



Sermon– September 30, 2018
Matt Carter

Verses Covered

Matthew 4:12 – 16

John 1:4 – 9

2 Corinthians 4:6

John 8:12, 20

Isaiah 9:6

2 Corinthians 4:4

Acts 26:16 - 18

John 3:19 - 20

Ezekiel 36:25 - 26

1 Peter 2:9

Amen. It is good to be in this place today. Again, if you missed it, my name is Matt Carter. Pastor of the Austin Stone Community Church in Austin, Texas. I moved to Austin 16 years ago to plant a church to try to reach the pagans of the University of Texas for Christ. And so far we've been doing alright. This, I'm not going to spend a bunch of time today talking about this because I could talk about it a long time. But I'll say this very simply. There has been no man that has had a greater influence on my walk with Christ than Chris Osborne. And there has been no greater church that's had a greater influence on my walk than Central Baptist. So I want to say thank you for that. Your fingerprints are all over our church in Austin in many ways.

I want you to open up your Bible to the book of Matthew, chapter 4 today. Matthew chapter. I've got this handheld mic, I'm not trying to look cool, I've got a little bit of a cough and so I didn't want to be coughing in that "Madonna mic" that Chris wears. And I texted him last night. I said, "Anything special you want to make sure that I do?" And he simply texted back and said, "Yeah, don't screw up my church." And that's, so I'm going to attempt to do that today. And I sent him a picture because I parked in his parking spot out there. And so we're going to be in Matthew chapter 4, verse 12 today. In my church we're preaching through the book of Matthew. This is kind of where I'm at. So I thought I'd just preach it to you guys.

You know one of the things we're going to realize is that everything that Jesus does in His ministry, He does intentionally. He's only got three years. From kind of the time He begins His ministry to the cross and the resurrection his ascension to accomplish his earthly ministry. And so one of

the things you realize is everything He does He does for a reason. And the text that we come to today, Matthew 4:12, you see Him doing something that seems at first sort of random and sort of innocuous. But it's not. He's going to go to His hometown, Matthews going to tell us He goes to His hometown of Nazareth. And then He goes to Capernaum which is near the Sea of Galilee. And that seems like that's no big deal. It seems like it's not a big deal, but what the Scripture is going to tell us is that Jesus was intentionally doing that in order to fulfil a prophecy from the prophet Isaiah. And so Isaiah tells us 800 years before Jesus ever rose up on the scene that what was going to happen is that in the area of Galilee, there would be a great light that would shine on a people that are living in darkness. And so what we're going to see today is two things. We're going to see, number one, we're going to see why the scripture refers to Jesus as the Light of the world. And if you've been in church for a while, you've heard that your whole life. But maybe you've never understood why is Jesus called the Light of the world. We're going to learn that and then the second thing we're going to learn today is what does that mean for you and me? What does it mean that Christ is the Light of the world. How does that apply in my life? And so let's read this together. Matthew 4:12. He says:

¹²Now when He heard, that's Jesus, now when He heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew into Galilee; ¹³and leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum by the sea in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴So that, He did that, it says so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled:

And then he quotes Isaiah in verse 15. He says,

¹⁵“The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles,

He says this in verse 16. Here's the key. He says,

¹⁶“The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region of the shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”

So let's pray together.

Father I thank You for this day. I thank You for the opportunity to be in this church where I fell in love with You and where I learned the power of Your word. So God I pray today that Your word would be powerful. I pray that You would change us today, pray that we would leave here differently than when we came in. And I ask that in Jesus name. Amen.

So one of the things we see is that all throughout the Bible, one of the most utilized metaphors, one of the most utilized metaphors that describes Jesus' nature and His purpose on this planet is that of the Light. Over and over and over again you see Jesus referred to as the light. Whether it's an Old Testament prophecy, whether it's the New Testament gospel writers, whether it's the New Testament epistle writers. Over and over and over again Jesus is spoken of as the Light. Couple of examples here. Don't turn there with me, I think we're going to have it on the screen, but John chapter 1, verse 4. Listen to how John talks about Jesus. Listen to how often he uses the word light. He says,

⁴In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it. ⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness to bear witness about the Light, that all might believe through him. ⁸But he was not the Light, but he came to bear witness about the Light.

In verse 9, he says,

⁹The true Light which gives light to everyone who is coming into the world.

You guys seeing a theme yet? Five times in six verses, Jesus is referred to as the Light. Why is that? Listen to how the apostle Paul talks about Jesus in 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verse 6. He says,

⁶For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shown in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

And so Jesus Himself talked about Himself as the Light. In John chapter 8, verse 12, watch this. It says,

¹²Again Jesus spoke to them saying, “I am the Light of the world; and whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the Light of life.”

Now I want to stop right there because we all know that verse and we’ve heard it a hundred times, but one of the things that I realized is that when you realize when Jesus said that statement that I’m the Light of the world, and when you realize where Jesus said that statement, you realize how profound it is. And so John quotes Jesus there in John chapter 8, verse 12, but then in John 8:20, John tells us kind of when and where He said it and you realize why it was such a profound statement. So let me read that to you. John 8:20. This is after Jesus said, “I’m the Light of the world.” In 8:20 he says,

²⁰These words He spoke in the treasury as He taught in the temple.

But then watch the next phrase there. It says,

but no one arrested Him,

Now that’s interesting. Jesus says, “I am the Light of the world.” And then John says, a few verses later, but the religious leaders didn’t arrest Him because His time had not come. Now here’s a question for you, Central. Why in the world would these religious leaders want to arrest Jesus simply because He said, “He’s the Light of the world?” Right? Look in verse 20 one more time. It says,

These words He spoke in the treasury as He taught in the temple.

And so, Jesus, watch this, this is really cool. I didn’t know this until a couple weeks ago. Jesus made the declaration that I am the Light of the world in the area of the temple in Jerusalem, though, known as the treasury. And that was the outer court of the temple. It was called the outer court,

or the court of women. OK. So that's where He made the statement. Now when He made the statement was interesting. He made the statement at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. At the end of the Feast of Tabernacles. And here's why that's a big deal. That's why the religious leaders wanted to arrest Him. Because during the Feast of Tabernacles, what they would do is they would get hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of candles and they would bring them to that outer court where Jesus walked in and said that. They would bring them to the outer court and they'd light the candles. And so these hundreds and hundreds of candles, day and night, would be shining. And they would be putting forth this incredible light. You could see it for miles and miles and miles away. This great light would shine from the outer court of the temple. And at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles what would happen is they'd come out and they would extinguish all the candles. And what those candles were meant to do was to remind them of how God led the people in Israel in the desert by a pillar of fire by night. And so at the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, they would extinguish all the candles and it was when Jesus Christ walked up, it was the end of the Feast of Tabernacles, all these candles had been extinguished, He walked into the outer court that used to be filled with light, but was now filled with darkness, and it was there that He looked up and said, "I want you guys to know that I am the Light of the world." And the religious leaders flipped out. If you could imagine the shock, if you can imagine the horror, if you can imagine how offended the religious leaders were when this guy from Nazareth, this carpenter from Nazareth shows up and equates Himself to the Light that God used to lead the people of God out of the desert. OK. That's why they wanted to arrest Him.

I want to just stop right there. Let me just say this. I, and this is especially true in Austin, Texas. Not so much true in College Station here, but I live in a very liberal city. And I live in a city where the culture of my city is absolutely embracing spirituality. If you go to a Starbucks and you ask some random person the question, "Hey, would you be willing to have a spiritual conversation with me?" They'll say, "Absolutely." And they'll talk to you. But if you ask the question, "Do you want to have a conversation with me about how Jesus Christ is the Son of God and the only way to heaven?" They'll say, "Absolutely not. You're a bigot." And so we're in a place where people are increasingly spiritual, but they're increasingly more uncomfortable with this idea that Jesus was the Son of God. They're increasingly uncomfortable with this idea that He was not God in the flesh. The He was just a good moral teacher. If you ask Austinites that question, maybe you've heard somebody talk about it. They really do that. You're like, "Well who was Jesus?" And let's say He's just a moral teacher. He was just another guy. Just another teacher. Well here's my question then. If Jesus was nothing more than a good, sweet, moral teacher, then why were people always wanting to kill Him? They wanted to kill Him because He stood in the most holy place of Israel, that used to have the light that represented God, He walked into that place and He said, "I want you guys to know that I am the Light of the world." He didn't say, "I am a light in the world." He said, "I am the Light of the world." So all throughout the Bible, all throughout the Bible you see Jesus referred to over and over and over again as the Light. Now let's read Matthew 4:12 one more time. Let's see if this starts making more sense to you. He says,

¹²Now when He heard that John had been arrested, He withdrew to Galilee, Jesus withdrew to Galilee; ¹³and leaving Nazareth, He went and lived in Capernaum by the Sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali. ¹⁴So that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled.

He went to Galilea so that a prophecy would be fulfilled. What is this prophecy that would be fulfilled? 4:15. Matthew 4:15. Isaiah says,

¹⁵The Land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, the Galilee of Gentiles

And here's the prophecy. Verse 16.

¹⁶The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great Light, and for those dwelling in the region of the shadow death, on them a light has dawned.

800 years before Jesus ever shows up on the scene, Isaiah predicts that there will be great Light. That is going to shine on a people that are living in darkness. Now here's the thing you need to understand. When they first read that, they thought, "Is that going to be a person? Is that going to be the literal sun? Is that going to be some sort of physical light? What is this light going to be that's going to shine on us?" Well Isaiah, a few verses later, tells them. He tells them it's not going to be the sun. It's not going to be some physical light. This light that's going to shine on the people living in darkness is actually going to be a person. And he says that just a few verses later after he says a great Light has shined in the darkness in Isaiah 9:6, he says who this great light is going to be. I bet you've heard this verse before. Isaiah 9:6. He says,

⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be on His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace.

Does that sound familiar to you guys? That's Isaiah talking about Christmas. Hundreds of years before Jesus ever shows up, hundreds of years before Jesus ever puts on our flesh and came to this earth, Isaiah said, there is going to be a baby that is born. And His name is going to be Wonderful Counselor, Prince of Peace, Everlasting Father, Almighty God. And this child that's going to be born whose name is God is going to grow up and He is going to be a great Light to a people that are living in darkness. That's the whole point guys, honestly, of the book of Matthew. Is Matthew shouting at the top of his lungs to the Jewish people? "Hey! Y'all remember back in the day when Isaiah said that there's going to be a baby that was born whose name is God and He was going to grow up and be the Light of the World?" Matthew was shouting at the top of his lungs, "That is Jesus Christ." Yet they rejected Him. And so that's why Jesus is called the Light of the world.

Now what I want to do with the rest of the sermon today is I want to talk about what does that mean for you and for me? That Jesus is the Light of the world that came to shine His light on a people living in darkness. What does that mean? Why does that matter to you? Why does that matter to me? Here's why. When you became a Christian, there are a bunch of names that are used to describe that moment of your coming to Christ. There's a bunch of names that the Bible uses, that people use, to describe the moment that you became a Christian. One of them is salvation. You hear that all the time. You hear people say when they become a Christian, they'll say, "Well on so and so date at this particular place, I got saved." You'll hear people talk about their salvation like that. I got saved. You hear other people describing the moment of their salvation, talking about being born again. And that's very Biblical. You have Nicodemus that

said, "You have to be born again if you want to enter the kingdom of Heaven." And so some of the folks in the South, and the older folks, they'll say, "Hey! I was born again." It's a very Biblical statement describing your salvation. That would be true. Some of the more academic folks, you'll hear people describing their salvation as justification. And it's true. That's a word that's a judicial term that means that at the moment of your salvation, you were declared not guilty in the sight of God. That God looks at you; you've been completely forgiven of your sins. You were justified. But here's the thing I want you to hear today. Here it is. That all those phrases and all those concepts can be summed up with this concept that Matthew is referring today in John chapter 4. Listen. The reason that Jesus Christ came to this planet, the reason that Jesus Christ came to this planet was to put on our flesh and to reach into our story and to transfer us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. That is why He came. That's what Matthew's saying. That He came to this planet to put on our flesh and to reach into our story and to remove us from a place of darkness so that we could have that salvation and live and walk in the Light of God. As a matter of fact, as I was studying this, I realized something that the first century Christians more than any other term, more than born again, more than salvation, more than justification, when they were talking about their conversion experience, they would talk about it in these terms. Some person say, "Well when did you become a Christ follower?" And they'd say, "Well I was transferred from darkness into light on this day." That was the phrase that they used more than any other thing. And for you to understand what that means, that you were delivered out of darkness and into the light of the glory of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, for you to understand what that means, the first thing you have to do is you've got to know what it means that before Jesus, you were living in darkness. To really know what it means that you were transferred from darkness to light. Yet you have to know what it means that before Christ you were in a state of darkness. That's how the Bible describes, that's one of the ways, that the Bible describes your spiritual condition before the blood of Jesus Christ changes you. It describes you as being in a state of spiritual darkness. To understand that, you've got to go back to the very beginning in the Garden of Eden. In the Garden of Eden, before sin entered into the picture, Adam and Eve were in perfect fellowship with God. They walked with God. They talked with God. They knew God. They interacted with God. They were in fellowship with God. And here's what the scripture tells us. That God is Light. And so before sin entered into the picture, Adam and Even walked in this uninterrupted, complete fellowship, of the Light of Almighty God. And so but this is what happened, they sinned, right. Sin entered into the picture. And the moment that Adam and Eve sinned, they lost all that. They lost the ability to see God face to face. Think about that. They lost the ability to, to be in relationship with God. They lost the ability to be in fellowship with God. They lost the ability to relate and interact with God. And what the bible describes that as is they entered into a state, not of the light of the glory of God, but they entered into a state of spiritual darkness. But that spiritual darkness didn't stay with Adam and Eve. The scripture tells us in Romans that that spiritual darkness was passed down through Adam to every single human being that's ever lived. You and I were born in a state of spiritual darkness until the blood of Jesus changes that. The Bible describes two different implications of this spiritual darkness. The Bible talks about how before Christ intervenes in your life, before you trusted Him as your Lord and Savior, before He transfers you out of darkness into light, the scripture describes us as having darkened spiritual eyes. Describes us has darkened spiritual eyes. Over and over again it talks about that. Now why? What does that mean? Here's what that means. The fact that we have darkened spiritual eyes means that we were not born with this natural understanding that the primary reason we were created was to be in fellowship with God. Let me just say something real quick. Everybody look

at me. Did you know that that's why you were created? Did you know that? You weren't created for all these other things. God put breath in your lungs and let you show up here on this earth for this end that you would be in fellowship in the Light of the One that created you. That is why you are alive. That is why every human being is alive; to be in fellowship with Almighty God. But we're born, because of sin, with the inability to know and to realize that that's why we were created. And that's why, because of these darkened spiritual eyes, that's why most people spend their entire lives trying to fill this void in their souls and they have absolutely no idea why it's there. It's because they were created to be in fellowship with God and they try to fill that hole with a thousand other things, but it never can do it. I think most of us discover that this kind of void in our hearts that needs to be filled, we start realizing it's there, most of us about fifteen years old. When you start realizing, man there's something that's not right. Because what happens when you're fifteen? There's a longing that's placed in your heart at fifteen to do something. What is it? It's to drive a car. Right? When you're fifteen years old, all you can think about is, "Man I just want to get to the place where mom and dad are no longer driving me around. Where mom's not dropping me off at school. I want to have the freedom to just be able to drive myself around." And so you think that's when life's really going to start. That's when life's going to get good. That's when life really is going to begin, when I'm sixteen. What happens? You turn sixteen and then you get your driver's license and you finally get that freedom and you start driving around. But what happens? You get a ticket that's like \$250 and your dad looks at you and says, "Oh, guess what? You've got to pay for gas and you've got to pay for insurance." And your mom looks at you and says, "Oh, yeah, I need you to take your little brother to soccer practice every day from now until Jesus comes back." And you're sixteen and you're like, "I thought life was going to be here, but this is just life." And then you think at sixteen, you think, "Ok, well I'll tell you what. Life, life must begin at 18 years old." That's when life really must begin. When I can actually get out of my moms' house and I can go to Texas A&M University and that's when life is really going to begin. And so you graduate from high school and you go to Texas A&M University and you think, "Alright! This is when it's really going to get good. But then you'll wake up one day and you'll realize my roommate is a pagan and he smells bad. And he's stealing my toothbrush when I'm not looking. And you're living on Taco Bell and Ramen Noodles to stay alive. And you think, "There's got to be more to life than this. There's got to be more."

And so you think OK. Here's what's got to happen. Life really must begin then when I get married and get a job. You hear the married people groan. That's you see where I'm going with this. Life must really begin when I get married and get a job. That's when everything's going to be great. Well then you wake up one day and you're married and you have a job and then you have these things that you have to pay like, they're called a mortgage and taxes and your boss is yelling at you and your wife's yelling at you to not leave the socks on the floor, but put them in the laundry basket, right. And you've got a kid and he's running around and you look over and he's smearing peanut butter on the drapes. And you think, "Wow! I thought this was life was going to begin." But it's just life. And so you think, "OK. Then life must really begin at retirement." Like that's when everything's going to fall into place. That's when the fullness of life is going to be experienced. If I can just make it to retirement. If I can get my kids out of the house for crying out loud. Get the biggest pay raise in the history of my life. Then everything's going to be great. But one day you wake up, you're retired, you've got bad knees, you're wearing bifocals, and you're just waiting around to die. I mean that's, and so we spend our entire lives looking for this place, for this thing that we'll experience the fullness of life and it never happens. You know why that

occurs? You can probably relate to that story at some level. You know why that phenomenon happens? It's because the primary reason you're alive on this planet is not to drive a car. And the primary reason that you're alive on this planet is not to get a job. And it's not to get married. And it's not to retire. The primary reason you're alive, the primary reason that you have breath in your lungs is to know and to love and to serve the Creator of the universe. But, but here's the thing, but you are born darkened to that understanding. You don't come out of the womb saying, "You know what I need? I need to follow Jesus." You're born, the Bible says, darkened to that understanding. Listen to 2 Corinthians 4:4. Listen to how Paul describes this darkened spiritual state of our eyes. He says,

⁴in their case the god of this world, Satan, has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the Light of the gospel of the glory of Christ.

And so what the Bible is teaching us here is that for us to get to the place where we understand the truths of God and we begin to walk in fellowship with Him like we were created to do. Something has to happen. Our darkened spiritual eyes have to be opened. Our darkened spiritual eyes have to be opened. And I want you to listen to this. Jesus, or rather, Paul is going to talk about his Damascus Road experience and Jesus is going to speak. Paul's converted. He's radically converted. Jesus knocks him off his horse. Shines a great light, by the way, and I want you to listen to this interchange and what Jesus actually says to Paul, that he's to go and do to the Gentiles in Acts 26:16. Jesus knocks him off his horse and then says this. He says,

¹⁶But rise and stand upon your feet for I have appeared to you for this purpose.

Jesus says, "Here's the reason I just knocked you off your horse. Get up on your feet. I'm appearing to you right now for this reason, Jesus says.

I have appeared to you for this purpose, to appoint you as a servant and witness to the things which you have seen, Me, and to those in which I will appear to you. Verse 17 he says, ¹⁷delivering you from your people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you,

So He's saying, "I'm sending you to the Gentiles." And watch what He tells him to do when He sends him to the Gentiles. Watch what Jesus said. He's sending him to the Gentiles in verse 18,

¹⁸to open their, say it with me, to open their eyes

Why did Jesus say that? Because they have darkened spiritual eyes. He said, "I'm sending you to open their eyes." What will they do when their eyes are opened?

So they may turn from darkness to the light and from the power of Satan to God that they may receive forgiveness of their sins in a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.

That's what happens at the moment of your salvation. That's what happens at the moment of your salvation as God opens your spiritual eyes, put faith and trust in Jesus Christ and God transfers out of the darkness into His marvelous light. And guys I want to tell you something. This, this is a

real phenomenon that I have heard about, that I have seen. This idea of God opening peoples darkened spiritual eyes. People that are in the throws of the power of Satan; God opening their eyes.

At The Austin Stone I planted the church, I'm the founding pastor, I'm the pastor of preaching there. But a few years ago we grew to the point that it got past my kind of leadership ability and my ability to run a business. And so I hired a lead pastor for the church. He kind of runs the day to day operations of the church and I'm sort of the lead pastor person of it. But his name is Kevin Peck. He's an Aggie. I think he's class of 2000. And here's the thing about Kevin Peck is that Kevin, Kevin might be the most brilliant man I've ever met. He's not smart. He's absolutely stone-cold brilliant. He's a brilliant, intelligent guy. He, he was getting his doctorate and he was writing his doctoral thesis on leadership development in the church. And you think to yourself, "Well how complicated can that be? Leadership development in the church." Seems like a pretty simple subject. Well he gave me his doctoral thesis before he turned it in. He said, "Matt could you read this?" And so I said, "Sure, I'd be happy to." Make sure it was OK. I'm about 3 or 4 pages into it and I'm telling you guys before Jesus, I'm not brilliant, but I'm fairly smart. I've got a doctorate. I'm about 4 or 5 pages into it and it hits me, I have absolutely no clue whatsoever what this guy's saying. So I'm thinking, "Well maybe he's just not that smart. He's not as smart as I thought. He's just saying nonsense." But then he turns it in and all the brilliant academic people are like, "This is the greatest thing that's ever been written since the Bible." Right? He's brilliant. But here's the thing. He'll tell you. He grew up in California. Grew up as an atheist. And when he came to Texas A&M, he came here and he started reading the Bible when he got here. Not to know God. He didn't believe in God. He started reading his Bible in order to be able to trip up Christians. And this brilliant Kevin Peck will tell you that as he began to read the Bible, a couple things happened. He said, number one, he said, it didn't make any sense to him. So here's a brilliant man. It made absolutely no sense to him. And the second thing. He said, "Matt, not only did it not make any sense, but it was the dumbest thing I'd ever heard in my entire life." He said, "It was moronic to me." And by the way, 1 Corinthians 1:18 says the gospel is moronic in the Greek for those who are perishing. But he said an interesting thing happened. He said a buddy of his on the track team started witnessing with him, witnessing to him. Started sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ to him. He kept rejecting it, kept rejecting it, and about the fifth time the guy tried to share the gospel with him, he put his hand up and said, "Man I've heard enough." He went home, he walked into his dorm room, and he knew enough to know that Christians got down on their knees when they prayed and so he told me, he said, "Matt I got down on my knees." On that day and he said this, he said this to God, he prayed this prayer. He said, "God if you will change me," he goes, "If You're real, if You're real and you will change me." He said, "If you will help me to understand the truths of Your word, I'll follow You the rest of my life." Kevin said in that moment he got up from his knees, this is his, this is his salvation story. He said he got up from his knees and he grabbed the Bible and he began to read it. And he said, Matt, he said, I kid you not, for the first time in my life it made all the sense in the world. He said, "Not only did it all of a sudden make complete and total sense to me, he said, but what was just a few days before the dumbest thing I'd ever heard, became in that moment the most life giving message I'd ever heard in my entire life." What happened to Kevin? What happened to Kevin is that God opened his darkened spiritual eyes to see the Light of Christ and Jesus completely changed his life.

Another implication. Almost done here. Hang with me. Another implication that you and I were born into spiritual darkness is not only are we born with darkened spiritual eyes, but the Bible says we're born with darkened spiritual hearts. We're born with darkened spiritual hearts. In John chapter 3, verse 19 John says,

¹⁹and this is judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the Light, because their deeds were evil. He says, ²⁰for everyone who does wicked things hates the Light and does not come into the Light lest his works should be exposed.

And so church, what John is saying here is that before God kind of steps into your story, before the blood of Jesus is applied to your life, what he's saying here is that your heart won't love the Light. That before you're saved, your heart is going to love the darkness. It's clear in John. He's saying that people that are far from God love the darkness. They coddle the darkness. They pursue the darkness. They go after the darkness. He's saying that they love the darkness. And so what God does when he transfers you out of darkness into the Light is He gives you a new heart. He changes your heart that once was a heart of stone and once a heart of darkness and he gives you a brand new heart. It says it there in Ezekiel chapter 36, verse 25. God says,

²⁵I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleanness and from all your idols I will cleanse you.

In verse 26, God says,

²⁶I will give you a new heart and a new spirit I will put within you and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

So listen, I want you to hear this. Don't miss what I'm about to say. That one of the primary ways that you know that you're saved, one of the primary ways that you know that God has transferred you from the darkness into the Light is that you've been given a new heart. And you go, "Matt how do I know if I have a new heart?" Here's how you know if you have a new heart. Because you have new desires. That you no longer love the darkness. That's how you know that God has changed your heart. Listen to me. Being a Christian does not mean that you're never going to sin again. But what it means is that you're never going to be OK with sin ever again. Being a Christian does not mean you're never going to sin again. But what it means when God opens your darkened spiritual eyes, He gives you a brand new heart. As you, your heart is going to have brand new desires and you're never going to be home with sin ever again. I've seen that in my own life. Before God changed my heart right here at Texas A&M, I felt right at home with my sin. I felt right at home with my sin. Before Jesus stepped into my story and transferred me from the darkness to the Light, sin didn't bother me at all. It didn't bother me at all. But now that I'm saved, now that I have been transferred from darkness to Light, the best way to describe how I feel when I fall into sin is very simple. Sin now feels foreign to me. Y'all with me? Sin feels foreign to me. If it doesn't there's a problem; if you're a Christian. It feels foreign to me. I don't feel at home in it anymore.

This summer, actually, I took Chris Osborne with me, Chris and I went to Bolivia together and saw a Compassion International compound and did a lot of dove hunting. If you've ever seen Chris Osborne dove hunt, he yells the whole time. Just this mouth, he just talks the whole time. Anyway, it was awesome. I'm a better shot than him. But anyway, we went to Bolivia and I actually had to fly home by myself. I had to leave a couple of days early and they did not have an extra translator to go with me. And so I had to go through the Bolivian airport, I have a little bit of High School Spanish but, man, that's it. So I had to navigate my way through the Bolivian airport. But here's the thing. One of the things we discovered there is you can't, and Bolivia is a great country, food's incredible, but you can't just eat anything. You've got to make sure that the food there that you're eating, as the locals say, is *Gringo Friendly*. Gringo means white people. And so they'll tell you, if you go to a restaurant, whether the food is gringo friendly or not. Because you don't want to eat non-gringo friendly food. It could be bad. And so I'm going through the airport. I finally make it through. Nobody speaks a lick of English in the whole place. Nobody! Not a word! And I finally get through security and it hits me. I'm starving to death and so I go up to this little counter where they're selling food there. And I ask, one of the phrases I do know is, "Do you speak English?" And the lady shook her head. And so I'm thinking, "How do I ask if this food is gringo friendly?" And so I get my phone out and I looked up Google Translator and I typed in that phrase, "Is this food gringo friendly?" And it gave me some phrase in Spanish, like "Esta comida amigable gringo?" I don't know. It was something. And so I pulled out the phone and I looked at her and I said this phrase in Spanish. And then she just busted out laughing as loud as she possibly could. And then she kind of turns around in Spanish and starts telling all her buddies, "Come here. Come here. Come here. Come here. Come here. Come here. Come here." And so everybody from the kitchen, like 15 girls, come walking out like, and she looked at me and kind of does this right here, like "Say it again white boy. Do it again." And so I read it, "Esta comida amigable gringo?" Whatever. And then all of them just bust out laughing as loud as they can. And then everybody kind of dies down laughing and she looks at me like this and she goes, "No." And so I walked off and I didn't eat. So here's the thing, man. It hit me in that moment, I'm like this is not my home. I am in a foreign country. It's not my home. It doesn't feel like my home. That's how sin ought to feel to you. It's not your home anymore. It's not who you are. It's not where you belong. And so when you walk down the road to sin, it ought to feel foreign to you. It's not who you are. You're a child of Light. And so when you're walking in the darkness, something ought to feel off. You know I got in that plane and I flew all the way back to Texas and I landed in Austin, Texas and I got off that plane and you know the first thing I smelled? I smelled Salt Lick Barbecue dabgummit! I'm like I'm in Texas and I smell barbecue. And I am home in Jesus name. Right? And the way that my body felt in that moment is the way your soul ought to feel when you're in the Light. The way my body felt in Texas is the way your soul ought to feel in the Light. It's not who we are anymore to walk in sin. God got hold of my heart and He changed me.

Here's the last thing here. Not only is it foreign to us, but it's contrary to our nature. God changes our nature. He makes us all together new. And so the best way to describe what how sin kind of feels like now when I encounter it, is just it's not my nature. Everything in my body and my soul screams out now that's not who you are. As I told you, before Christ, if I would sin, I'd brag about it to my buddies. But now after God has changed me, if I sin, the best way to describe it is I grieve. And here's the thing. You can take Kevin Peck's story and you can take my story, and you can chalk it up to some random psychological or physiological or cultural phenomena, but for what

it's worth to you, I'm convinced it's none of that. I'm convinced the absolute core of my being rather than the words of the living God are true when He told us in 1 Peter chapter 2, verse 9, he says,

9But you are a chosen race, you are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His own possession. Why? That you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light.

And I'll end with this. If you're here today and maybe you're new to church, or you're not a believer, or maybe somebody brought you here, maybe this is your first time at church and you come in here and you're thinking, "What is this all about? Why are they singing? Why do people come into a building on a Sunday morning when there's so many other things you could be doing on Sunday morning? Why are these people here? Why are they singing? Why are so many of them lifting their hands? Why are they bowing their heads? Why is a guy yelling at me right now? What is going on?" Here's what I want you to tell them. Here's what I want to tell you. Jesus did not come to this planet to start a new religion. Jesus didn't come to this planet to start a new political party. Jesus did not come to this earth to create for you a list of do's and don'ts that you've got to follow hoping to please God. Jesus came to this planet because God loves you too much for you to spend your entire life living in the darkness of your sin. Jesus came to this earth to open your eyes and He came to this earth to give you a new heart. So that you can live the life you were always created to live which is in the light of God. I think the old Christian Christmas hymn maybe says it best. Maybe the best song that's ever been written, O Holy Night. It says,

Long lay the world in sin and error pining
Until He appeared and the soul felt its worth
A thrill of hope the weary world rejoices
For yonder breaks a new and a glorious morn

That's what Jesus Christ is offering you today if you do not know Christ. He is offering you a new and a glorious morning in the Light. If you're here and you're a believer and you know beyond a shadow of a doubt that you have been transferred from the darkness to the light, but today you find yourself and you're like, "Matt if I'm honest, I'm walking in the deeds of darkness. I know for a fact that I'm saved. I know for a fact that I'm born again. I know for a fact that I'm justified. I know for a fact that God has transferred me from the darkness into the light. But, Matt, I'm walking today in the deeds of darkness." If that's you, I cannot think of a better day than today to come home. It's not who you are anymore. You're hanging out in a foreign country that you will never feel like you belong. Because it's not your home. Step back today into the light. Step back today into the light. There is life there and there is healing there. And most importantly, He's waiting for you there.

Let's pray.

If there are any of you here today that have never in your life trusted in Christ as your Lord and Savior, there's never been a time where God has stepped into your story and transferred you from the darkness of your sin into the light of His glory that you're created for. And I can't think of a better way than today to do that. Ask Him to change you. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins.

And He will make you His child. And the best way you know how, just do that right now. If you're a Christian here and you're like Matt I'm walking in the deeds of darkness. And right now ask Jesus to give you the power to repent. Ask the Lord to give you the power to turn back and run to the Light. It's the only place you'll ever be at home. The best way you know. Do that right now. Jesus we love You. We thank You. I thank You for Your word. I thank You for its power. And I thank You for the fact, more than anything, that You came to us and You changed us. You died for us. You shed Your blood on the cross. You rose three days later so that we can be a people transferred out of darkness into Your marvelous light. Thank You, Lord. We praise You today for what You've done. In Jesus name. Amen.