

GOING DEEPER

To add a bit of depth to our kids message this week, and to give you more to share with your kids, have a read below.

In John 8:12 Jesus said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." And in Matthew 5:16 he told us that we were lights in the darkness.

So what did he mean? Well to understand this we need to go a long way back. Over 2000 years back, to Jerusalem. So get in the "Way back" machine, and come with me.

In Jerusalem, at the time of Jesus they had a special day (kind of a Public Holiday) called 'The Feast of Booths.' It was an eight day party extravaganza, celebrated in the city of Jerusalem and Jewish people would travel miles and miles just to be in Jerusalem for this celebration.

Now 'The Feast of Booths' happens in Autumn, around the time all the crops are being brought in from the fields. It was a time of great feasting, and there were many, many different things they did to celebrate.

Now you might remember that as Moses led God's people through the desert, God went with them as a big pillar of fire to light their nights. So to remember that, the priest in Jesus' time would light four huge candelabras. These candelabras were like giant lamps with a place for four lights. These 75 foot tall (that's an eight storey building!) candelabras were outside the temple, and strong young men would climb up to the four bowls at the top of each one and pour ten gallons of oil into the bowls, then light the oil, and the whole of Jerusalem was lit up by their bright light.

Can you imagine how cool that must have looked? And it gets even better. Jerusalem is built on a hill, with the Temple at the highest part of the hill. So the light from these giant candelabras could be seen for miles around. And people would travel from very far away to come to Jerusalem and be a part of the celebrations for the Feast of Booths?

Well many, many of those people would have to camp outside of the city walls, in their own tents. So they would have little lamps in their tents to light up the night too. Just picture standing in the Temple, with these bright burning lights high above you, and all around you. Around the whole city, little lights burn like stars in the tents of the people. Everybody would be cheering and celebrating when the candelabras were lit. There would be music and everyone would be filled with joy.

Well this is the celebration that was going on when Jesus said I AM the Light of the world.

So what did Jesus mean when he said he is the light of the world?

Well firstly, when he says that he's speaking for God as God. In fact each time he says "I am," we're reminded that he's God, because that was the special name God used for himself.

Basically, he's saying that He's the same light- the same God- that led the people with Moses through the desert and away from Pharaoh.

But he's also saying something else. Jesus is the Light of the world, because he opens our eyes to the truth. Like a blind person seeing for the very first time. But he gives us eyes to see the way things really are. To see who we really are inside. To see the world the way it really is.

Jesus is saying that he's the only one that can light up our lives, and lead us out of darkness.

The darkness we face isn't the darkness that comes when the sun goes down.

Jesus opens up our eyes and shows us that while life can be great, without Jesus it's never fully complete. That we're made to be close to the one who made us. So when we don't know Jesus it's like being in darkness.

Like a light, Jesus shows us that there are parts of our character that hide, and don't look anything like the way God wants them to look. We tell lies, we hurt people. We sin.

But at the same time he calls us to come closer. Have you ever noticed that the closer you get to the light, the dirtier things around look? Well Jesus wants us to come closer to him. To see all our sin. But also to say sorry, and find forgiveness. To be transformed. To change.

But it's not just us he wants to change. Remember how all the people at the Festival of Booths would have looked amazing. All lit up like stars at night for everyone to see. Well in the same kind of way, Jesus also wants us to be lights to the world. That is- to let his light shine through us.

He wants people to see the way we talk, and treat people, and act, and know straight away that we're part of God's people. That we are like that because the Light of the world is living in us.

COVID-19 has changed our church landscape, but it hasn't changed our mission.

We and our kids are in a place we've never been before in history, and it's our time to shine for Jesus. To be different to the darkness. To be people with the light in this COVID-19 crisis.

If you have any ideas for how we can do that, I'd love to hear them on our What's App group chat - CBC Family Chat.