



December 17, 2017

## Light in the Darkness

Just after Thanksgiving, my neighbors put up their Christmas lights. They put them up over the course of a week. They put up one section of lights one day and another section another day. There was a build-up and anticipation in the neighborhood. When the lights were all done, there was still daylight so we had to wait just a little more. Why? Because you don't turn Christmas lights on when the sun is out. I mean, you could, but it would've been a little anti-climactic. They wouldn't be very bright. You probably couldn't even tell if they were on or not. No, you turn them on when it's dark so it can actually shine in the darkness. That's what light does. It shines brighter in the darkness by dispelling the darkness. Last week, we looked at how the beginning of Christmas goes all the way back to the very beginning with Jesus, the Word. This week, when God said "let there be light" and it pierced the darkness at the beginning of Creation. **Jesus is the light of men who pierced the darkness of sin and death and overcame it at the beginning of Christmas.**

## The Light of Life (4a)

First, Jesus is the light who brings life to a dark and dreary world. John continues with the theme of creation from the beginning. John says, "*In him was life*". How is Jesus the light of life.

### Physical Life

*He is the light of physical life.* One of the foundational truths of life on this planet is that without light, there is no life. If there was no light, no photons emanating from the Sun, there would be no energy to fuel life on this planet as we know it. There would be no atmosphere; no photosynthesis; no light; and no life. Jesus through whom light comes into the world is the light that gives life to every living thing.

## Spiritual Life

*He is also the light of spiritual life. Life is more than just the physical. It's also spiritual. All life is in reference to the life of God. "In Him", Paul says, "we live and move and have our being". When God made us in his image, he made us to be live in a fellowship of life with Him. When God made Adam out of the dust of the earth and breathed his own breath of life into him, "he became a living being". However, at the fall, sin severed that fellowship of life and brought death. Like a rose cut at the stem, our spiritual death leads to physical and eternal death. But, Jesus redeems and reconnects us to that life by reconnecting us to his own life. "For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself."*

## Eternal Life

*And through is own life, he brings us the light of eternal life. Later on in John 3:16, Jesus says that God sent him into the world "that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." We'll see what that means later, but eternal life is not merely an unending life that goes on and on. Rather, it's also the abundance of life in fellowship with an eternal God. Jesus said, "I came that they may have life and have it abundantly (John 10:10)". When Adam and Eve fell in sin, it plunged the whole world into the darkness and despair of sin and death. But, Jesus is the light of life who comes to dispel the darkness and overcome death because "in Him was life".*

## Light and Life

This reminds us how the very nature of life, itself, is a clue to the existence of God, and Jesus, through whom everything was made. Francis Collins, former head of the Human Genome Project and current director of the National Institutes of Health, and a strong Christian, argues that the fundamental laws and constants of physics, including the nature of light, points to a Creator God:

When you look from the perspective of a scientist at the universe, it looks as if it knew we were coming. There are 15 constants- [including the speed of light]- that have precise values. If any of those constants was off by even one part in a million, or in some cases, by one part in a million million, the universe could not have actually come to the point where we see it. Matter would not have been able to coalesce, there would have been no galaxy, stars, planets, or people.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Francis Collins, "The Language of God: A Scientist Presents Evidence for Belief", p. 75.

Jesus is the light that gives life to all, including us.

## The Light of Men (4b)

Jesus is not only the light that brings life to the world, but he also gives light to men, in particular. *“In him was the life, and the life was the light of men”*. Echoing Genesis 1, when God created the universe, he shined light into the darkness. Here in John 1, when God brings life to a dark world, he shines the light of Jesus to men. Light has a four important functions for us.

### Reveals

Light reveals and illuminates. When go to drive your car at night, you turn on your head lights so you can see what’s in front of you. This is what John is saying about the coming of Jesus. Isaiah put it this way, *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined (Is. 9.2)”*. After the fall, we all fell into the darkness of spiritual blindness and ignorance. We were cut off and alienated from God. But now, Jesus has come to shine the light of the knowledge of God into our hearts and minds. James Boice says this:

Jesus is revealed as the One who knows God the Father and who makes him known...Before Christ came into the world, the world was in darkness. The world did not know God. Christ came. His light shone before men. Then men had light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>

Friends, do you know God? Do you know Him, intimately and personally, or do you just know of Him? Jesus is the light that shines the knowledge of God into our hearts. And he invites you to step out of the darkness of life without God and into the light of life with God which is infinitely better.

### Warms

It also warms. Light not only illuminates, but it also energizes. It’s the only visible form of electromagnetic radiation. Plants and solar panels harness the power of photons for energy. When we walked in the cold darkness of sin and despair, the light of Christ gives us warmth, and the light of hope. He enlivens us with the power of His life that gives us life. Jesus says in John 12:46: *“ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.”*

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<sup>2</sup> James M. Boice, the Gospel of John, 1:45.

## Guides

It, not only reveals and warms, but it also guides. It reminds us of how God led the Israelites in the wilderness as a glory-cloud of light. His word, the Psalmist says, “is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path”. And those who walk apart from His word, walk in darkness and stumble and fall. Jesus, who is the Word and the light says, “*I am the light of the world, whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life* (John 8.12)”. Faith is trusting in Jesus as the light that not only gives you life, but leads your life.

## A Light Unto Our Path

This has several implications for us. First, this means using the light of Christ revealed in His word to lead and light our way in the darkness of this world. We have to use it; to hide it in our hearts; let it guide us; let it teach us. Not to live by its light is like going into a dark tunnel with a million candle power flashlight and not using it. We will hit and stumble over anything and everything. God’s word ought to be lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path. It ought to be the sun that keeps your heart warm to the things of the Lord. It is the sun that helps the seed of faith grow in the soil of your heart and bear fruit in your life.

## Lewis: Meaning and Darkness

Second, if you’re not a Christian, you can take for granted how the light of Christ makes sense of reality. It’s like how C.S. Lewis puts it, when Atheists deny that there is meaning in the universe because there is no God:

If the whole universe has no meaning, we should never have found out that it has no meaning; just as, if there no light in the universe and therefore no creatures with eyes, we should never know it was dark. Dark would be without meaning.<sup>3</sup> ...I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen: not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else”.<sup>4</sup>

You have to presuppose the existence of God in order to deny it.

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<sup>3</sup> C.S. Lewis, Mere Christianity

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

## The Light over Darkness (5)

This brings us to my last point: Jesus is the light that is life and he gives light to men because he came not only to pierce the darkness but to overcome it in the gospel. If light brings life, then darkness is the shadow of death. And if light is good, then darkness symbolizes sin and evil. This is why Jesus came into the world to shine into the darkness and overcome it, *“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”*.

### Dispel Darkness

When the whole world was covered in the darkness of sin, cloaked in the despair of death, Jesus came to bring light and life to men. He came to dispel it; to drive it away; to overcome it. This is the gospel. This is what Christmas is all about.

### Light in the Darkness

He is the light that shines in the darkness. He came to free us from the realm of sin and the shadow of death. He came to shine the light of righteousness and life to sinners lost in darkness, sin, and death. He shined the light of God’s grace and truth to sinners. He called the dead from the darkness of the grave and brought him into His marvelous light and life. He called sinners to repentance and gave them eternal life. Like a beacon in the dark, Jesus calls us out of the darkness of our sins and the despair of death and bids us come to him by faith.

### Overcoming the Darkness

He is the light that overcame the darkness by being overcome by it in his death and resurrection. At the cross, the light of the world, the light of life and the light of men took our sins and the punishment and death we deserved when he was covered in darkness. This is what darkness, ultimately, means to be devoid of all light and life; to be devoid of the light of the loving presence of God, to be in the outer darkness of hell. This is why for three hours in the middle of the day, on that cross on Calvary, it was as dark as midnight. He was overcome at the cross and laid in the darkness of the grave for three days. But, death could not hold him; darkness could not ultimately overcome Him. In the resurrection, he overcame darkness; after three days, he overcame death. And he did all for us, to redeem and restore us from darkness into the light of eternal life with Him, who is the light of life and the light of men.

# Light of Christ

Friends, this is the gospel we celebrate at Christmas. He is the light that is already shining before you. And faith is simply opening the door of your hearts and letting Him shine into your hearts. Letting him come and dispel the darkness of sin and death to give you abundant, eternal life. Will you open the door? Will you open the curtains and let His light shine in? “**46** *I have come into the world as light,*” Jesus said, “*so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.*”

*For God, who said, “Let light shine out of **darkness**,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.*

# The Beginning of Christmas

*Advent Messages from John 1*

## The Light of Men

John 1:4-5

### Sermon Outline

1. Light in the Darkness
2. The Light of Light (4a)
3. The Light of Men (4b)
4. The Light Overcoming Darkness (5)
5. Letting Light In

# The Beginning of Christmas

*Advent Messages from John 1*

## The Light of Men

John 1:4-5

## Sermon Discussion Questions

### Understanding the Text

1. When was the last time you used a flashlight? Describe how it helped you see in the dark?
2. Why is light so important? What are some ways that you use light for important things in your life?
3. What are some ways that God speaks about light for our Christian life?
4. How do these passages help you understand John 1:4-5?
  - a. John 5:26
  - b. John 11:25
  - c. 1 John 5:11
  - d. John 8:12; 9:5
  - e. John 12: 46
  - f. Matthew 27:45

### Going Deeper

1. Are you utilizing God's word as "a lamp unto your feet and a light unto your path"? If you find yourself stumbling or unsure about some areas of your life, are you shining the light of God's word and the gospel into that area of your life?
2. How can you use your life as a light for others to see and come to Jesus?
3. Are there times when you feel like darkness is overcoming you? How does the gospel help you through those times?