

## Good News! Light Has Come!

Genesis 3:15; John 1:4–5; 1 Peter 2:9–10

This weekend small group leaders and Jeff and I spent several hours studying biblical models of worship and what constitutes authentic worship. Saturday morning we watched a clip of Alistair Begg telling a story about someone who has had a bad morning on their way to worship and well-meaning but misdirected worship leader beginning the worship service by asking, “How do y’all feel this morning.” In his humorous way he imagine the conversation going, “I woke up late, I haven’t had my coffee; I didn’t read my bible; I had a fight with someone over a parking a place on the way in... and you want to know how I feel? I feel rotten. That’s how I feel. What have you got for me?” And the answer from the worship leader: “I got nothing. That’s what I got.” Now he tells a much better story than I... But there’s a lesson in that story that we need to take notice of. When believers encounter people who have had not only bad days, but bad weeks and bad months, and bad relationships, and bad brokenness of every kind... If they are aware that we are Christians and say to us, “Hey, I feel rotten because there’s all kinds of brokenness in my life. What have you got for me?” What would your answer be? Or maybe even a more penetrating question for us this morning: Why does someone stumbling around in darkness need to ask children of light if they have anything or know anything that will help? This morning we are going to simply look at the darkness of world, and see how God has overcome darkness through the Light and life of Jesus Christ.

### PRAY

Christmas has been called a season of light. To children of King Jesus, we understand that it is indeed the season of celebrating that Christ, the Light of the World, has come, and he overcomes the darkness of sin and death. But to those outside of Christ — to those who are without hope and without God — the season of light may be understood as a strand of electric lights draped on a front yard bush. Or a faux candle running on a triple-A battery that means something warm and sentimental, but no one is sure exactly what. Without hope and without God. Let those words from Ephesians 2:12 ring down the halls of your heart for a moment. No hope and without God. If ever there was a description of darkness, that’s it. And it is an accurate description of our world. It’s the reality for every soul outside of Christ at this moment. Let’s remind ourselves of how things got so

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dark, but more importantly see how God has overcome that darkness through the Light and life of Jesus Christ.

**Genesis 3:1–19** — <sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God actually say, ‘You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?’” <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.’” <sup>4</sup> But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. <sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to the man and said to him, “Where are you?” <sup>10</sup> And he said, “I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup> He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” <sup>12</sup> The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

<sup>14</sup> The Lord God said to the serpent, “Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; **he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**”

<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said, “I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you.”

<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, ‘You shall not eat of it,’ cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; <sup>18</sup> thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. <sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”

Did you hear the different words that describe darkness? Before Adam rebelled and we all fell into sin, the garden flourished, there was no brokenness, and most importantly there was life-giving

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communion with God himself. In v. 8 God was in the midst of the Garden. His blessing was present Adam and Eve. But after they broke God's commandment, the vocabulary is very different. Beginning in v. 14 these words show up: cursed, enmity, pain, thorns and thistles, sweat of your face. In place of life-giving communion with God there is now spiritual death, physical pain and brokenness, relational brokenness — both vertically between them and God, and horizontally between them, and immediately passing it on to the next generation when one of their sons murders the other. The Creation itself is now under a curse and does not produce as God designed in creation. Darkness is a metaphor for all these curses and consequences. V. 19 is culmination of what God said would happen when they disobeyed: they would die. you will “return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” And what I feel as the greatest heartache shows up in v. 24. It's the separation Ephesians 2 is talking about: God drove the man out of the garden. Just a few verses earlier the man and woman had perfect communion with God — there was no separation. Now they are driven out, and an angel with a flaming sword is posted there to keep them out. Sometime after that we find them digging the first grave in bible. It's a grave for their son — their son who was murdered by their other son. That is darkness.

Suppose you were to encounter Adam as he throws the last spade full of dirt on the grave of his son and wipes the muddy sweat off of his brow. And you say, “Adam, how are you? How do you feel?” “You want to know how I feel? I feel rotten. That's how I feel. What have you got for me?”

Beloved, we may well encounter a hundred Adams between now and Christmas. They may hide how rotten they feel. And they may feel rotten and not even know why they feel that way... But as we meet them, and talk to them, and care for them, and maybe even weep over them, do we have anything for them? Answer: Yes! And if it were Adam, himself, we could point him to the thin beam of light that breaks through God's judgment against sin in v. 15. God speaking to the serpent, Satan: “I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; **he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.**” In just five words — he shall bruise your head — all the darkness that has just engulfed the entire whole world through Adam's cosmic treason is undone in the first telling of the Good News found in the life of Jesus, who is the Light of men. That cryptic phrase describes God's plan of redemption, which is the head-crushing Savior conquering the prince of darkness, destroying sin, defeating death, and resurrecting Adam's race from the grave it deserves.

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**Romans 5:12** tells us, “sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” That’s rotten! What have you got for me?” This is what I’ve got: More that all the pain, and cursing, and brokenness and wreckage of sin and darkness and hopelessness and separation from God — more than all of that... much more does the grace of God and the free gift by the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abound for many! Jesus is the promised 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam who resurrects and restores what the first Adam destroyed and killed!

The first telling of the Good News — the odd statement that Eve’s son would overthrow darkness — is now fulfilled in Christ. It is the mystery of the incarnation. The Creator condescends to come in the form of the created in order establish the New Creation! As we read in the Call to Worship, John puts it like this in the prologue to his Gospel account:

**John 1:1** — In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. <sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

“I’m rotten! I don’t feel like there’s any hope for me. I’m a miserable wretch. It just all seems so futile and empty. And if there’s a God, he must be a million miles away. What have you got for me?” Everything! I have everything for you! I have good news of great joy! Unto you has been born a Savior, who is Christ the Lord! All the brokenness, all the pain, all the cursing, all the darkness of sin and death — all of it — is undone by Jesus, who is the Light of the World. It’s true that your sin has driven you away from communion with God. **But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.** (Ephesians 2:13) To all who receive him, who believe in his name, he gives the right to become children of God. (John 1:12)

“Oh man! That sounds so good. But I am so full of sin and darkness!”

The glorious Lord Jesus, the only Son from the Father, is full of grace and truth. From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace! Look away from your sin, look away to Jesus, the Light of the World!

Oh, Saints! The world is full of those who are outside of Christ. They live in the darkness of hopelessness and separation from God. Sin is producing the only thing sin can produce: death and cursing and brokenness on a thousand levels. And do we have anything for them? Isn’t it time for the

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people who walk, and shop, and curse in darkness to live and love and in the light of Christ? We have the hope of the Gospel of Jesus for them! And it is our joyful assignment and privilege to say, “Yes! Freedom from sin, the undoing of the curse, healing of broken relationships, nearness and communion with God, eternal life is found in Jesus Christ, and in Christ alone! He is the Second Adam, the better Adam who reinstates us in God’s love, who crushes the head of the enemy of your soul.

Christian, can you be timid or silent in this season of light? Consider the **privilege**, the **purpose**, and the **promotion** you have been given!

You have the **privilege of being adopted** out of Adam’s cursed race and made a child of King Jesus! Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us that we should be called the children of God! (1 John 3:1) In love God predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace (Ephesians 1:4b–6a). You were a child of wrath, but now you adopted as a son of God. (Galatians 4:5)

You have been given **purpose to proclaim**, and spend your on what has eternal value rather than squandering life on what does not last. **1 Peter 2:9–10** — **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.** As recipients of his mercy, as a royal priesthood, as his people, let’s joyfully proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of death and darkness so that others may find hope and life in Christ.

We cannot remain silent in light of the **privilege of our adoption**, the **purpose to proclaim** the praise of the Lord Jesus, and especially because we have been given a stunning **promotion to ambassador**: We are **promoted from those** who were apart from God to **those who are God’s ambassadors**. **2 Corinthians 5:17–20** — Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

God is on mission reconciling the world to himself through Christ, the Light of the World, and we are promoted to ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. To those we encounter,

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those separated from God, without hope, under the church, dying in their sin, we must implore them on behalf of Christ, as his ambassadors, to be reconciled to God. If you remain outside of Christ this morning, hear this message of hope — the only message of hope. Separation from God will not heal itself, and you cannot improve it. What is separation in this temporary life turns into eternal separation unless you turn to Christ, who made peace with God by the blood of his cross and brought us near who were once far off. There is no other remedy. There is no other hope. There is no other light.

Saints, it is the season of Light, the season of Hope, and we are children of light, messengers of the hope of the Gospel, and ambassadors for the King. Let not one soul we encounter be mired in hopelessness and darkness because we had nothing for them. We are to be angels — messengers — of the good news of life and light. To quote Charles Spurgeon:

If sinners be damned, at least let them leap to Hell over our dead bodies. And if they perish, let them perish with our arms wrapped about their knees, imploring them to stay. If Hell must be filled, let it be filled in the teeth of our exertions, and let not one go unwarned and unprayed for.

### PRAY

GOSPEL THREAD: Think of 2 or 3 or 4 people who do not know the Lord, and so are separated from God and without hope. Perhaps family members, neighbors, work associates, classmates, those you play with, or go to the gym with, or eat at Chick-fil-a with, or ride the bus with... 2, 3, or 4 names. Do you have them? Write them down. Over the next week, begin praying for them. Beginning in 2022 we are each going ask God to pair with someone with whom we can read the Gospel of John. You don't have to be a theologian. You don't have to memorize anything. There's no sales pitch. There's course to go through. We are simply going to ask someone to read the Gospel of John with us. We'll take 4–6 weeks to do it. Perhaps meeting at Starbucks, or your kitchen table, or the lobby area of Planet Fitness, or the club house, or the break room at work... God helping us, and walking as children of light in joyful obedience as his ambassadors, we will see people respond to the Gospel simply by reading God's word. This Friday at the banquet we will have a number of things for you. One will be a gift to you from the church. I'll personally have a gift for each family... and you'll have get a small gift bag or two with a mason jar of hot chocolate that you can give to someone with an invitation to make a 6 week or so commitment to read the bible together once or twice a week. Don't let the enemy of your squelch the hope of salvation found in Jesus. The is our privilege as adopted children, our purpose as his royal priesthood, and is consistent with the promotion we have received to be his ambassadors.