

Illuminate Devotional Study— John 8:12-30

Start by reading John 8:12-30.

In the Laurel Caverns near Uniontown, PA, amateur spelunkers can, for a small fee, experience a tour of a cave which provides the opportunity to experience total darkness. Having experienced it, darkness of this caliber proves unnerving even for adults. Darkness is uncomfortable. We strive to avoid it.

There's a darkness spoken of in the Bible, which only one light can dispel, and that is the darkness of sin. It's the darkness that we feel when our guilt is exposed. It's the darkness we experience in those quiet spaces in life, when we are faced with our fears and frailties, and the weak and worthless things we use to try to hide them. It's the darkness we try to avoid when we in our more honest moments are confronted with our own mortality. To this darkness, Jesus declares: "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jesus says this after celebrating the Feast of Booths. During the feast, torches were lit to commemorate the time when God provided his presence in a pillar of fire to light their way and guide them in their flight from Egypt to the promised land (see Exodus 13:21-22). Jesus now identifies Himself as the true and ultimate light of God's presence by which people lost in darkness find eternal rest in the promised land of heaven. As the Light of the World, He would dispel the darkness of sin that had separated us from God.

The Pharisees, the Jewish religious leaders of the day, didn't like this. In their eyes, rule following, old-fashioned effort and super-holy goodness were all that was needed to climb out of the darkness of sin into God's presence. Disgusted that Jesus would think otherwise, they mocked Him and called Him a liar. They wanted nothing to do with this so-called "light." He responds with one of the saddest statements in the Bible. "I am going away (to the Father in Heaven) and you will seek me, and you will die in your sins, where I am going you cannot come...Unless you believe that I am He (that is, the Light of the World) you will die in your sins" (John 8:21, 24).

Friends, for you these words do not need to cause fear. Trusting in Him, you will never hear the words "you will die in your sins," because to you the Light of the World says I have died for your sins. In Jesus we walk in the light of life that dispels the darkness of sin. This is an invitation for "whoever" believes in him. There are no exclusions.

Questions for reflection:

1. *Think of a time you were exposed to complete or near complete darkness for an extended amount of time. How did it make you feel?*
2. *In what ways do you experience the darkness of sin in your life? (Guilt? Fear? Struggles with family? Health issues? Loss of loved ones?)*
3. *In what ways are you tempted to try to bring light to your darkness by ways other than Jesus? How have those efforts worked?*
4. *What does trusting in Jesus, the light of the world, provide for you that these other things have not?*

Prayer: Dear Jesus, as this world's only light, thank you for dispelling the darkness of our sin through your death for us on your cross. Forgive me for the ways in which I try to dispel that darkness on my own, and help me to trust in you each day. Cause me to walk in the light of life both now and forever. Amen.