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***Jesus in the Land of Ghosts
(The Light of the World)***

John 8:12

Peter Hiett @ The Sanctuary Downtown
September 5, 2010

[Opening Song – U2 “The Fly”]

Several years ago, on a Friday around 4:00pm, I was getting ready to go home. I was the only person in the building (our old church building in the mountains, on Lookout Mountain Road). I heard a voice, and walked out of my office to see a young man. His hair was wild; his eyes were wild and distant. His clothes didn't match.

In fact, he had no pants, and no shoes. Fortunately, he had long underwear. I asked him what he needed. He said, “A pair of pants would be nice.” I then asked him what had happened. He looked at me in utter seriousness and said, “Do you want the truth, or do you want a lie?” I said, “Ahh, well ... I'll go with the truth.” And he told me his story.

He said, “I drove out here from Michigan. I parked my car up here on Lookout Mountain Road. I had a religious experience, so I took off all my clothes and wandered in the woods for two days.” And then he said, “You know how it is.”

I said, “Well, kinda ... I guess.”

He said, “When I got back someone had taken my pants with my keys and all my stuff, and I'm locked out.” I asked him what we could do for him, and he said, “A pair of pants would be nice.” And that was it.

I then realized that this fellow and myself lived in different worlds... but I really wanted to help; so I drove him over to Evergreen Outreach and he got some pants and shoes... and nothing else. I kept asking him questions, trying to make some sense out of this tormented man sitting next to me in the car. But there was no reason and logic... no light connecting my world to his.

On the way back, I was inquiring as to his needs for money or shelter or something, and he turned to me, put his finger to his lips, and went,

“Shhhhhh,

Shhhhhh,

Shhhhhh...

You ask too many questions.”

Maybe his truth was a lie... a lie he told himself... a lie about a lie.

"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions."

That wasn't the first time I had heard that voice, and it wouldn't be the last. Ironically, I think I've heard it most from religious folks.

I heard it at youth group and camps as a teenager.

I asked lots of questions:

How do we know this Jesus stuff is true?

How could creation happen in 6 days?

Where did evil come from?

If God is Love, why would He torture people forever without end?

Inevitably, someone would get frustrated, and say:

"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions. Just have faith."

"Have faith in what?!?"

"Have faith in Jesus, the Truth."

"... Well isn't it because I have faith in the truth that I'm asking these questions?"

Didn't Jesus say, "Seek and ye will find?" And isn't Jesus "The Truth?"

So if an "unbeliever" seeks "the Truth", isn't he a believer *in* the truth, and thus seeking the truth... and Jesus is the Truth he will find?

But if a believer says, *"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions..."* Does that believer seek truth? Or believe in truth? Or a lie?

So who has more faith in Jesus, the Truth?

A. A sinner who desperately seeks the Truth, or

B. A religious person who says, *"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions... Just have faith."*

Who has more faith in Jesus... The Truth?

If Jesus is the Truth, He is the objective truth ... apart from me, outside of me, out **there**.

But He is also the subjective truth ... the truth within me, when I'm truthful.

I can only know Truth ... not simply use truth or manipulate truth.

To be truthful is to be Jesus-full.

To be truthful is to have faith in the Truth.

Faith in the Truth is called honesty.

Some people think Faith is actually dishonesty – a voice that says, *"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions."*

But faith in Jesus is faith in the Truth – it's honesty.
So, Jesus is the Truth, and the Way to the Truth.
Therefore, the only way to know the Truth is to be truthful.
In other words, it's Jesus that makes you ask honest questions.

John already told us He is the light that enlightens all men. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one comes to the Father but through Him.

"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions."

Who says that?

In the last few years I've heard that from several religious authorities:

"Peter, you can ask your questions in private, or with us ... but don't ask them in front of the laity, the people in church.

Let your questions be our secret.

Your honesty hurts the cause!"

What if honesty **is** the cause?!

That is, Christ in us ... Truth in us ... Honesty.

"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions."

Sometimes I tell myself that:

"Peter, life is hard enough. Don't ask Susan or the kids how they're doing.
Don't go there – the truth might hurt.
And don't ask about those anxieties and fears in your own heart –
Bury them in the dark and pretend everything is ok."
*Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... Keep your questions, fears, and anxieties a secret;
Bury them in the dark.
Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh."*

Do you ever tell yourself that?

"Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions."

Close your eyes for a moment, and think about:

Your rights – life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness
Your freedom – you're an American, so you're free
Your possessions – think of the things you own
Your accomplishments – degrees, awards, good decisions, and hard work.

Think of your life.

Now, what if – in a moment – you could see the Truth; but the Truth revealed that:
All your rights are an illusion – you deserve nothing, and no one owes you a thing
Your freedom is really bondage – you’re being programmed,
like the people in *The Matrix*... you’re a slave
All your possessions aren’t yours – they’re stolen,
so you hoard them while others starve.
Your accomplishments are illusions, your good deeds are laced with evil,
and are therefore evil.
Your generosity is really selfishness
Your love is really lust
Your good deeds are as filthy rags
Your life is really a walking death

If the Truth revealed **that** ... would you want to see the Truth?
If the light revealed **that** ... would you prefer the darkness?

Now you may say, “That’s an interesting thought experiment, but I know it’s not true. If it were true, I’d have to be, like, mentally ill ... and my entire life would be an illusion!”

OK. If, in a moment, you could see the truth, but the truth revealed that you were an apparition ... like a ghost ... would you want to see?

If seeing the Truth meant losing your life, would you want to see the Truth?
Well, the Truth would have to be pretty awesome to want to see it that badly.

Like I was saying, the man with no pants turned to me and said, “*Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions.*” At that, I realized that I could not reach him. He was alone.

I dropped him off at his car, not knowing what he’d do, where he’d go, or who he was. He was like a ghost. In one sense, he was utterly free... so free that he constructed his very own world. He was free from the Truth. And yet when I dropped him off, I felt like I dropped him off in hell.

There is no greater bondage than freedom from the Truth.
“*Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh ... You ask too many questions. Turn off the light.*”

In John chapter 8, verse 12, Jesus is at the Feast of Booths, celebrating the Israelites’ journey from bondage to freedom, following the Pillar of Fire, the Light in the wilderness. Jesus has just told the woman caught in the act of adultery, “Neither do I condemn you. From the now, go and sin no more.”

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.”

“*Ego eimi.*” That’s a hugely important little phrase in the Gospel of John.

“God is Light” – John 1:5. And Jesus is “The Light of the World (John 8:12)... The true light that enlightens everyone (John 1:9).”

Light is a mystery. Scientists can't figure out what it is.

It's almost personal – whether it appears as a particle or wave, it literally seems to depend on the expectations or faith of the person who observes it.

And light is eternal – all time is relative to the speed of light. That means that a photon of light has no past and no future. It is the same “yesterday, today, and forever.” It is “The Now.”

And there are different spectrums of light. Right now in this room, there is infra-red light and ultra-violet light. There is light you can see and light you can't see. According to Scripture, there is light you can see with the eyes in your head, and light you must see with the eyes of your heart... Faith.

That's why there are blind people who see far better than seeing people.

Well, the light we do see tells us about the light we don't yet see. Apart from being the foundation of all time and space, think about what light does for you:

Imagine walking into a pitch-black room full of obstacles.

First thing, you'd look for the light, because light reveals things, giving them meaning:

The thing that smacked your shin was the coffee table; the sound was the cat.

Light reveals things and judges things.

Were your suspicions true or false? Good or bad?

Turn on the light and judge.

The light reveals things, judges things, and connects things.

Imagine if I turned off all the lights and commanded you to square dance.

People would get hurt, and they wouldn't dance.

So imagine if I yelled, “Try Harder!”

People would only get hurt more.

But now imagine if someone turned on the light.

Dancing might be fun.

Light connects things. According to John, God is Light and God is Love and the Light is Love.

Maybe the reason we don't love is not that we don't try hard enough. In fact, the harder we try to love, the more we often don't love. Maybe the reason we don't love is because we haven't seen the Light. And what's the Light? The Light is Truth, and the Truth is Love.

When we reject the Light, we disconnect ourselves from Life. Like a ghost... perhaps you've met some ... people you see or hear, but with whom you just can't seem to connect. It's like they're empty of anything real... an apparition ... a ghost.

When we believe lies and speak lies, we become a lie and turn ourselves into a ghost. The primordial lie was spoken by a snake in a garden long ago. It goes like this:

“God is not good, and so He can’t be trusted.
So take matters into your own hands,
Then hide ... from the Light,
Trapped in a lie, alone in the dark,
Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh.”

Well, light reveals things, judges things, connects things, and frees things. Remember, Jesus is saying these things at the Feast of Booths. A high point of the feast was the evening of the first night – 4 immense lamps or torches were prepared in the temple court where Jesus taught. When these torches were lit, they were said to illumine all Jerusalem. (And remember, the New Jerusalem will be entirely filled with light. And remember, we **are** the New Jerusalem.)

Well, each night of the feast, when the torches had been set ablaze, the wisest and holiest old men in Israel would sing and dance in that light all night long, celebrating freedom from bondage by the Pillar of Fire. That light revealed truth, judged wickedness, and led Israel from bondage to Homeland. The Light set them free.

It was then and there that Jesus said, “I AM the Light of the world.”
Soon He will say, “I AM the way, the truth, and the life.”
Not **a** light, **a** way, **a** truth, **a** life... **the** Light, **the** Way, **the** Truth, **the** Life.
I AM.

The Gospel of John is famous for these I AM statements.
At the burning bush, God told Moses, “I AM that I AM. Tell them I AM sent me to you.”

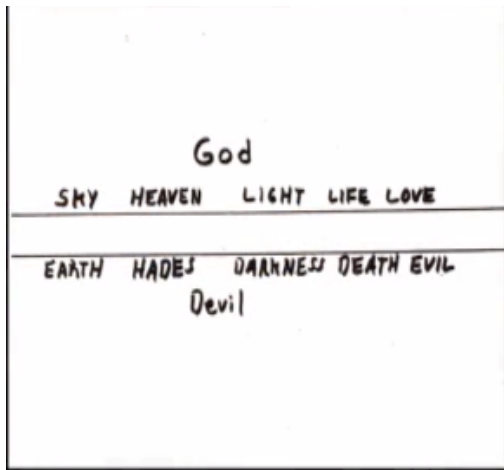
In the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, “I AM Yahweh” is often translated “I AM I AM.” God is I AM... the One who is defined by no other.

When Jesus uses that phrase in this sentence, He implies that He is God. He’ll use it several times more in this chapter, ending with “Before Abraham was, I AM.”

At that, they take up stones to stone Him, just as they had taken up stones to stone the adulterous woman who Jesus just forgave.

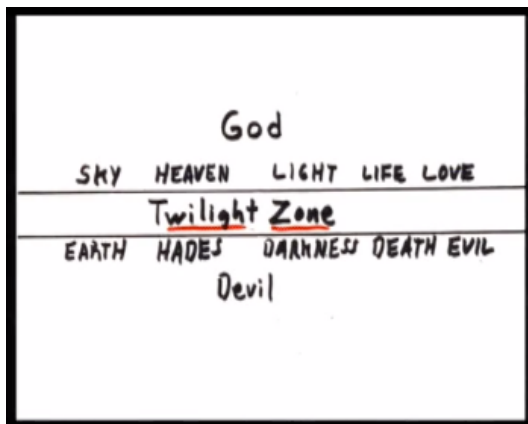
“I AM the Light of the world,” says Jesus. Not **some** of the world... **The World.**
And God is Light, and God is Love.
Jesus is God’s love poured into this world, and Jesus Christ and Him crucified is God’s Love revealed in this world.
Jesus is the Light of the world.

A Biblical view of reality is something like this:

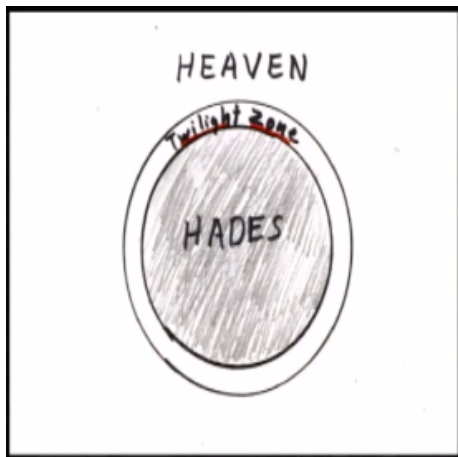


Heaven is above, the world (earth) is below. Hades is below.
 Heaven is full of light, life, and love – God.
 Hades is empty of light, life, and love. It's death, dead, and evil.
 And the deeper you sink into Hades, the worse it gets.
 Hades is often translated "Hell."

We live on the skin of the earth, between Heaven and Hell.
 This expanse that we exist in is literally The Twilight Zone... literally between light and dark.



This is a wide-angle view of the very same thing.



Our world is a dark bubble of nothingness floating in a sea of light, life, and love... the fullness of God. And one day the earth will be flooded with light. One day, according to Scripture, it will be filled with Jesus. The invasion has already begun, and the Cross was the decisive battle. It's the invasion of Truth into the land of lies – the invasion of the “Light of the World” into “The World.” It's happening now, when and where we live – in the Twilight Zone.

Speaking of the Twilight Zone, my friend Robert Gelinas is the Pastor of Colorado Community Church in Aurora. This spring, he borrowed a room in this building to write a book. One evening, with his cell phone, he took a video of this room – the sanctuary – to show his kids. Soon after, he called me, and said, “Peter, you should see this. Something's on the video.”

This is the video.

[A video of a shadowy figure flying across the sanctuary is shown. You can watch the video on our website under this sermon title at about 24:00 minutes]



Did you see that?

It's like this big black shadow flaps its wings and flies across that northeast window.

Well, I looked at the video with Ben – our video expert – and we thought, “That’s really weird... but it’s probably some anomaly or something.”

A few days later, I was talking to a new couple before the service, and she said, “Hey, do people ever see stuff in here?” I said, “Well yeah, sometimes people have told me they see angels.” (Actually, one friend saw 7 just a few weeks ago.) And she said, “Well, recently, we saw like a big black thing – like a shadow. During worship, it sort of flapped its wings and flew across that northeast window. We both saw it.”

Wow. It must not have liked the worship.

Now, I know this is weird, and please feel free to doubt my integrity. You don’t have to believe what I’m about to tell you. But please believe that Jesus is the Light of the world, and that we battle against principalities and powers – world rulers of this present darkness.

Well, I mentioned this thing to my wife; so one day, last May (May 9th), Susan and I spent several hours praying through this old building. Together, we’ve had a fair amount of experience praying against demons, and even Satan. And over time, I’ve really come to respect this gift that my wife has: she’ll see things and hear things. However, she only sees and hears what Jesus wants her to see and hear. So, she can’t pick Bronco games or tell you the color of your underwear. But I’ve had enough crazy experiences with her to know that it’s real.

So anyway, we took some communion wine and prayed through this building. She heard all kinds of stuff. Both she and some folks who’ve prayed here in the past believe that some religious authority abused some people in this place long ago. In the northeast tower, my wife kept hearing this voice. It went, “*Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh, Shhhhhh.*” I claimed authority over it in Jesus’ name, demanding that it reveal its identity. Its name was “Secrets.”

When people are abused, the abuser almost always tries to bind the abused in secrets. You see, evil inhabits lies and secrets; and apart from the darkness, evil has no power.

Well, we bound “Secrets” and several other nasty things, and commanded them to leave; and they did. Then, I prayed a prayer and Susan and I had an experience that I don’t think we’ll ever forget. I’ll tell you about it in a minute.

Now, I need to say, I don’t know exactly what that shadow was. It might have been a demonic spirit named “Secrets,” or perhaps it was something else. I don’t know exactly. But it was a shadow, and shadows are destroyed by light – The Light. And I do believe it was a lie. All evil is a lie, and lies are destroyed by the Truth.

I’m not sure why God allowed us to see it, except perhaps he wanted us to get rid of it, and wanted me to talk about it... and one other thing I’ll tell you about ... in a minute.

But now I hope you realize that, according to Scripture, we battle these kinds of things all the time. We battle darkness and lies. So I don’t mean to freak you out... unless of course, you take refuge in darkness and lies. And then I hope to freak you right out of the darkness and lies and into the

arms of the Light who loves you. In other words, I want you to hate sin, and even more, the sin of hiding sin.

Sin is lack of faith in the Truth, who is the Light, and who is Love. Sin is faith in lies.

So an adulteress has faith that in her situation – at that moment, for her – adultery is best. And you see, that's a lie.

The thief has faith in his heart that in his situation – at that moment, for him – his theft is actually best. That's a lie.

According to Scripture, we're all unfaithful to God, our Bridegroom. And according to Jesus, nothing we own is really ours; it's stewardship. We're all sinners. We're all adulterers and thieves. We have faith in a lie that God is not good. Faith in lies is what gives the old Prince of Darkness his power. Sin is faith in lies, but the greatest sin is hiding that sin. The greatest danger is lying about the lies, keeping sin a secret.

You know, it wasn't the prostitutes and thieves who crucified Jesus. Actually, they came streaming to the Light. It was the prostitutes and thieves who wouldn't admit that they were prostitutes and thieves who crucified Jesus. It was the religious authorities – the Pharisees.

This Gospel reveals that our sins are paid for and forgiven. But if we won't admit that we've sinned, we won't admit that our sins have been forgiven. We'll hate the Light, for the Light is grace, and grace exposes sin by forgiving sin. So, Pharisees hate the light, and hide their hearts in darkness.

If I walk up to you and say, "I forgive you for murder" ... that's highly offensive... unless you believe that you have murdered.

Jesus told the Pharisees that they were, "Like white-washed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside, but are full of death on the inside." They were ghosts. They might recite the truth about God **out there**, but they were not truthful **in here** ... they were not honest. They were deluded, like they had an insanity of the soul. They were like ghosts.

They were hollow, like an empty water skin. In Hebrew, "*obe*," which is also translated, "ghost." In Greek, it's a "*phantasm*" – it means "appearance." It's where we get our word "phantom." It means: "ghost."

Well, if you study the Pharisees, you begin to realize they were a lot like us. They were respectable, religious people, trying really hard to be good. Well, anytime we trust lies, we sin; and anytime we hide sin, we hide lies in a lie, and we start to become a lie ... an empty place of darkness, cut off from the Way, the Truth, and the Life – dead, trapped in lies ... lost. We turn ourselves into ghosts.

The process starts here in this world, and unless it's rectified, it continues after this life. A ghost sinks into the earth. A ghost descends into Hades, what some call Hell.

And now, I'm sorry to say, this is only the introduction to my sermon. So I'll have to tell you my point and preach it next week. I was hoping to preach the rest of chapter 8 (46 verses), and I've only read verse 12. At verse 12, Jesus just judged the adulteress by not judging her. He just judged her with grace, and the Pharisees judge grace, and so judge themselves into darkness.

Then (verse 12), Jesus says, "I AM the Light of the world." Some Pharisees start to argue with Him, and Jesus reveals that they are "children of the devil." They love lies and hate the truth... the truth that would set them free. But unless they have faith in Him – faith in Truth ... unless they're honest, they would die in their sins; like ghosts that descend into Hades.

So, this is my point: hate lies, and love the Truth.

Don't listen to lies, don't tell lies, and above all, don't become a lie ... or you'll become a ghost. As soon as you sense a lie, run into the Light, run to the Truth, love the Truth. And now you may say, "That's just it... I'm terrified of the Truth, because I'm already a lie... I'm a ghost!"

So, this is my point: Jesus is the Truth, crucified for you.

Jesus is Truth and Love.

Jesus is Grace.

The Truth is Grace.

The Light is Grace.

And apart from Grace, we're all ghosts, trapped in a lie.

So at times, Grace may burn. It is Light and it is fire. You will lose your life, for Grace will burn away your sin, your lies, your prison... in other words, Grace will set you free. You will lose your life and then find it. Grace will destroy the ghost that was you, and grace will create a new you.

So, this is my point: The Light is Grace.

The Light is always your friend.

The Light is Jesus.

Always run to Jesus. He is your home, and you are His.

Well, anyway... Susan and I sprinkled communion wine all over this old building. We bound "Secrets," and a bunch of other nasty things, and cast them out in Jesus' name.

We were standing in the basement of that southeast tower, and I said something like, "In Jesus' name, I command any spirit, any entity, any disembodied person ... anything in this building or associated with this building ... I command you to come to attention and reveal your identity."

Susan said, "Someone's here ... Her name is Elise."

So I started in, "I take authority over you, Elise, in Jesus' name... I command you to reveal what gives you the right to be here. You may not lie...." And Susan interrupted me. She said, "No Peter, it's not like that. She's confused and frightened. She doesn't know why she's here. She's a little old lady."

Well, demons lie... but I had bound this thing, and I thought, "What if?"
In that moment, I thought of "Secrets," and how secrets keep people in bondage.
I thought of secrets created in this place, and how religious lies trap people in lies... the greatest lie
... the lie that traps us all – that God is not good. That God is not Grace.

And so I said, "Elise, you need to go to Jesus... He's not like those bad men. He's not like the others." And then I said this... I wondered if I should say it, but I said it...
"Elise, Jesus loves you ... You need to go to Jesus."

Susan said, "She's gone." And I thought, "That was weird."

You know, Scripture forbids necromancy – that is, consulting with the dead. But I didn't consult ...
I proclaimed the Gospel.

Well, we came back upstairs. I remember, I went back in this northeast room to turn off a light or something. I walked back in here and found Susan standing still with this amazed look on her face. She said, "Peter, I just heard Jesus as clear as a bell. I heard Him say, 'Welcome home, Elise.' And then I heard Elise say, 'I was lost'."

I think she was a ghost, but not anymore.

Does that offend you? If you have questions –and you should – you should diligently search the Scriptures asking, "Is that even possible?" You should ask questions. But does it offend you? Does the very idea offend you? Does that much grace offend you? Grace that would go **that deep** ... does it offend you? Does it burn you?

If it burns you, maybe you're a ghost.
Don't run from the Light.
Run to the Light.
This is the Light.

[Communion]

Search me, o God, and know my heart.
Try me, and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way.
This is the Way.
Confess every darkness, every lie ... and listen to Jesus say, "I don't condemn you."