

This year it took till middle of January before we had our first ice storm. You know that on Thursday morning the city woke up to a thin layer of ice. News crews immediately were at major intersections getting video of all sorts of vehicles losing control on the icy roads. Travel was treacherous and would have remained that way all day. That is until about 10:00 in the morning. That's when the sun broke through the clouds. Within hours the ice in many places was gone. Travel returned to near normal as the danger of the ice was removed by the sun.

The warnings on icy days are for drivers just as much as they are for people walking. Slipping and falling on the ice causes just as much danger for people. But the sunlight cleared all that up and took away the danger. Light can be used during this season of the church year called Epiphany as a picture of the Savior for everyone. Of course not everyone believes. Some say they do but act completely different. Others think they know Jesus but aren't convincing. We might wonder how we can tell for sure.

The apostle John gives us two ways to test ourselves in the second lesson for today. We'll use them like a light, helping us to find our way through the darkness and calling our attention to the only important light this world has. It's by doing this that we hope to safely continue...

**Walking in the light of Jesus**  
**Know him by obedience**  
**Know him by love**

"I know the Bible. I've heard it before; the story about Jesus and his followers, tales of God's people. It talks about the future too. I know all about it." Someone saying these things sounds very knowledgeable, like they read Scripture a lot. But if you knew they were really reading Scripture looking for hidden secrets and codes then their claims seem questionable. The apostle John was trying to counter people doing just that. People who said they knew Jesus but were unprepared to take the Bible at face value. There was a secret Jesus. They wanted knowledge of Jesus that no one else had. So John countered with a simple test. **"The man who says, 'I know him,' but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."** A person who makes these claims should also be keeping the law, not living a crude or wild lifestyle, basically someone who obeys Jesus' commands. If not they're lying to themselves and others.

Millions in the world believe they're obeying God's commands. Those persecuting Christians believe they're obeying God. Some have claimed God called them to kill so they obeyed. But it's not always the extreme. Others let themselves off easy thinking God's demands of obedience aren't that strong. Look like a Christian on Sunday, the rest of the week you do what you want. So obedience is just making sure you're here on Sunday, standing and sitting at the appropriate times, saying the words, making a good show of your Christianity.

So we say we know Jesus but are we really obeying his commands. We need God's understanding of obedience. Thankfully Jesus told us. **"A new command I give you: love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another."** To God, obedience is centered in love. Faith, or a claim that we know Jesus, is nothing unless accompanied by action and love. Only true believers in Christ can walk in the light of Christ and know him by obedience. So are you obeying Jesus by loving?

If you were asked how you're saved you would say by the death of Jesus. That's a great answer, but only half right. The cross is so important but we sometimes forget what led to the cross. It was Jesus and a life of obedience. Jesus needed a perfect life of obedience to give weight to his death. Without perfection his death wouldn't count for us. Thankfully his life was characterized by obedience and he completed it perfectly. Like a light shining into the darkest corners his perfection covered every sin and every misstep that we took. Every pass we took on obedience, every false or half hearted show of our Christianity, every dark place in our hearts pierced by his light. And that light brought forgiveness.

Even during an eclipse with the sun partially blacked out it's still too bright to look at. Because God in his glory is too perfect for sinners to look at he gave Jesus as a way to see God and live. Without Jesus physically present people see Jesus through believers. Each of you is the light of God to someone else. **"But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him: whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did."** Your faith does works of obedience that are little rays of sunshine in the darkness. Taking a moment to teach your child something from their homework, holding the door for someone behind you, reading a Bible story or doing your memory work or having a family devotion, these are your moments of obedience when your light shines.

I've always been pretty convinced that if my in-laws wrapped up some of the old toys for their daughters and claimed they were new they wouldn't notice. With so many toys kids can't play with all of what they have so how would they know the difference. John went the other way. He spoke things that sounded new but openly told them they were old, really as old as the world itself. **"I am not writing you a new command but an old one, which you have had since the beginning. This old command is the message you have heard."** The commandment he shared with them was around with the people of God in Old Testament time, it was brought forward through the prophets, and it was expounded upon by Jesus himself. As long as they knew Jesus they knew this old command.

Restoring old things is a favorite pastime of many people. An old rusty junker can be made to shine once again. A broken down house can be redesigned and remodeled to function once again as a home. It's very rewarding to make what's old new again. Jesus came with the same priority. Take the old worn out bodies of sinful human beings that are doomed for destruction and make them shiny and new again. The only way he could do that was to take the old command to love that we weren't keeping and fulfill it. **"Its truth is seen in him and you, because the darkness is passing and the true light is already shining."** What's new about this command is that now its seen completed in you. The true light is Jesus and the forgiveness he won for us. That good news light shines in you. The darkness is gone, the secret is exposed, and the hidden knowledge is no more. The reality is you live your life of love through faith in Christ.

We are made new in Christ. John used the picture of hate and love. You can't hate someone and still claim to know Christ. Hate makes people stumble not follow in faith. But we've been made new. We confess all our sins, the sins of hatred and lack of love to Jesus, and trust him. He gives us his perfection to claim as our own. We don't go back to hate because he gives us forgiveness and an ability to say yes to God. We submit to his will, obey his commands, and replace our hate with love. We love without hate, not limited to one group, but love for everyone as God commanded. We do this willingly because of Christ's love for us. We stay out of the darkness and walk in the light because we know Christ by his love.

You claim to know Jesus. That's great. Now take the test. Do you walk behind your Savior, walking the way he walked, walking by his light? Do you get rid of your anger and hatred for others and replace it with obedience and love for God and for neighbor? If you can answer yes it's because of Christ Jesus. We walk and we love in him. We walk in the light of Jesus.