

Tuesday, January 6, 2025

John 1:5

The devotions this week are written by Lisa Liou. Lisa is the founder and executive director of All Gen Movement, a Christian ministry dedicated to healing the generations and renewing the Church. She previously served over 20 years with InterVarsity, most recently as Regional Director in the Western US. She is married to Jeff, an ordained CRC minister, and together they live in Monrovia, CA with their two teenagers.

*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

As we begin this devotional on the theme of light, consider lighting a candle.

Yesterday, we looked at the first day of creation, when God introduced light. Today, we come to a parallel passage. John's gospel begins by explaining that Christ, who he calls the Word, was with God all the way back in the creation story. We learn that Christ was a part of creation and that he is life and light for all humanity.

John is telling us that Christ entering our world in human flesh was akin to that moment on day one of creation when it switched from dark to light. The world has experienced a profound change.

When I was a kid, our entire neighborhood would purchase luminaries (white bags with candles in them) to line our sidewalks and driveways on Christmas Eve. It was a beautiful sight to see (and quite safe in snowy, cold Michigan). Perhaps you haven't had luminaries, but maybe you have held a light while singing Silent Night or lit candles for an advent wreath. Most of us at least hang some Christmas twinkle lights each year. It is not a coincidence that lights feature prominently in our Christmas celebrations. They act as a symbolic reminder of Christ's birth, a light in the darkness.

However, the imagery of dark turning to light (Gen 1:3) and a flickering light, like a candle, in a dark room are two different images. When John talks about Jesus shining in the darkness, and the darkness not overcoming it, what do you picture?

Our Christmas traditions cause me to picture more of a flicker, as if Jesus were a glimmering light on that dark night in Bethlehem, just like that halo of light we often see around his head in cards. That image is certainly symbolically rich. But maybe John meant something more like the Genesis picture. When the light arrives, the darkness is gone. They are distinct from one another, rather than co-existing.

I can see the truth of both. On the one hand, Jesus' light and power cast out darkness completely. On the other hand, we live in the "now, but not yet" of Christ's reign in a weary and sinful world. We still experience the darkness, but in Christ, we know the light.

Where have you experienced darkness in your life or in the world lately? What does it mean to you that Jesus is the light in the darkness, and the darkness does not overcome it? Have you experienced his light more like a flicker or like an obliteration of darkness?

Let Jesus know where you'd like to experience more of his light. You can end again with this prayer. As you breathe in say, Light of the world, and as you breathe out say, let your light shine.