Grace Evangelical Free Church January 1, 2023

**John 8:12** Jesus: Light of the World

To the majority of people in the world, Jesus is an honored historical figure who was the founder of Christianity—but that is about as far as it goes. Many have no idea how the prophecies He fulfilled has proven an unsurpassed impact upon the history of man:

**John 8:12**: **“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.**”

* **Grammatical Usage: “light”** or in the Greek, “phós” literally means, “radiant source” referring to Jesus’ messiahship encompassing truth, knowledge and existence; “**darkness**” or “scotia” meaning, “spiritual darkness; ignorance of the divine”; “**life**” or “zóé” meaning, “life” in both the physical (present) and the spiritual (future) sense.
* **Literal Interpretation:** **Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, I am the radiant source of every aspect of existence. Whoever follows me will not walk in ignorance of material or spiritual reality, but will possess understanding of this (present) life and the life to come.**
* **Contextual/Comparison:** God keeps His Word: God continually uses His Word. In fact, without the birth, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, life on planet earth would be incomprehensibly different from what it is today. How different? Twelve ways the promise and reality of Jesus Christ has changed the world:

1. Individuals: “**Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (**Colossians 1:27**)

The essence of Jesus’ mission was to save the individual life of every person who chooses to put his or her trust in Him. He didn’t just point the way to a set of ideals or moral principles but promised when we were “**born again by his Spirit**” He would come to live inside of us, guiding and empowering us to live meaningful and godly lives, setting us “**free from the law of sin and death**” (**Romans 8:2**). There was a new dynamite—a dynamic power—to live a productive life.

2. Women: “**There is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus**” (**Ga. 3:28**)

No one altered the role of women in society more than Christ. Prior to New Testament times, women labored in harsh, subservient roles, and were often nothing more than “slaves, dogs, horses, and donkeys”—all possessions to be used and cast away. Jesus’ teachings and example reconfirmed the truth that from the time of creation, women are of equal worth as men in God’s sight, including their complimentary roles in the marriage relationship. ALL of the women’s rights enjoyed, especially in the past two hundred years, were produced by the Christian faith.

3. Family Life: “**Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord…Husbands, love your wives just as Christ also loved the Church…Children, obey your parents in the Lord for this is right**” (**Ephesians 5:22**, **25**; **6:1**)

The application of Jesus’ teachings also gave permanent strength and completeness to the world’s most important institution—the family. Wives were not slaves, husbands weren’t to be tyrants, and children possessed significance. The Christian truths of submission, equal worth, partnership, and self-sacrificing love gave harmony and protection to family relationships that became the foundation of Western civilization and culture.

4. The Church: “**I will build my Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it**” (**Matthew 16:18**)

Though the Church has not always properly applied the teachings of Christ, it is also true that no group of people have made a more positive impact on the history of the world than the Christian Church. The Church—the “called out ones” (Greek “ekklesia”)—transformed the Roman Empire, rescued “learning” from the destruction of the Middle Ages, raised Europe out of barbarism, pioneered the New World, and sent Christian civilization to the ends of the earth. History would be drastically different without the acts of God’s people in every century. Even today, without the compassion, evangelism and humanitarianism of the Church, millions would be without hope.

5. Civil Government: “**The authorities that exist are appointed by God…he is God’s minister to you for good…an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil**” (**Romans 13:1**, **4**)

One of the things we both criticize and take for granted in the 21st century is the positive role of human governments that were shaped by Christianity. Prior to the Christian faith being applied to civil government, people lived in perpetual fear of massacres and tyrants. Power and fear ruled human societies for much of human history. But after the coming of Christ, the biblical role of civil government began to emerge through the Magna Carta, British common law, republican governments, democratic principles and human rights. These things weren’t just the evolutionary march of history—they were incremental applications of Christ’s teachings to human governments.

6. Education: “**In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**” (**Col. 2:3**)

We would have lost much of the great literature of Greece and Rome (and other civilizations of the ancient world) if it weren’t for the Christian monks who preserved that knowledge through finding, preserving, and copying ancient writings during the Middle Ages. The first universities in Paris and London were started by believers who had a thirst for knowledge and wisdom.

The printing of the Gutenberg Bible was considered by TIME magazine the most important event of the past five hundred years because it made truth and knowledge easily available to the masses. The first 120 universities in America, beginning with Harvard, were started by followers of Christ for the advancement of the Christian faith. Most of the major milestones in human education flow from one fountain: faith in Jesus Christ.

7. Business: “**Do your work heartily as unto the Lord, not to men. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve**” (**Colossians 3:23**)

Even the development of human work, labor and industry finds its zenith in the application of Christian truths. For most of history, and still in some parts of the world, there were only a few wealthy tyrants and teeming masses of poor people. For thousands of years there was no middle class and no freedom for individual initiative. During the Christianizing of Europe, this all changed as believers applied biblical concepts of labor and industry, which eventually became free enterprise capitalism that led the world out of mass poverty. The teachings of Christ applied to the free enterprise system you currently enjoy is built on faith from start to finish.

8. Science: “**All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men**” (**John 1:3-4**)

Modern science was born of the Christian faith and not in opposition to it. It was Christian civilization that proposed that “design points to a Designer” and that man was placed on the earth to discover God’s secrets in nature and use those discoveries to benefit people. From Galileo to Faraday, from Pascal to Einstein, many of the leading scientists of both the past and present have been people of faith who used their trust in God to reveal the mysteries of his creation. None of this would have been possible without believing in a God whose creation can be understood. That Creator is Jesus Christ.

9. The Arts: “**Don’t be drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord**” (**Ephesians 5:18-19**)

Picture the totem pole faces and primitive art forms of pagan peoples; they always look wild, menacing, and evil. But after Jesus brought healing, peace, and completeness, artists began reflecting that wholeness in ever expanding art forms. It’s a long way from lewd and angry totem poles to the Sistine Chapel, but Christ produced the difference. When people are changed and brought into right relationship to God, they sing, paint, and give him glory in the arts resulting in more hymns, songs and depictions of Jesus than any other individual in history.

10. Faith: “**that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith**” (**Ephesians 3:17**)

Jesus lived a life of complete faith in the Father and imparted that faith to his followers. Christians are the true progressives because they see life’s challenges and opportunities through the lens of faith in Jesus Christ. “**All things are possible to those that believe.**” Our faith makes us the best leaders, soldiers, caregivers, and husbands and wives. Wars against evil have been won through valiant faith; individual lives have been rescued through tender faith. It’s hard to imagine a world without faith in the Lord Jesus Christ which over two billion people now share.

11. Love: “**that you being rooted and grounded in love may . . . know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge**” (**Ephesians 3:17**, **19**)

The love of Jesus Christ has made the greatest mark upon the world. “**God is love**,” and Jesus’ horrific suffering on behalf of sinful people showed the world once and for all that God cares for each one of us and provided a way out of our guilt and self-destruction. For two thousand years, the majority of hospitals and other ministries of compassion around the globe have been launched in His name. Where would our world be without the love of Christ expressed through His people?

12. Hope: “**Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (**Colossians 1:27**)

We end with our beginning Scripture. Christ changes individuals and nations by giving them a firm hope in a future he has secured through his death, resurrection and ascension. There is life after death. There will be a resurrection of all people. Jesus is coming again to bring his redeemed people into an eternity of love and blessing in His heavenly presence. Because of these truths, the follower of Christ lives in perpetual and mind-boggling future hope that Jesus Christ will provide.

* **Conclusion**: Hope is not a wish or a dream—it’s as real as the nail-scarred hands and the empty tomb. Hope gets us through the day, helps us handle tragedies and death, and points our hearts upward. Jesus Christ is the only hope of the world. He is YOUR only hope – do you know Him?