few years. This year I'd like to do the same thing. The daily lessons of this year's VBS are "God the creator of the light" for Monday; "Man who lost the light" for Tuesday, "Jesus, the light of the world" for Wednesday; "Paul who received the light" for Thursday, "Children of God" for Friday. The center of the lessons is the truth that Jesus is the true light. Today let us learn the word of Jesus, "I am the light of the world" from the gospel according to John.

1. The Light and the Feast of Tabernacles

Jesus told "I am the light of the world" at the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles is the seven-day feast of fall harvest. "Tabernacle" means "booth" People made temporary booths or huts made of tree branches and lived there during the feast. It commemorates God's provisions for Israel during their Exodus journey through the wilderness. God gave Israelites water, food and things they needed in the severe environment, and God finally led them

to the promised land. Deuteronomy expresses God's perfect provisions saying, "Your clothing did not wear out on you and your foot did not swell these forty years." (Deut. 8:4)

During the Feast of Tabernacles each morning priests drew water from the pool of Siloam, carried it with a golden pot in procession into the temple, and poured it out next to the altar of sacrifice. Jesus told "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'" (John 7:37-38) on the last day of the feast. The water pouring ceremony of the feast is connected to this statement. We cannot have harvest without water. The priests pour water asking God to give them enough rain and rich harvest from the field. Jesus promised more than the water for the field, the water that would quench the thirsty of the souls. The water poured to the altar would dry soon, but the water Jesus gives never dries, but it will spring from the heart of the believers, and it will flow like a river.

All of us have the thirst in our heart. Even though we are wealthy and healthy, and have nice family and friends, we cannot quench the spiritual thirst with such things. Only Jesus can quench that thirst. "Siloam," the name of pool from which the priest draw the water, means the Messiah. The action of drawing the water from Siloam means that Jesus is the only person who can give the water that never dries up.

There also, giant candelabras burned in the court of the temple during the Feast of Tabernacles. They illuminated the temple courts at night. It said that people could see the light from very remote place. At the same time the people with flaming torches processed through

the temple amid singing. The temple was lit up in every corner. According 8:20, Jesus said “I am the light of the world.” beside the offering boxes. The offering boxes were in the “Women’s Court.” The giant candelabras were set the court. Jesus might say the word before the light. At the end of the feast the light of candelabras was extinguished, but never the light of Jesus. It seemed that the light was extinguished on the day of his death, but it was just only a moment. The light was to be brilliant again by his resurrection. It became the light of the salvation shining all over the world.

2. The Guiding Light

The word “light” has many of contexts and profound meanings. We would not be able to learn about it all while this short time, so should we keep only two of them in mind. One is “the light of guidance,” and the other is “the light of life.”

For the very beginning, we will think about “the light of guidance.” Jesus said in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” Here He means that the followers of Jesus, “the Light,” will be guided to the righteous life without any exceptions. What would you do if you lost the headlight of your car while driving on dark roads deep in a mountain? Unless you find the moon or something shining, there’s no way to keep driving in such situation. You would be out of roads and might crush into a ditch. Likewise you need light to drive; we absolutely need the light of guidance to live through the hopeless generation.

At night, when you take a flight, you could see the land from up

there. Every single town and road is lit up, you would have seen once. In America, for security reasons stores and offices won't be lights off; and even at night there are still turned on. Recently, in Japan, because of the growth of LED lamps that need only little electricity, many buildings keep turning on as well as USA.

However, the more lights people turn on, the darker minds people living there would have. I have been to Kabuki-cho in Tokyo and stayed there one night. There was no boundary between day and night and it was too bright to let people sleep. Contrary to the brightness in town, I heard, people were trapped by pleasure, temptations and crimes. Despite the physical brightness, the world gradually gets darker; our society always have abused children, dreamless young, and lost elderly. People used to have "duty and sentiment" things, and they had enough responsibility over their positions and humble behavior out of communication. Now it's seemingly all lost, and people need something to rely on. They need "Light." In our generation, we especially need "the light of guide" shining upon our mind and leading us where to go. In conclusion, the "Light" is Jesus Christ. Following this light, we could always walk in the light.

I have one story. It was happened when there's no GPS. One navy ship was pursuing forward on the sea at night; then the light came up and they had to change the course in order to avoid the light. The captain wanted to keep going, and sent the sign of "change the course" to the light before them. After that, the light sent the exactly same sign back. The captain got upset and sent another sign again, saying, "We are the navy ship from Great Britain. Change the course or we cannot avoid you anymore." After all, the light said back, "We

are not a ship; we are a lighthouse on the head. You change the course or you will crush and sink under the sea.” It’s absolute which side was right in this story. Many people rely on the light of themselves, and believe in their lights are right. Yet the true light is only Jesus Christ. In the dark generation, His light still shines; what is essential is to follow the light.

3. The Life-Giving Light

Let’s think about “the light of life”. In 8:12, again Jesus spoke to them, saying, “Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” What does this word mean?

You can find “water of life” in the Scripture, and it has meaning of “life-giving water”. Every creatures on the earth needs water, and the water gives the life to them. Thus, “light of life” can be said “life-giving light.” The light is essential to almost all creatures in order to survive. The plants create nourishment by “photosynthesis”. Animals also need light to keep their lives. This is the same for human beings. When we receive the ultraviolet ray B of sunlight, the vitamin D is created; therefore, the vitamin D is called “Sun vitamin.” The vitamin D gives strength to bones but also functions to avoid dementia and depression, and reduce the risk of cancer, hypertension, diabetes and heart disease. The sunlight gives the life to our body; therefore, “light of life” given by Jesus Christ brings us more than the sunlight.

John 1:1 called Jesus “Word.”In Greek, “Word” is called “logos,”and it has meaning of “origin” or “ultimate” in Greek philosophy. Jesus Christ is “logos”. We can understand about it logically; however, it seems like it is very far away from us. But the

Scripture says, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” (John1:4) “Word” has “life.” It is saying that Jesus Christ is not the philosophical concept but he is the living God who has a life. In English, “life” has various meanings. It means not only the power to make us alive, but also our daily experiences during the period from birth to death. “Word has life” means that Jesus Christ, the Son of God who is the origin and ultimate of the world, became a human and lived in this world. This tells us that he spend the time on the earth as a human being. Jesus Christ is not just philosophical “logos,” but is truly “the living Word.”

We can not see “life” itself. But we can see the daily life and learn from it. That’s why the Scripture says, “and that life was the light of men.” Because Jesus Christ came to this world and it became a history, we can see invisible “original” or “ultimate” one. Jesus is the light that brings us “life.”

Almost all the people praise the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and what he did. It is such a pleasure that we can live like Jesus or follow what Jesus taught us. However, we are depressed at ourselves when we can not. The light of Jesus is “the light of guidance”, and it is sometimes too bright. However, you shall not look away. The light of Jesus is “the light of guidance” but at the same time it is “the light of life” or “life giving light.” You can not follow Jesus Christ with your own power. It will be possible with the life of Jesus Christ.

That’s why John 1:9-13 says like this, “The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to

all who did receive 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.” When we receive Jesus Christ, from God, we can receive “life” as a child of God. We can rely on Jesus Christ and become follower of Christ by the life. Jesus Christ is truly “the light of life.” We shall face to him, live with him and walk in his light.

(Prayer)

Heavenly Father, we thank You that You sent Your Son Jesus to Hades for our salvation. We can be saved from sin, death, and judgment by the sufferings and glory of Lord Jesus. We can live with power and die in peace because of Lord Jesus. Our life and death are in His hands. The Lord is with the believers always and everywhere. Lead us to live our daily life with the Lord. We pray this in the name of our Lord Jesus, Amen.