**I am the light of the world**

We continue our series looking at the claims of Jesus through the ‘I am’ statements in John’s gospel.

* They are claims that are too big for us to grasp – and incredibly controversial.
* Some like to think of Jesus as mild and gentle – well he was very loving but in these chapters in John he is arguing with the religious leaders. And they hated him.
* If we really understand Jesus’ claim we will have to respond to it in some way. It is too big a claim not to respond to – and some may respond with anger.
* Jesus made this claim in the temple (8v20) during the feast of tabernacles
* A feast held each year to remember when the Israelites wandered in the wilderness
* It was a time of celebration. It is reported that during the celebrations 4 huge lamps were lit in the temple’s court of the women.
* They would have been a reminder of the pillar of fire that led them in the wilderness.
* In that context Jesus says ‘I am the light of the world.’ We are going to look at Jesus’ claim in 3 parts.

**1. The Claim Jesus Makes**

* What does he mean? In what way is he light?
* There are 2 things light often symbolises in the Bible:
  1. Truth/knowledge
     + Not meaning general knowledge or knowledge gained through study
     + But knowledge of God – see John 1:18
     + We don’t need to be in the dark about the big questions of life and death – the questions about whether there is something ‘out there’.
     + This is an exclusive claim – now be warned if you aren’t yet a Christian what Jesus claims may well get you riled up.
       - He has been calling God his Father and he says v19
       - That is exclusive isn’t it? If you don’t know me you don’t know the Father.
       - So he is saying, you will not find out what is out there through any other person, through any other religion, through sitting amongst trees in silence or through anything else.
       - How do you respond to that? Many like to say they think all religions lead to God but what if that isn’t true.
  2. Goodness
     + The Bible also uses the image of light to symbolise goodness (see 1John 1:5)
     + So Jesus is claiming to be perfectly good.
     + And as the light of the world he claims to show us what is good and bad, right and wrong.
     + Which is what we need because in many areas of life we don’t know what is right and what is wrong.
     + And you would suspect that being around someone who is perfectly good would be uncomfortable. See John 8:1-11

Jesus is also making a statement about the world – it is dark.

* We see the evidence of the darkness of the world all around us.
* Miscarriages of justice, fearfulness, depression, despair, sickness and suffering a desperate search for meaning.

**2. The Invitation Jesus Offers**

* Notice who the invitation is to: ‘whoever’
* It isn’t for one nation or race, the invitation is to whoever
* Jesus is the light for Indians, Chinese, Sudanese, Americans and British

And the invitation is to follow Jesus

* As the Israelistes were to follow the pillar in the wilderness.
  + They weren’t merely to admire the pillar
  + Nor were they to expect that the pillar would follow them
  + They were to follow it and we are invited to follow Jesus
    - To give up self-determination
    - To say I will go where you want me to go
    - I will live as you say I should

But of course many don’t take up Jesus’ invitation

* In fact he says in John 3:19 (have a read).
* Jesus is saying that people love the darkness because their deeds are evil
* We have an aversion to the light – like someone with a migraine drawing the curtains, shutting out the light
* Why? Because if we come to the light we have to recognise our own sin, that we aren’t as good as we like to think but also that there will be obligations laid on us.
* Maybe there are some watching this who would say – look I know it’s true
* I know it’s true but I don’t want to follow Jesus because I know it will mean giving something up something I love.
* Well this is where we need to turn to Jesus’ promise…

**3. The Promise Jesus Gives**

See what Jesus promises in the last part of verse 12

* Never walk in darkness
  + If light symbolises knowledge of God then never walking in the darkness will mean walking with God.
  + Through Jesus we can live this life in a father child relationship with God.
  + Which is such an incredible promise – through the difficulties and struggles of this life to know you walk in the light, with God.
  + Light also means goodness – so to walk in the light means having your darkness dealt with
  + read 1John 1:5-8.
  + Important distinction in these verses
  + Christians sin and need purifying (v8-9) – but Christians don’t ‘walk in the darkness’ (v6) i.e. live a life refusing to submit to Jesus.
* Have the light of life
  + Light and life are put together elsewhere in the gospel (see John 1:4)
  + It is the eternal life which starts now and stretches on for eternity.

So – are you following Jesus? His invitation is for all.