

You are the Light of the World

(Talk #5 “Living in the Heavens” series)

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In Jesus, the love of God overcame the corruption of sin so that the glory of God’s divine life can now break through the oppression and suffering of sin that is experienced in each of us. He has recreated us and we are called to be true to this rebirth, to shine forth this glorious mystery in all that we do – whether in suffering or prosperity, in weakness or in manifestations of God’s power. Embracing the call to be the light of the world allows us to unite with and experience the true light, which is Christ.

Being a Light = Being True to Who We Are as Children of God

In the last talk, we heard about living as children of God. As a child of God, a believer in Jesus, who are we? What characterizes us? Jesus tells us concretely and conclusively - *“You are the Light of the world” (Mathew 5:14)*. What does this mean?

A child is one who receives his father’s nature. So the child might look like the Father, have the same sense of humor, share the same values, etc. A child of God is one who has received the nature of God through the Holy Spirit, and therefore his values and choices should reflect the will of the Father. Jesus says as much when he says:

“Amen, amen, I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing; for what he does, his son will do also. (John 5:8)

Jesus is the light of the world because he shows us the Divine Nature (John 12:44-46). He reveals to us who God is and what his intention for us is. So when Jesus calls us the light of the world, he is stating that we have been brought into the life of the Divine Trinity and *we too should manifest the light of God to the world in our words and actions.*

Walk in the The Light of God

Like all created things, light manifests some aspect of God’s nature. It is often used to describe a reflection of God’s glory. In the Old Testament, especially in the psalms, there are many references that describe God as being radiant or resplendent. *“Oh Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Thyself with light as with a cloak.” (Psalm 104:1-2)* *“His brilliance is like the day and rays of light shine from His hands.” (Habakkuk 3:4)*

In the New Testament we see that Jesus is the fulfillment of the promise from the Old Testament Prophecies. Of Him it is said; *“He is the Light that will enlighten the nations.” (Luke 2:32)* *“The people who walk in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwell in a dark land, the light will shine on them.” (Isaiah 9:2)*

And indeed, as Jesus begins his public ministry He proclaims, *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12)* During His time on earth, it is primarily by His words and deeds that Jesus reveals Himself as the Light of the World: He cures the sick, helps the blind to see, speaks words of truth and life, feeds the hungry, is full of compassion, tells people about the Father’s love etc. Then he instructs his followers, disciples (us) that we should do the same things. Jesus says, *“You are the light of the world; Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.” (Matthew 12:14,16)*

I found it interesting that in John chapter 5, close to the time that Jesus heads to Jerusalem he says to the disciples: *“For a little while longer the light is among you. Walk while you have the light, that darkness may not overtake you. While you have the light, believe in the light in order that you may **become** sons of light.” (John 12:35-36)* So after Jesus ascends to the Father, we are to carry on His work of bringing His Light to the world.

Ephesians 5:8 has always been a very motivating scripture for me in terms of evangelization. *“For you were formerly in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; therefore, walk as children of light.”* I really see this as a command. First Jesus tells us who we are - light in the Lord, and then He tells us what to do. It’s similar to when he says *“go make disciples of all nations ...”* (Mathew 28:18) in the great commission.

Over the years these scriptures are often in the back of my mind and they cause me to think about how I can be a light in various situations that I encounter. I remember when I first moved to Maryland after living in New Zealand with the ICPE mission - one of the first places I visited was the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception in D.C. That is such a beautiful place and on the outside of the building, to the right of the main doors, it says, “walk as children of light” in huge letters. That really encouraged and resonated with me.

So what does it look like to walk as children of light? Ephesians 5 continues: *“For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth, trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord...¹⁵Therefore be careful how you walk, not as unwise men, but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”*

So even though we are Children of light we always have a choice to either bear the light or to hide it. It can really be a challenge in our world today to let the light shine. We see in the scriptures how many times we are admonished and exhorted to not hide the light. Don’t put it under a bushel basket but put it on a lamp stand for all to see (Mathew 5:15). We can ask ourselves ***are we acting as children of the light or as sons of the world as we go through our day?*** The people around us are always watching what we do and how we respond in various situations. I was thinking of an example that I’m sure we can all relate to. Imagine that you are at work or at a restaurant with friends or co-workers. Many times people complain, say negative things or talk badly of others. This is a kind of darkness. We may do our best not to say anything negative to add to the conversation (which is a good thing) but that is not enough because the darkness is still there. We should try to bring in the light by saying something positive or uplifting about the person or the situation. It can be a real challenge to be a light in our daily lives especially when the darkness around us is so thick and pervasive and we can easily get discouraged. But we have to persevere and remember; that the darker the darkness, the greater the difference that one little light can make. And the Word promises *“The light shines in the darkness but the darkness can not overcome it.”* (John 1:5)

In order to **be** a light we have to continuously stay close to the source of the light - Jesus, and to His Word (the scriptures). *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”* (Psalm 119:105). Each day we have to draw near to the Lord in prayer and try to stay in communion with him throughout the day. As I was thinking about this an analogy came to me. Ever since Angelina was a little girl she has always loved “glow-in-the-dark” toys and objects. She has glow in the dark stars on the ceiling that light up when we turn off the lights at night. She has a little glow in the dark statue of Mary and rosary beads that she keeps by her bed. Many times she comes over to the light by my bed and holds the objects close to it so they can be as bright as possible so that they will shine more when the lights are off. But if the objects stay away from the light for awhile or don’t get recharged they will grow very dim or not be seen at all. That’s exactly what we are like too! We need to draw near to Jesus every day in our prayer time so that we can be filled with the light to go out and **SHINE** wherever we are throughout the day.

So what are some specific and practical ways that we can be bearers of Light? Let’s ask ourselves: “How can I be a light to those around me today in an *intentional* and *specific* way?”

- **SMILE ! :)** you can’t see a smile and not feel brightened by it! It is also so nice when someone smiles back. When you smile it can lift the gloom. *It’s making a connection with someone.* It’s a gift that we can give to each other whether friends or strangers. Even better say “HI” to someone- in the parking lot, at the grocery store etc. *What we are communicating is: yes you are important and worthy of attention.*
- **Take a genuine interest in others,** be warm, reach out: I believe that one of the greatest struggles that people suffer from is loneliness. We live in very dehumanizing society and so many people feel alone and unloved.
- **Simply listen to someone.** Look them in the eye. Help people to know their dignity.
- **Speak words of truth, hope and life.**
- **Ask yourself WWJD - What Would Jesus Do** - in this particular situation? Imitate the Light.

- **Pray with and for people.** They can be amazingly receptive.
- **Be aware and sensitive to people's needs and offer to help when possible.**
- **Evangelization: Share the Gospel;** share your witness; tell them about the Light!

Being a Light by Embracing Our Role as Priest Prophet and King

When we were baptized, we were brought into Christ and therefore share in his role as priest, prophet, and king.

Jesus Christ is the one whom the Father anointed with the Holy Spirit and established as priest, prophet, and king. The whole People of God participates in these three offices of Christ and bears the responsibilities for mission and service that flow from them. (CCC 783)

LIVING AS A PRIEST

On entering the People of God through faith and Baptism, one receives a share in this people's unique, priestly vocation: "Christ the Lord, high priest taken from among men, has made this new people 'a kingdom of priests to God, his Father.' The baptized, by regeneration and the anointing of the Holy Spirit, are consecrated to be a spiritual house and a holy priesthood." (CCC 784)

We are not all called to take up the special role as an ordained priest, but we are all brought into the priesthood of Christ.

Come to him, a living stone, rejected by human beings but chosen and precious in the sight of God, and, like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:4-5)

A priest offers sacrifice. In Christ, we see that the true priest offers himself as the sacrifice. We are called to do nothing less. In reality, this reflects how we experience the life of the trinity in Christ, because for all eternity, the Son of God has always embraced the Father with a total offering of himself since he receives his nature from the Father, including the Father's perfect love/generosity. Becoming man, that offering never diminished, but was brought into space and time through a man so that now, we who are brought into Christ through the Holy Spirit, can participate in that same offering of love.

St. Paul refers to this when he says he is making up for what is lacking in the sacrifice of Christ:

"Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ on behalf of his body, which is the church..." (Colossians 1:24)

There is nothing lacking in the offering of Christ. But what still has to be accomplished is the completion of the "spiritual house" of God, the Body of Christ. The fulfillment of all things has not yet come to pass – the Bride of Christ is still making herself ready through acts of love and sacrifice as she unites with Christ in his mission (Revelation 19:7-8).

We make holy sacrifices through our choices – what we choose to think about, what we choose to do. This is why St. Paul says *"Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship." (Romans 12:1).*

"Hence the laity, dedicated as they are to Christ and anointed by the Holy Spirit, are marvelously called and prepared so that even richer fruits of the Spirit may be produced in them. For all their works, prayers, and apostolic undertakings, family and married life, daily work, relaxation of mind and body, if they are accomplished in the Spirit - indeed even the hardships of life if patiently born - all these become spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. In the celebration of the Eucharist these may most fittingly be offered to the Father along with the body of the Lord. And so, worshipping everywhere by their holy actions, the laity consecrate the world itself to God, everywhere offering worship by the holiness of their lives." (CCC 901)

How is God calling us to participate in his sacrifice? Some areas:

Family Life: Husbands and wives should love each other and their children with a *sacrificial love*, not allowing their own preferences or desires to get in the way of their family's well being. This may mean sacrificing time, energy or comfort to help the family grow. It may mean persevering with discipline so as to form character (either in us or a child) or saying a word that you know will not be taken well even if done in love. When do we pull back from sacrificing for our family and what leads us to pull back?

Intercession: Jesus still intercedes for us (Romans 8:34) and he calls us to intercede for the world. How can we know the heart of Christ, his great hunger for the salvation of souls, and not intercede for those who do not know him? It is quite possible that if we do not really know Christ's heart for the world, we do not know it for ourselves. When we intercede for the world regularly (at least 10 minutes a day), our heart becomes more like his. We will see not just people, but eternal souls who are so precious and dearly loved by the Father. We will see within us a greater ability to show love and affection to all, especially the marginalized. We will see a greater detachment from material things because we will see them in light of eternity such that sacrificing these will be much less of a sacrifice. We should also consider fasting for the salvation of souls. If we are not interceding for the world at least 10 minutes a day, we can start now – it could move mountains out of the way of those who need the Lord and it could do wonders in our own hearts as well. Consider praying the Chaplet of Divine Mercy daily.

Serving Others: Consider how you can reach out to others in the community, neighbors, coworkers, etc. Can you invite anyone over for dinner? Help a neighbor with a need? How can you be Christ to those around you?

LIVING AS A PROPHET

"The holy People of God shares also in Christ's prophetic office," above all in the supernatural sense of faith that belongs to the whole People, lay and clergy, when it "unfailingly adheres to this faith . . . once for all delivered to the saints," and when it deepens its understanding and becomes Christ's witness in the midst of this world. (CCC 785)

A prophet is one who declares, through his own words and deeds, the word of God. Scripture (1 Cor 12:8-11,31) and our experience in the Charismatic Renewal tell us that God does want to speak to us (Matthew 10:19-20), so we should make a strong effort throughout the day to listen to his Spirit so as to bring his words to those around us.

But being prophetic does not only revolve around receiving a word from the Lord and speaking it out. **We also speak prophetically when we live by faith in the Lord.** When we pray outside of an abortion clinic, we witness to God's love for the human person and his desire to help those in need. When we share our faith with others, we proclaim God's good news of salvation for their souls. When we raise our hands in praise to God at prayer meeting, we reveal the Spirit's desire to lift us up to the throne of God. When we live a virtuous and holy life, we demonstrate the character of God.

What is it that we are witnessing to in the things we do each day? What are we witnessing to in the things we don't do? We speak through what we say, through what we don't say, through what we do, and through what we don't do. We are always witnessing to something – whether it be our sinful state or the life of God. Our actions need to match our words to give a proper witness. It does little good to tell a child not to watch TV if they see us watching TV, or to ask them to work hard at school if they don't see us working hard in the things we should be doing. Likewise, we need to be growing in holiness so that our own lives witness to the power of the gospel that we are proclaiming.

When Jesus was tempted in the desert to turn stones into bread, he said *"Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God"* (Matthew 4:4). The world is starving to hear the word of God, mankind was created to feast on the Word of God. Each of us is the prophet sent by God to reveal Christ to the world around us. Remember who you are - a child of the Father - and let his Word transform your life so that your life proclaims his Word to those around you.

LIVING AS A KING

Finally, the People of God shares in the royal office of Christ. He exercises his kingship by drawing all men to himself through his death and Resurrection. Christ, King and Lord of the universe, made himself the servant of all, for he came "not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." For the Christian, "to reign is to serve

him,” particularly when serving “the poor and the suffering, in whom the Church recognizes the image of her poor and suffering founder.” The People of God fulfills its royal dignity by a life in keeping with its vocation to serve with Christ. (CCC 786)

When we think of a king, we often think of authority, of someone who reigns over everything in the kingdom. And certainly, this is part of what we are brought into for Jesus is the King of kings, and he has absolute authority over all things. This gives us great confidence in our salvation, for we know that he has defeated every enemy (sin, Satan, and death). And we are called to exercise his authority over creation.

He called the twelve together, and gave them power and authority over all the demons and to heal diseases. And He sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to perform healing. (Luke 9:1-2)

Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Clearly, **Jesus calls us to wield his authority in the world around us** – to proclaim his kingdom with authority, to take authority over nature so as to heal the sick, and to take authority over demons so as to free God’s people. However, *one cannot exercise the authority of the king unless he lives under that authority as well*. Part of sharing in Jesus’ reign is reigning over our own thoughts, doubts, desires, and actions. We are called to take authority over that within us which would turn away from our King and to make it subject to his will. In doing so, we find that we rise above temptation, that we see things for what they are and can live with clarity.

We are overcomers! We are no longer slaves to sin, to fears, to doubts, to Satan, or anything else. This is the message we proclaim when we live in the victory of Jesus. As we allow Jesus to reign over more of our hearts, we see something grow in our hearts - the desire to love and serve those around us.

The kingship of Jesus is one of service, for the King of kings made himself the servant of all, and so it should be for all of us. He exercises his authority and power to serve the lowly, free the oppressed, and heal those who are broken.

Jesus called them to Himself and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. “It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” (Matt 20:25-28)

Conclusion

This really summarizes how we are called to be the light of the world. We are to enter into the fullness of life, to be true to who we are as children of God. This involves offering ourselves with Christ to the Father as a sacrifice in thanksgiving and for the sake of the salvation of souls. We are to help the world to see a glimpse of the Divine Nature in our words and actions, so that they can know Christ and the power of his death and resurrection, so that they might be made whole and brought into his glorious life for all eternity. Love is analogous to light – it gives of itself, it reaches out to share itself with others. The more we enter into the life of the Trinity, the more his love compels us.

In general, light is very attractive. We are drawn to light. We love to look at the stars, to decorate with Christmas lights, to draw near to a warm campfire. So it should be with us. Many in the world believe Christianity is boring and that it puts limitations on freedom and happiness. But the happiest, most fulfilled people in the world are those who are fulfilled in Christ. When people experience the love and joy of a Christian, they are drawn to that person because what they are experiencing is really the love and touch of God being made known through the Christian. God wants us to grow in our ability to express genuine love and affection for those around us, he wants us to be as interested in those around us as he is. What can we do to grow in our ability to love those around us and to express that love?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Light reaches out. How do you think God is calling you to reach out with his love and goodness?
2. How can you show more warmth and interest in your relationships?
3. How do you think God wants you to serve as a priest? *(What does God want you to sacrifice for the sake of the world around you (family, neighbors, coworkers, ...)? Is there anything you tend to avoid sacrificing?)*
4. How do you think God wants you to serve as a prophet? *(Do you pray to know what God would want to say to those around you?)*
5. How do you think God wants you to serve as a king? *(Do you see anything in your life that is outside his reign? How might God want you to exercise authority for the sake of others?)*