

How to See in the Dark

Luke 11:33-36

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As Christians, how should we respond to the darkness we see around us every single day? Sometimes, the darkness can seem too pervasive, too corrosive, too evil. Does our light even make a difference? Jesus encouraged His disciples that just a little light can illuminate a dark room, and our example of godliness can set the example in our world.

If you were living in Great Britain during World War II, you would have experienced mandatory black outs at night; all the lights in your home and even your vehicle headlights were required to be turned off at night. This strategy was effective in hiding urban centers from German bombers, but it sure made life difficult.

I have read that during the first month of the mandatory blackout, more than a thousand people died from automobile accidents alone.

In his book, which I've begun reading, entitled *Is The Commission Still Great?*—a reference to our mission as believers to reach our darkened world for Christ—the author, Steve Richardson, writes that while British subjects struggled to see their way around their roads and homes during these blackouts, Royal Air Force

pilots evidently weren't having trouble seeing at all.

One pilot evidently had such great night vision he was nicknamed "Cat's Eyes Cunningham" because, like a cat, he could wreak havoc and destruction. One night, Cunningham shot down three German bombers in one mission. The other British pilots as well had this uncanny ability to spot enemy planes in the dark skies overhead.

Eventually, the British Air Ministry revealed their secret; for months, the pilots had been on a healthy diet of carrots.

That news kicked off a marketing campaign throughout the British Isles. Citizens were urged to grow and eat carrots as a way to combat what they called "blackout blindness"; so they could

see better in their homes and on the roadways.

The British Ministry of Food published recipes for carrot marmalade and carrot fudge. Now that's the way to eat carrots!

The British public embraced this vegetable, power packed with vitamin A. In fact, by 1942, Great Britain had a surplus of 100,000 tons of carrots.

It spread to the United States where parents made sure to feed their children plenty of carrots. Walt Disney helped the cause by creating a cartoon of singing carrots.

Rumor had it that Germany began feeding its pilots carrots as well.

Problem was, it was entirely false propaganda; carrots had no effect on a person's ability to see in the dark.

What Britain's government wanted to do was deflect attention away from the real reason their pilots were succeeding in the air. Their military success had nothing to do with carrots; it had everything to do with the fact that their planes had recently been equipped with the world's first air-to-air radar system.

And they didn't want anybody to know.

Adapted from Steve Richardson, [Is the Commission Still Great?](#) (Moody Publishers, 2022), p. 9

It was a brilliant distraction.

The Bible tells us that the world around us in a perpetual spiritual nighttime—a moral, ethical blackout. It blindly follows cultural propaganda that there's

something they can grow, something they can do that will give them sight.

They pin their hopes on nothing better than carrots.

The propaganda of Satan and the systems of the world have deceived them. What they need is the radar of God's revelation.

In Luke's Gospel account, at chapter 11, the Lord Jesus is about to make a connection between His preaching and nighttime vision.

The question for His disciples—and for us today—will be this: can you see? Can you see through the darkness of this *evil* generation? Can you discern the truth even though you are pummeled by propaganda?

Is the answer really carrots? Or is it the penetrating radar of God's revealed truth?

Well to help His audience answer that question, the Lord now uses an illustration, here at **verse 33 Jesus says:**

“No one after lighting a lamp puts it in a cellar or under a basket, but on a stand, so that those who enter may see the light.”

Luke 11:33

You're not going to light a little lamp, or candle and leave it down there all by itself in the wine cellar or put it in some little alcove hidden away. You put it in the most open space you've got so that the

light can reach every possible square inch.

Which Jesus effectively means here, what He's referring to, what Luke wants to point out is that Jesus has been preaching, but not in secret. Not in the cellar but in the synagogues.

The light of His truth has been seen by everyone.

He's not hiding anything. His lamp is in the open. He might speak parabolically or metaphorically at times, but the truth is being revealed, even here in this sermon.

He says to them, "You're a wicked generation; you're wandering around in the darkness; you need to see the light, spiritually."

Now with that, the Lord moves on to make several analogies between His word and good vision.

He says to them here in **verse 34**:

"Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad, your body is full of darkness."

Luke 11:34

Let's slow down and clarify some of these analogies.

The **eye** here relates to receiving God's Word. This is referring to when you see, spiritually speaking; you are receiving, accepting spiritual truth; it's like light

coming through your eye which ends up lighting a lamp on the inside.

Here's another analogy: the **lamp of your body** is a reference to your lifestyle; this is what you do with your body; this is a reference to the way you live.

In other words, when you receive the light of what Jesus is preaching, it lights up a lamp inside you and then it provides light for your life which is then demonstrated in your lifestyle.

Here's another analogy: the word **light** here refers to inner wisdom and discernment; we could call it "spiritual insight, spiritual 20/20 vision."

God's truth corrects your eyesight.

One final analogy: if you refuse the light of God's Word, your body—that is, your lifestyle—continues in **darkness**. This is a reference to moral and ethical and relational confusion and corruption.

The problem is you can't see in the dark. You will get into an accident out there on the highway of life; you will stub your toe in your home and fail in your relationships in life.

The solution isn't growing self-confidence; it isn't religious traditions or ceremonies; that's like planting a row of carrots—it won't help you see in the dark.

What you need is an internal radar system where the Holy Spirit installs the truth of Christ inside you, giving you spiritual vision as you live in a dark world.

Let me read **verse 34** again and expand it based on the meaning of these words and the context:

Your eye is the lamp of your body—your lifestyle; when your eye is healthy, when it receives the light of truth, your whole body is full of light, but when it is bad—when it is corrupt—your body, your lifestyle, is full of darkness and corruption.

Now following these analogies, Jesus delivers a pretty serious warning here in **verse 35**:

“Therefore be careful lest the light in you be darkness.”

Luke 11:35

Now don't misunderstand. Jesus isn't saying that everyone has an inner light, there is no inner light in a fallen human being; light comes into us from outside us, from God alone.

David E. Garland, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke* (Zondervan, 2011), p. 488

According to the Bible we are depraved, sinful, blind, and lost people, eager to believe the propaganda that we can make ourselves see better, rather than repent of sin and pursue the light of God's Word.

The world will tell you that all you need to do to be able to see your way through in life is connect to your inner light, you have all the light you need inside you already, just believe in yourself; just be true to yourself.

That's as foolish as telling people to start growing carrots so they can see in the dark.

That isn't what Jesus is saying. Jesus is warning them in this verse not to let the light they've already seen and heard—which has penetrated their heart—get turned off or kicked out.

They've seen Him and they've heard Him; they sense His words are true; Jesus is saying, “Don't reject My word.”

That would be like being handed a candle and then blowing it out because you prefer the darkness. Jesus told us why that happens in **John 3:19**, **“Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil.”**

“Leave me alone in the dark!”

Ivor Powell put it so well a generation ago when he wrote: “There are none so blind as those who do not wish to see.”

Ivor Powell, *Luke's Thrilling Gospel* (Kregel, 1965), p. 275

There's that sense of intentionality here the Lord is clearly leveling at his audience. What do you intend to do with the light you've seen and heard in Me?

Most of them, one author described, will be like those who pull the shade down on a window to keep the light from coming in.

Charles R. Swindoll, *Insights on Luke* (Zondervan, 2012), p. 303

As I studied this invitation from the Lord, I couldn't help but think of that infamous window tax in England, when the king

taxed households based on the number of windows they had.

The idea had been proposed to him of a national income tax, but that was severely opposed since it would disclose personal income. That was considered private, and none of the government's business.

My, how things have changed!

So instead, the king introduced a window tax in 1697. It assumed wealthier people had bigger houses and more windows and should pay more taxes and poor people had smaller houses and fewer windows and should pay less taxes.

That tax plan was accepted as fair.

A hundred years later, the Prime Minister of England decided to triple the window tax. But before it was enacted, thousands of windows throughout the United Kingdom were boarded up, or bricked up, overnight.

The only way to avoid taxes was to seal up your windows.

Well, the only way to avoid the admission of sin and the exposure of the light of truth is to seal up the windows of our hearts.

We live in a world where minds and hearts are intentionally boarded up.

In this analogy, if the windows are open and clear, the light of Jesus's gospel is allowed to move in, our lives will be flooded with moral and ethical and spiritual light, but if we refuse, our lives will remain culturally and morally and

ethically and spiritually dark and confused.

I propped my feet up and thought quickly of a few signs of closed minds and the confusion that has come, simply because the light of God's Word is not allowed to shine on the subject at hand.

I thought of the utter despair of our world over the idea that earth is going to be destroyed, either through climate change or overpopulation.

When I was younger, the concern was that earth was going to freeze and the sun burn out. Now, the cultural consensus is that we're not going to freeze, we will fry.

I'm not a scientist and I'm not here to make a statement on what it means that the temperature of our planet has risen 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit over the last 100 years.

But I do know the promise of God's Word that He Himself will destroy the earth and the universe in a fireball of judgment and then recreate the earth and the universe brand new and immortal (2 Peter 3).

Until that day of judgment, following the millennial kingdom of Christ on earth, the earth isn't going to be destroyed.

The world is in despair over somehow saving this planet when God has already told us of His plans.

One article published last month was from a teenage girl who had decided it was "a moral wrong to have babies when the climate problem is not fixed."

I thought it was sad that this young girl is deciding her future as a mother based on a cultural dogma.

What does the light of God's Word reveal? Well, the Lord gave Noah a promise, following the destruction of the human race through the global flood; a promise that has lasted to this day and will last until the end of millennial kingdom when the earth no longer remains as it is now; here's the promise:

*While the earth remains,
seedtime and harvest, cold
and heat, summer and
winter, day and night, shall
not cease.*

Genesis 8:22

In other words, the four seasons, planting and harvesting, darkness and light, the rotation of the planet continues, the gravitational pull of the moon continues, the light of the sun at the right degree continues.

There's no need to be dismayed over the future viability of life on this planet.

Secondly, there is despair over not finding another planet to live on.

According to the world, since God didn't create the earth, and since we've concluded this planet isn't going to be able to sustain us, we need to leave this one.

Let me tell you, I plan on leaving this one.

The world says, "We need an exit plan"; well, I've already got an exit plan.

But our world has spent billions of dollars already trying to find another planet.

Surely in all the galaxies out there, there is another earth, another friendly planet.

But God's word tells us there isn't. **Isaiah chapter 45** tells us that God made the universe uninhabitable, all of it, except for planet earth.

By the way, that's why the Bible emphasizes the earth. Have you noticed that? Even when God's word mentions the universe—the heavens—it focuses on earth uniquely.

The Bible begins in **Genesis 1:1** by saying: "**In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**" The heavens—that's the universe—and the earth. Saying God created the universe *and* the earth is redundant; the earth is part of the universe.

But God is focusing in the very first verse on the uniqueness of this planet for His eternal plans and purposes.

So, Isaiah says this:

*For thus says the Lord, who
created the heavens (he is
God!), who formed the
earth and made it ... (he did
not create it empty, he
formed it to be inhabited!)*

Isaiah 45:18

Beloved, the only planet God created to be inhabited is planet earth. The Lord says through Isaiah, everything else is empty—that word can be translated waste place, uninhabitable. You could paraphrase Isaiah to say, **“God created the universe to uninhabitable, but He created the earth to be inhabited.”**

Which by the way settles any fear of aliens out there who might end up invading us and using us for science experiments.

So why is the universe so big? So that it can do what God’s Word says it will do: declare the power and glory and greatness, the immensity of our Creator God.

David wrote: the heavens—the universe—**declare the glory of God (Psalm 19:1)**. Imagine, David writes, our Creator God is the one who fashioned **the moon and the stars which He set in place (Psalm 8:3)**.

The bigger the universe becomes, the smaller we become; but the greater God becomes, the greater His purposes and plans become for our little lives and our little planet, His glory and His grace become all the more stunning.

The more we learn about our universe, the more staggering our God becomes.

The newest telescope, by the way, has been launched into space—the James Webb Telescope—in search of another planet to move to; in search of alien species; in search of answers to the origin of the universe. The world isn’t

going to let the light of God’s Word have any say in any of that.

That powerful telescope is now sending back images that are surprising and troubling the prevailing evolutionary views of galaxy formation; those pictures aren’t supporting their theories.

I was reading a journal a few months ago where one evolutionary scientist admitted, and I quote, “I am now lying in bed at 3:00am wondering if everything I believed was wrong.”

Dismay over earth’s destruction, despair over the future of the cosmos and human life; and I thought of one more: **that is disillusionment over personhood and identity.**

Our world is disillusioned and confused over gender and sexual morality, and it all stems from rejecting a Creator God who made us in His image, male and female.

But when God is removed from His throne, mankind in all his confusion takes God’s place.

And now it’s up to you to create your own identity, your own gender, your own personhood. Gender is no longer set; since there is no Creator, you now must create yourself.

So, children today must make decisions in elementary school that are staggering; they are to tell their teachers their preferred pronouns and names.

Children have to figure out who they’re going to be when they grow up.

One author wrote tongue in cheek about this; she wrote that if 8-year-olds knew what they wanted to be when they grew up, the world would be filled with cowboys.

Adapted from Andree Seu Peterson, "A Tragic Role Reversal" World Magazine, November 19, 2022), p. 70

I had a man come up to me a couple of weeks ago who told me his 8-year-old granddaughter was given a survey at the beginning of school where they were asked to answer if they were a boy or a girl. That's in the third grade.

His granddaughter wrote, rather confidently that she was a girl. The teacher challenged her and even asked her how she knew she was a girl. She responded, "Because I've got all the right parts."

The wisdom of an 8-year-old.

So, what does the believer do in a darkened and confused culture like that.

Do we listen to sermon series and news reports that get us all stirred up about how dark and confused the world is?

Jesus gives us the answer here in verse 36:

"If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, it will be wholly bright, as when a lamp with its rays gives you light."

Luke 11:36

He is simply inviting His audience to receive His Word, open the windows and

allow His truth to remove their blindness and allow the light to come in and take residence.

Darrell Bock writes in his commentary, as the believer does that, what happens is their lives begin to reflect light outward like a lamp in a dark room.

Darrell L. Bock, [Luke: Volume 2](#) (Baker Academic, 1996), p. 1103

This is the challenge for the believer to receive the light and then live out the light. Don't spend your time cursing the darkness; don't just get all stirred up over the latest chapter of cultural confusion and despair and disillusionment—expect it.

They have turned out the light and can expect nothing but darkness.

But the apostle Peter tells the believer to ***"proclaim the excellencies of Him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).***

Wherever God places us, in whatever station or post or career or classroom He assigns us, let's turn on the light and proclaim how excellent is our Lord!

The apostle Paul reminds the believer in Ephesians 5:8, ***"for at one time you were darkness."*** In other words, you not only walked in darkness, but you were darkness—inside and out—you were filled with darkness, unable to see. ***"You were darkness (Paul says) but now you are light in the Lord. [So] walk as children of light" (Ephesians 5:8).***

Just turn on the light.

Christians need to act like Christians.
Demonstrate your deliverance.

Our eyes are open now; we see; we see
the light!

Adapted from Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Compassionate* (Victor Books, 1988), p. 128

And that means we see things differently
than the rest of the world.

Don't throw your hands up in despair, the
world is deceived; they've bought into the
propaganda; they're trying to plant
carrots so they can see in the dark. We
have the radar of God's revelation.

We understand that carrots are
counterfeits.

We understand why we must follow Him;
His light is the only thing that allows us
to see in the dark.

I went to our family optometrist last year
and got my annual eye exam.

I knew I needed it because I was having
to tilt my head higher and higher just to
fix the thermostat.

So, I went in there and sat down on that
chair and he lowered that contraption
down in front of me where I was to look
through a series of lenses. He'd say,
"Which one is better, that one or this

one?" and I'd say, "That one." "Which
one is clearer now, that one or this one?"
and I said, "This one?" After 3 or 4 times,
I'd never thought of it before then, but
pulled away and said, "I'll bet you already
know which one's better, don't you?" He
just smiled and said, "Yes, I do." And he
did; a little later he said, "Which one is
better, this one or that one?" and I said,
"That one." He paused and said, "Are you
sure?"

For the believer, let me make the point
that we need God's Word more than ever.

When you get into the word you are
taking a spiritual eye exam.

You realize you have perception issues,
you need clarity and vision; the Lord
already knows which way you should go;
that's why He can say that His Word is **a
lamp to our feet and a light to our path
(Psalm 119:105)**.

His light helps us see in the dark.

So pray:

*Lord, we need Your light to come in all
the more today, to change our lives, to
clarify our perspective, to repair our
distorted vision and then through us,
shine as a light to our darkened world, for
Your glory and praise, Amen.*

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