



I Am (Part 3) – The Light of the World

Matt Chandler – February 14, 2016

Good morning. How are we? Doing well? Hey, a Catholic saint was beheaded a long time ago, so happy Valentine's Day. Make sure you celebrate deeply today. That's just absurd. Like why would I start the service that way?

If you have your Bibles, go ahead and grab those. John, chapter 8, is where we're going to be. If you don't have a Bible with you, I want to encourage you. There should be a black hardback one somewhere around you. Why don't you grab that? If you don't own one, that's our gift to you. If you're not familiar with the Bible, how it works, I have the page number on the screen, and for your reference, big numbers are chapters and little numbers are verses.

If you don't know, I'm just glad you're here. We're going to let the Word of God press into us today, and it's going to be a really cool thing. While you're turning there, I wanted to do a little Village Church family business, so if you're a guest with us, you'll just get to sit in on a little family meeting. About a year ago, Lauren and I began to get a sense that my life in particular was getting a bit out of control in regard to reaching the end of my bandwidth.

I pastor The Village Church. This is my primary love, what I feel most called to, but I've been the president of Acts 29, which is a church-planting organization with 600 churches on six continents. I've written some books, and then I get to travel and speak at these other places. We just began to feel that I was starting to hit my bandwidth.

I don't know if you've had that moment where you're like, "Okay, I can't do any more. I'm done here." I was beginning to feel that, so in a conversation Lauren and I had, we just decided that we were going to use my sabbatical to hit the hard reset button. We cleared my fall. We kept my spring and winter, but we cleared my fall, outside of one trip to Nashville.

I literally hopped on a plane at 6:00, got to Nashville around 8:30 or 9:00. I spoke at 9:00 a.m., drove from the venue to the airport, got back on a plane, and was home back in Dallas by 4:00. That was it. If I missed a weekend in the fall, it was because I was being disappointed with my son down at A&M watching them try to win at football. So we're out just being a family and doing family things.

After my first week of sabbatical, I just went, "Yeah, this is what I want to do. I want to shrink my circles. I want to push all of my chips in at The Village and in this community and be a part of this thing with all of my energy and not just some of my energy." So I wrote and contacted everyone who had me under contract. I'm not under any contract to write any more books. In fact, I've told everybody, "I'll deliver my next book right after Norah graduates from high school." She's 6, so that creates some space for me.

I just said to them, "I would like out of these contracts. This is what I feel the Lord is calling me into and the season he's calling me into." Many of them wrote back and said, "Praise God. Bless you, brother. Serve the local congregation. It's what you've been called to." Many others wrote and said, "We've already advertised. People have already signed up. Sounds awesome. We'll see you there."

I say all that because I've been out three of the first six weekends of The Village Church. There are two things I want to say about that. The first is that my heart is here. I'm in. I've told you you don't have to worry about Pastor Matt looking for another... I am in. Thirteen years here. I've lived here longer than I've lived anywhere in my life. My family is here. Lauren's family is here. We are Village persons.

So I wanted you to hear from me that I'm in, and then because I heard just a little bit of nonsense. By *nonsense* I don't mean, "Where is Chandler? He's not committed." I'm saying people were like, "I heard you're not preaching because you've been having really bad headaches." I haven't. My head is awesome. I can't remember the last time I had a headache, but with my medical history, people just fill in the gaps. "Chandler has been out three weeks. He's sick again." No, I'm not. I feel awesome.

The second thing I really wanted to push across is that even though I am ferociously committed and I will always be the primary preaching pastor at this place, it is a good, right, healthy thing for you to hear other men passionately and ferociously preach the Word of God to you, because *it* is what's central and *it* is what we are built upon, not any one man's giftedness.

I like that we like each other. I mean, it's Valentine's Day. I'm digging this. This isn't a crush. We're 13 years in. I love that, and yet I'm excited about the day where *you* get excited about other gifted godly men preaching the Bible to you in a way that's tangible for them to feel, because we're not putting anybody up here who can't and isn't very gifted at preaching the Word of God to you. Like Afshin Ziafat, Anthony Moore, Jamin Roller last week... He looks 12, but the guy can go.

So ultimately, I want you to get just as excited about hearing other men preach the Word of God as you do when *I* get the opportunity to be with you, because when all is said and done, what we're built on had better not be the giftedness of any one or two or three people. That will not sustain you in the day of trouble. With that said, it's my turn to preach, so let's go.

John, chapter 8, is where we are. We're in week three of the *I Am* series. All we're doing is walking through the gospel of John. The idea behind all of it is that if we turn our eyes onto Jesus, if we look at Jesus and consider Jesus, not just what Jesus has done but who he is... If we look at who Jesus is, the Bible says that has a transforming effect on us as people, that our lives are transformed not just by knowing what Jesus has done but by knowing, seeing, and understanding who he is.

We taught that week one. The Bible says that we all with unveiled faces, beholding the glory of the Lord, are transformed from one degree of glory to the next. The way we're transformed is by beholding the glory of Jesus. We said that in week one. We looked at Jesus as the Savior of the world. Then last week, Jamin Roller talked about Jesus as the Bread of Life. That takes us to this week's text, which is Jesus is the Light of the World.

Let's look at this text together. John, chapter 8. We're going to start in verse 12. If you'll oblige me, will you stand as we read the Word of God? This doesn't mean it's magic or anything. We're just honoring that God wants to communicate with his people, has desired to communicate with his people, and *has* communicated with his people.

"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.' So the Pharisees said to him, 'You are bearing witness about yourself; your testimony is not true.'" Things just got awkward. "Jesus answered, 'Even if I do bear witness about myself, my testimony is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going, but you do not know where I come from or where I am going.'"

May God bless the reading of his Word.

If we're reading the Bible with imagination, this is a really awkward moment. Jesus is sitting down in the temple, and he is teaching, and there's a crowd there. In his teaching he says, "I am the Light of the World," and someone speaks up in the crowd. Someone says, "You're trying to testify about yourself, and you're a liar." That's awkward. "No, he did not say that to Jesus."

Jesus says, "What if I *am* testifying about myself? I know where I come from, and I know where I'm going. You don't know where I come from, and you don't know where I'm going, so how would you know if I'm lying or not?" Something is going on here. Why are they so offended by this statement? Like I might say some things in here that quasi offend you today.

You're just like, "Uh, I can't believe he believes that; what an ignorant moron," and just kind of walk out, going, "That guy is a moron." I can live with that, but it would be a special kind of offense to make you stand up here and go, "You ridiculous liar!" It's going to get really awkward as security drags you out. It's just going to be a bad deal today on Valentine's Day. We don't want that. It's hearts and candy. A guy had his head cut off. We're celebrating that today. Let's just breathe in that.

Yet in the middle of this teaching, this guy says, "You're testifying about yourself, and what you say is not true." So what's really happening in this kind of weird dialogue, and then Jesus' response of, "I know where I come from, and I know where I'm going, but you don't know either"? The idea of light and the imagery of light for a Hebrew in the first century, particularly an expert in the law, would have massive connotations.

Maybe the best way to unpack what Jesus is saying is to think just briefly about Genesis 1. Here's what happens in Genesis 1. The Bible says the state of the universe looks like this: it is formless, it is dark, and it is void. Then in Genesis, chapter 1, verse 3, the Spirit of God is hovering over the waters, and God says, "Let there be light."

It's formless, dark, and void, and the God of the universe says, "Let there be light," and from that sentence, structure began to replace formlessness. What was formless was being formed, and darkness was put on its heels, and what was void began to be filled with life. This process of what is formless being formed, what is dark being put on its heels, and what is void being filled with life is the way God begins to interact with his creation, particularly men and women, moving forward.

So much is this imagery of light about forming and pushing back darkness and filling with life that even the prophet Isaiah, when he's talking about the coming of Jesus in Isaiah, chapter 9... This is a Christmas verse for most people, but the verse reads, "**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.**"

When Jesus says, "I am the Light of the World," Jesus is making some claims that are unacceptable for those who are moral elites, those who have built their worth on the ability to check boxes, the people who feel that because of their behavior they are better than. This is a massive threat to their existence, because Jesus just said, "I am God."

So when he says, "You can say that my testimony is false, but I know where I come from," what's he talking about? He was there. He is the Word made flesh. So when God says, "Let there be light," who's the active force of creation? Jesus. Jesus is like, "I know where I come from, and I know where I'm going." Where's that? Revelation 22: "And on that day they will no longer need the sun or the moon, for the glory of God will be their light."

There's a day coming in the new heavens and new earth where there's no sun, no moon. You don't need that, because seeing Christ face to face will illuminate in a way that's better than the way the sun illuminates now. We won't need anything to reflect light because the light will be in our midst. This is Jesus' rebuttal to their, "You're a liar."

"How do *you* know if I'm a liar? I know where I've come from, and I know where I'm going. You don't know where I've come, and you don't know where we're going." Jesus is claiming (it's a bold claim), "I alone take what is formless and form it, I alone put darkness on its heels, and I alone fill voids with life." That's my outline. There you go. Formless to form, dark to light, and then void to full. So let's start.

1. *Formless to form*. We had in my house a little yellow booklet I used to use with Audrey. It was edited by Sinclair Ferguson. It was basically the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* condensed and made helpful to use with your children. Basically, the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is a tool the church has used for a long time to help intellectually shape our understanding of God.

If you were here when we walked through the Apostles' Creed, it's just a more robust way for spiritual formation to occur. The first question of the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* is a great question, a question that everyone is trying to answer. Here's the question: "What is the chief end of

man?" If I could put that in more common language, "Why are we here? Why do we exist? What is this all about?"

The catechism gives the answer. Here's the answer the *Westminster Shorter Catechism* gives: "The chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." The purpose of your life, the purpose of my life, is to glorify God by enjoying him forever. My friend John Piper is the one who added that word *by*. The confession says that man's chief end is to glorify God *and* to enjoy him forever.

John tweaked the words. Don't panic. You can do that. It's a catechism not the Bible. If John is tweaking words in the Bible, we have a problem, but that's not what he has done here. He said, "No, no, no. A better, a more true faithful biblical exposition of this answer would be that we would bring glory to God *by* enjoying him forever. Not *and* enjoy him forever, but rather we're going to glorify God by enjoying him." How amazing is that for a purpose?

"What's your ultimate purpose?"

"To enjoy God."

"Well, how do you do that?"

"By glorifying him."

"How do you do that?"

"By rightly living and ordering my life around his commands that are all meant to lead me into the fullest life possible."

We're Christians. We're not crusty prudes. In a real sense, we're hedonists, chasing after deeper joys, greater pleasures. You are a whole person. There's a real mysterious kind of thing, whether it's psychology or philosophy or theology. There's all this argument about this. Here's what we're almost all going to agree upon. You have at the center of who you are a soul. Psychology is not going to give you *soul*. Spirit, mind...they're going to be somewhere in there.

You have a soul. That soul is eternal, and yet attached to that soul are these other really massive things, like your intellect. Your intellect doesn't stand alone. It's attached to your soul. Your physical

body isn't on its own. It's attached to the soul, which is why you can wound the body and it affects the soul. You have emotions. You feel, whether you want to call that the *heart* or whatever.

Again, this is argued about ad nauseam. I don't want to fight today; it's Valentine's Day. I'm just saying that you are a whole person and there's a type of integration the Lord is after. So when we say the chief end of man, the reason we exist, the reason we're physical and intellectual, the reason we have a heart, and the reason the spirit kind of pulls them all in like a tractor beam is that our chief end is realized by us being holistic people.

Here's how it works. According to the Bible, the mind informs the heart, and sometimes they fight with each other. Sometimes the heart wrestles with the mind, the mind wrestles with the heart, and the body is kind of along for the ride. The mind informs the heart that fuels what we feel that navigates our physical functionality. This is how we work. It's why stress manifests itself in physical ways. It's why anxiety creates a physical effect. Anxiety is a feeling built around what you believe to be true, worked out in your physical form.

When we're talking about Jesus being the Light of the World, we're saying (this is a very bold true statement) that outside of Jesus Christ, outside of a relationship with Jesus (not intellectual assent; remember week one: not knowing *about* but *knowing*), we are way outside of what we were designed to be and are therefore not fulfilling what we were created to fulfill and, therefore, in a very real sense, are unmade, unformed. Yet when we come into Christ, the Light of the World, he begins to form us.

If you have a background in church, the language Christians use for this is *sanctification*. We are being formed. We are being sanctified. Just for a quick moment of honesty, how many of you Christians would be like, "I hate the pace of this formation thing; it's moving a little slow"? Let me try to encourage you. When we're talking about spiritual birth, it's helpful to think about physical birth. You didn't come out of the womb ready to do push-ups. You came out 99 percent cartilage with a hole in the top of your head that if you pressed on it would mean bad things.

You were mainly cartilage, and over a period of time, you began to be able to feed yourself. You began to be able to crawl. You began to be able to walk. You began to be able to run. It's slower, and yet this is how the Lord grows us too. It's slower than we'd like, but we *are* being formed. If you are a Christian, in your highs and in your lows you *are* being formed. So we can despise how long it takes, but just be glad in knowing that you *are* being formed.

2. *Dark to light.* The Bible is going to say that outside of a relationship with Jesus Christ we are in what's called in the Scriptures the *domain of darkness*. When we become Christians, Colossians says we're transferred out of the domain of darkness and into the kingdom of his beloved Son. It's in this moment that we're moved out of darkness and into light.

If you're not a Christian, the Bible is going to say that you walk in a type of spiritual blindness, that you just simply can't see what is ultimate reality. You can see *some* things, but not what is ultimate. You can feel some things, but not what is ultimate. This is called the *domain of darkness*. It's trying to navigate life without knowing what is ultimate reality. You can run and run and run, but who knows if you're heading in the right direction?

My daddy was Navy, and then retired, and then him and my mom were long-haul truck drivers. We never had a lot of money. In fact, my whole life, white walls, overhead lights. I married a woman... That is *not* how they do things. They're color and lamps. It took me a long time to respect having to walk through a dark room, past a switch, to turn on the light. Many a stubbed toe, dislocated toes, hit knees, and repentance for words shouted the first couple of years of marriage, as I tried to navigate this new way of nesting, we'll call it.

When you're walking in darkness, even when you think you know where things are, you don't necessarily know where things are. This is our spiritual state outside of Christ. When Jesus says, "I am the Light of the World," he's talking about illumination. The Bible tells us that when the Holy Spirit awakens our hearts to the reality of Jesus Christ, this integration piece we started talking about earlier starts to actually happen.

The Scriptures open to us, and we can understand them in a way we couldn't understand them before we became Christians. We read them now with our minds informed by truth. Our hearts begin to be shaped, and then that fuels some of our emotions so we're free now to worship, not coldly and intellectually alone but really feel stirred in our affections for the God of the Bible because he has done these things, because our mind believes and has informed the heart that has now fueled our response to what God has done. This is the work of light.

I want to take advantage of this "darkness to light" thing to have a conversation about some of the aspects that are scary about God...awesome but scary. You want to talk scary stuff about God? It doesn't matter how you answer that, because it's the next part of my notes, but let's talk about that.

I want you to think about this for a second. It should create a little bit of nervousness in you. Nothing is hidden from God. You have no secrets. None.

Here's a fun exercise I play with myself and I've oftentimes played with you. If you're feeling cocky spiritually... No one is even going to admit they feel that, but if you're in the place where you're like, "You know, people should just watch how I'm doing this and take some notes..." You find yourself saying this a lot: "You know, what I do is..." when nobody even asked you what you do.

Here's a fun game to play. Would you still be confident in that swagger if we took all of the thoughts you've had this week and put them on the screen and we all got to watch it as a movie today? I'll give this to you. Not even last week; the last 48 hours. We just take all of your thoughts, all of your doubts, all of your lusts, all of the things you wanted to say but didn't, and we just watched them. Are you going to stay and watch your own movie?

First of all, I don't think you *would* stay, and secondly, if you *did*, that swagger would fade in a hurry. There is nothing hidden from God, ever. You have no secrets...not in your mind, not in your heart, not in your activities. So that feeling of getting away with something... I'm trying to love you enough to say you're not getting away with anything.

David says it like this. Psalm 139:11-12: "**If I say, 'Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night,' even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light with you.**" So if your idea is that you can wait until 2:00 in the morning, dress like a ninja, and God is not going to see what you're doing, I'm telling you, there's no place to hide, and you cannot camouflage yourself from God.

Even being here today is ineffective camouflage. You can't hide. If you're hunters, there's nothing you can spray on you or put on you or position you can get in that hides you from his ability to see. You have no secrets. It's a myth. Last weekend was my daughter's 13th birthday, so I was out. I wasn't going to miss that with her. We had a blast. I wrote her a letter on Thursday night. I won't read that letter to you, but I will read this sentence that I wrote to her: "Secrets are the darkness in which death and destruction grow."

If you're not a Christian, my expectation is that you're walking in what the Bible would call your *flesh*. You're outside of Christ. You're just doing what seems right to you. But if I could take this moment and talk to Christians specifically, there's this really heinous lie that Christians believe that

because we're Christians we should be past a certain point and we shouldn't struggle with some of the things we're struggling with.

When you believe that, you're drawn into secrecy in ways that let the hooks of death and destruction get into you. I'm telling you, this is 20 years of pastoral ministry pleading with you right now. Let me give real life examples. You are a housewife who has gotten herself addicted to prescription pills. You feel guilty and ashamed. You feel controlled. You keep swearing you're not going to do it, but you keep falling back into it.

Gosh, you can't tell anybody. What's your husband going to think? What are the people in your small group going to think? Oh my gosh! What about the ladies you do yoga with? They know you're a Christian. They know you're a religious type. What are they going to do when they find this out? So what you do is you say, "That's too risky; I can't share that with anybody," so you retreat into the shadows. You don't take the off-ramp of confession. You hide. Darkness becomes the place that those hooks of death and destruction set deeper.

Or you're a man and you're flirting with some girl at work, or you're a woman at home just perusing Facebook when you come across that ex boyfriend and you begin to remember all of the fun things he did for you. Of course, not the seven times he cheated on you, which is why you broke up with him, but you over-romanticize the past, and your mind space and your gladness is no longer toward your husband but toward this other man.

You can feel a tinge of shame. You can feel a tinge of "This is wrong." Then instead of taking the off-ramp of confession, we retreat into the darkness, and as we retreat into the darkness, hooks sink deeper. The fear of, "If I confess this, I could lose my marriage; if I confess this, I could lose my job; if I confess this, people are going to look at me funny" forces us into the darkness, and by going into the darkness the hooks of death and destruction set.

Here's what happens. Here's why it's so heartbreaking. Then it costs you your marriage. Then it costs you your job. Then in the mercy of God, when you get outed, people look at you in a strange way. So King David, writing about this... King David is an expert on this as a murdering adulterer who tries to hide.

It says in Psalm 32:1-5, "**Blessed** [happy, glad] **is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.**" We can believe that, right? Nobody wants to argue with that. Happy, glad,

joyful is the man who understands that his sin has been forgiven and covered. **"Blessed** [happy, glad] **is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit."** *Deceit* in this verse does not mean he's not guilty of anything but rather he has nothing to hide.

Watch what happens here. This is where science thinks it has discovered something recently that the Bible has been teaching since it was written. Verse 3: **"For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer."** Or in our case, maybe in the heat of winter.

Verse 5: **"I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and you forgave the iniquity of my sin."** David is saying, "When I'm in the dark, when I'm living a duplicitous life, when I have chosen not the embarrassment of confession but the self-determined willpower to overcome in the darkness, projecting an ideal self, projecting a better version of me than is reality and bearing the weight of that, I'm not going to just take the easy way out."

This is a conversation I have with my children all the time. I can't tell you how often with both of my older two (I don't think I've had this conversation yet with sweet Norah) I've sat down and said, "This is a really big moment for you. I'm asking you about this, and here's what you're going to get to do. You're going to get to choose to be honest with me and then learn that your mom's love and my love is not predicated upon your behavior..." If you're like, "Do you use the word *predicated*?" Probably not. He's 10. Probably not.

I'll say, "Or you can choose to lie to me, and if you lie to me, buddy... Listen, I'm trying to plead with you here. If you lie to me, you're choosing to not just bear the weight of one life but to bear the weight of two, and nobody has been designed to bear the weight of two lives. If you lie here, what you're doing is you're going to now divide all your energy, all your vitality, and all your gladness into two pieces: the ideal self you want to project to everybody and the real you God wants to forgive and work in. So did you do it, buddy?"

I mean, you ask that question after *that* speech. I don't want my kids to allow the hooks of the Enemy to set deeply in them. Even these little dialogues, where they choose to walk in deceit, they're choosing to do what most of us know is crushing: to project one thing while being another.

When Jesus says, "I am the Light of the World," he's saying, "I'm going to put that nonsense on its heels."

That's why I point to the cross so often with you guys. Jesus already outed you. This kind of ideal self nonsense, where you don't struggle, you're not worried... He has already outed you. You're broken. You need help. I have help for you. I'm going to shine light in the darkness. Darkness does not overcome light. You've never opened up your door at night and had darkness flow into your house. You've opened up your door, and light shone out of it. This is what Jesus does. We see it in this verse.

By the way, if this is you right now and you have secret unconfessed sin... I'm not just talking about general struggles. I'm saying your life is marked by a consistent cycle of being sucked into the same thing over and over again, and you hate it, but you don't want anybody to know about it, so you keep trying with self-determined will to handle it yourself. You've gotten nowhere, and it has been 5 years, 8 years, 10 years, 15 years, 20 years, and you just keep thinking you're going to figure it out. Look at what happens in John 8, starting in verse 2.

"Early in the morning [Jesus] came again to the temple. All the people came to him, and he sat down and taught them. The scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in adultery, and placing her in the midst [of this crowd] they said to him, 'Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?'

This they said to test him, that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. And as they continued to ask him, he stood up and said to them, 'Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her.' And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground."

Don't you kind of want to know what he wrote on the ground? I do too. I have no idea, and the Bible doesn't tell us. Conjecture is conjecture. So he's writing again on the ground, and look at what happens. **"But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones..."** Why? Because older men have a portfolio of failures, and younger men are experts.

If you're in your 20s, you think you're smarter than you are. When you're in your 50s, you know that you've learned some lessons the hard way, and it should temper you as you get older. That's

why it's the older men who are like, "Dang it!" So here's this woman. She has been caught in the act of adultery. Praise God for the wickedness of the Pharisees or this woman would have been stoned.

They wanted Jesus, so they drag this woman to Jesus. They have clear means by the law to pelt this woman with rocks until she dies. They bring her caught in her shame. She did not confess. She's busted, outed in her sin. They drag her in front of Jesus. My guess is she's on the ground kind of covered up, waiting for the first rock to hit her, hoping that maybe it's a head shot that knocks her out so she doesn't feel the rest of it, listening to this dialogue.

Jesus says, "Let the one of you who's without sin throw the first stone," and then...*Thud! Thud! Thud!* The rocks fall to the ground. Jesus walks over to her and picks up her head and looks at her eyes and says, "Where are they? Has no one condemned you? Neither do I. Go and sin no more." This story reminds me of John 3:17: "For Christ has come into the world not to condemn the world but rather to save the world from condemnation."

I want to point out that this woman, in an overwhelmed sense of guilt and shame, did not confess her sins. She was caught in the act. The Scripture is clear that she's caught in the act of adultery. She didn't commit adultery, go home, feel sick to her stomach, and call her priest the next morning. "I feel terrible. I want to make some penance." That's not what happens. She gets busted in the act. Those who don't even come clean of their own volition are extended grace by Jesus.

This is a stunning mercy that God gives us in Christ. He is the Light of the World. He puts darkness on its heels. Brother, sister, if you are walking in secret unconfessed sin, it ends one of three ways: with you taking the off-ramp of confession... I'm not promising you it won't be costly. I'm not promising you it won't be painful. I will assure you it's embarrassing. That's the off-ramp God gives you to spare you from the hooks of death and destruction.

Or in his mercy he will out you. This happens all the time. In fact, just to encourage the saints, if you're in here and you're a Christian and you were living a duplicitous life for an extended season and got busted in your sin... You didn't come clean; you got busted in your sin. Would you raise your hand? Okay, you can look around. This is us, just a gaggle of morons.

I think the third way is the hardest. In God's wrath, he will simply turn you over to your sin to be destroyed by it. This is a frightful thing. You will get the sense that you're getting away with something when in reality God in his wrath has turned you over. That's what Romans 1 teaches.

There comes this point where God just says, "You want that rather than what I have for you? You want to walk in the darkness? I'll just turn you over to darkness."

If you go read Romans 1:28 and following, you see what begins to occur when God turns you over to darkness. It is a type of moral disintegration, where you go way farther than you ever thought you were capable of going. Jesus is the Light of the World. He puts darkness on its heels.

3. *He takes what is void and fills it with life.* John 10:10 says, "**The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.**" What Jesus is after for you and for me is abundant life. This is true. I think we'll all agree upon this. You don't have to be a Christian to enjoy the good graces of common grace.

Here's what I mean. You don't have to be a Christian to enjoy a really good meal. You can be a God-hating pagan and love steak and a good bottle of wine...or chicken nuggets. I don't know what your thing is. You do not have to be a Christian to love a vacation at the beach...or mountains, depending on where you are on that continuum. You don't have to be a Christian to enjoy physical intimacy with another human being.

None of those things require you to be a Christian, but here's where I would argue that in order to experience the fullness of any of those things, you must be a Christian. You can have a good marriage. You can enjoy a good meal. You can have a good vacation. You can enjoy a certain level of intimacy, but outside of Jesus Christ, because we are formless and not formed, to fulfill what we were created to do, to bring glory to God by enjoying him forever, you will always hit a low ceiling and never be able to realize the full extent of joy available in any and all of those acts.

So for the Christian, rooted in the Word of God, informed in his mind, ministering to his heart, and forming his ministry, shaping his body, a great steak and a bottle of wine leads to worship of something greater. That's not even on the table for an unbeliever. It's like, "Dang! This is a good steak. And man, what kind of cab is this?" But for the believer... "How generous is God, not only that he provided this but that he thought it up?"

If you don't think God is about in a real sense enjoying who he is, why give things different flavors? Why do that? Because he wants to be glorified in our enjoyment of his creative brilliance. It's an awesome truth. Maybe you're an unbeliever and you're like, "That's just categorically untrue." Well, I have a lost guy who wants to argue with you. I'm a Christian, so I'll let a lost guy argue with you.

Last weekend was the Super Bowl. It was a great game. I don't even care if you're a Carolina fan. I have found myself personally just nervous that Von Miller is going to fly out of somewhere and knock me down. Just beast mode. No answer for that man machine Aggie thing. Anyway, a player who was not in that game but is a prolific player in the NFL was interviewed by 60 Minutes a few years ago, and here's what he had to say. This is Tom Brady.

"Why do I have three Super Bowl rings...?" We know this is dated, because he has four Super Bowl rings now. "Why do I have three Super Bowl rings and still think there is something greater out there for me? I mean, maybe a lot of people would say, 'Hey man, this is what it is.' I reached my goal, my dream, my life. Me, I think, 'God, it's got to be more than this. I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be.'" Tom Brady.

There's this time we do this exercise where I have you say, "I am not God." So we're going to do it, except we're going to put "Tom" in there now. I want you to say, "I am not Tom Brady." Say it. For the record, you said that with more confidence than you usually do when I have you say, "I am not God." I'll deal with that this week.

So let's think about Tom Brady. There are six billion people on earth, roughly, probably more than that now. Of those, you have ten quarterbacks in the NFL who are not journeyman-type of turnover, new spot every year. Of that ten, you have five that franchises have said, "We're going to build the whole thing around you." Of that five, two or three are in the discussion as one of the greatest of all times.

The quarterback position is so hard to grade, which is why the draft has produced so many flops. It requires not just intellect but a speedy level of processing that's extremely... Everybody thinks they can do it. Like when you're watching... "Oh, come on!" Brother, please. So Tom is going to be in the discussion as one of the greatest, if not *the* greatest quarterback of all time.

Let's real talk. He is wealthier than you. He is better looking than you. He is living out, in many ways (men in particular), most of your fantasies. They will build a statue of him outside of Gillette Stadium. Little boys right now are watching him play, and they are being fueled up for their run. The next great quarterbacks will talk about watching Tom Brady win Super Bowls. None of that is true about you.

No one is building a statue of you outside of your workplace 10 years after you're gone. Can we just agree? You might be salesman of the year, bro, but no one is building a statue of you. Not only that, but there's not a 12-year-old right now who's going to win an award 15 years from now and be like, "Man, I remember when I was 11, I watched such-and-such market in marketing, and I just knew if I applied myself and worked hard and went to all of these camps I could market like this marketer marketed." That's not you.

No one is watching you do work on a global stage and going, "That's incredible." You're just being faithful where you are. But here's where Tom serves us. He has the American dream at his lap, and here's what he says. He has won three Super Bowls. They did a documentary on the six quarterbacks who were drafted before him just to shame the other teams for not drafting Brady. "Tee Martin was drafted before Brady. He's now a high school coach in Georgia." I mean, just shaming Tee Martin. "Hey, all of these other guys are bums. Tom Brady...you should have seen it."

Tom, who has it all...four Super Bowl rings, a part of the country that worships him like he's part of the Trinity, a church stadium where 80,000 worshipers gather on the weekends and chant his name...says, "God, it's got to be more than this. I mean this isn't, this can't be what it's all cracked up to be." Ecclesiastes 3:11 says that God has put eternity into the heart of man. Therefore, only what is eternal can fill the gap of eternity.

That is why Brady, for his four Super Bowl rings and his Victoria's Secret model wife, says, "Oh my God! This can't be it." Because it's *not* it. Gisele and another seven Super Bowls are never going to fill the gap of eternity. They can't. They're temporary. When Jesus says, "I am the Light of the World," he's saying, "I fill that void with life." Life plays itself out, and it ties all together. We get a new heart, and then from that sense we're walking not in duplicity but open and honest.

Our relationships deepen, and we begin to walk in community, because not only have we been formed but we're walking in the light. Think of how much easier it is to be loved and have deep community if you're fully known. If you're hiding, you can't even receive people's love, because you think they love the projected image of you, which actually just enslaves you farther. Then lastly, you see here that we now have purpose.

I've often argued that life in Christ is the death of boredom, because if the chief end of man is to bring glory to God by enjoying him forever, that brings purpose into my neighborhood, purpose into my workplace, purpose into my sons' and daughters' activities. It means I am reflecting the

light of Christ anywhere and everywhere I can by enjoying him, and I enjoy him by lining myself up with his good right commands that are meant to lead me into the fullest life possible. Jesus is the Light of the World.

I know you're hearing these things as whole people. You've come in here with a specific mindset, and that mindset has informed your heart a specific way. That being a reality, you are sensing something I'm saying in wildly different ways. Here we are, about 1,500 of us here, and a lot more on the other side of that camera down in Dallas, over in Fort Worth, over in Plano... In the midst of all that, we're hearing this, and because we have different mindsets that have shaped how we think and feel and interact with information, we're all processing this differently.

Here's my role and my hope. I mean not to judge you in any way today, only to lay before you that Jesus is the Light of the World in the hopes that by the grace of God you might begin to make sense of that feeling of being unformed and you might trust upon the name of Jesus; that if you feel stuck in darkness and have tried to get out of it only to continually stub your toe or trip over things or not quite be able to make it into the light, that Jesus is the Light of the World.

I've prayed all week long that if you feel like you're kind of chasing things... You're never going to be Tom Brady, but you're doing all right, and you just hit that low ceiling quickly. I'm hopeful that the Holy Spirit of God might awaken your heart to believe that Jesus is the Light of the World. And Christian, if you're walking in ongoing secret sin, that you might remember the goodness of God's grace to you and you might take the off-ramp of confession before those hooks go in deeper and lead to death and destruction.

Jesus is the Light of the World, and those who follow him will not walk in darkness but will walk in light. This is true, because he knows where he came from, and he knows where he's going. Let's pray.

Father, I thank you for these men and women. What a joy to be together today and let you press on us a little bit, let you encourage us a little bit, let you stir our affections. So I pray, even as we turn our attention to you in song and Communion and the other things we'll do here, that you might, Father, encourage us. Grant us courage to confess. Do the work of illumination, Holy Spirit of God. It's for your beautiful name I pray, amen.