

The Light of Life – Pt. 1
Genesis 1:3, John 1:1-5
The Light of Life is Bringing Light and Life to the World

The Old Testament and New Testament begin with two stories that carry a similar theme and expression of God's creation... In Genesis 1:3, you read the first words ever spoken by God... *LET THERE BE LIGHT*. And it was... **God spoke light and life into creation.** And then, John writes to begin his Gospel account: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. ³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. ⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.* Two expressions of how God created...and each time, we see light and life living together and acting together and moving together to bring about God's amazing plan to fruition into the world. **Today begins the season of Advent – and it all is leading up to Christmas and the birth of Jesus...**and during this time we're going to sing all the Christmas songs and anticipate the arrival of the light of the world...Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary. And I'm sure we'll sing at some point the song "Hark the Herald Angels Sing" ... which says, "Light and life to all He brings." And I think that is one of the greatest expressions of God and this season... God is bringing, from the very beginning, light and life.

But that's not the only time He brings this. **Advent and Christmas are a reminder that JESUS is always bringing light and life into the darkest places and into our darkest places in life.**

Remember, Jesus is alive...He's still doing work among His people. And for that we praise God...and today – God is still bringing about light and life through the light of life...Jesus Christ. One author writes... "Advent always begins in the dark" ...the darkness of the world and the darkness of a people lost, looking for a savior.

So, as we begin this new series today – I want you to think about something:

Where in the world are you experiencing darkness? It's not a hard experiment...because the reality is that darkness is all around us. **We might say it different ways – darkness is hardship, trials, evil, pain, suffering, hurt...but each of them expresses a sense of darkness.** Where is that for you? As a way to help you see this...**I want you to think about darkness kind of like a bullseye that you're in the middle of.** On the **outside ring is what's going on around us.** Wars, rumors of war, the taking of innocent life, the news, economic distress...all that kind of stuff – is on the outer ring – it's all around you, and you just kind of live in it...it's a general darkness that the world experiences outside of your control. And then there's **the inner ring...that's the stuff that happens to the people around you.** Family, friends, loved ones...situations they're going through, things you're praying about, hurt they're experiencing...that's a darkness that you feel and that surrounds you. And then there's **the bullseyes...which darkness that's happening to you.** That's the stuff inside that no one sees...or only your wife or your kids see, know about, or receive the brunt of. That's the stuff that, as Paul described...is the fight, not against flesh and blood – but against principalities of darkness and evil.

So, where is the struggle of darkness for you? Wherever it is, today is a day to

rejoice...because the light of life...is bringing light and life...to the darkness...and that's where Advent begins...in the darkness. And as John reminds us...to this day – and forevermore – the darkness will not overcome it.

Now for some of you, today, this will be a difficult thing to believe. Because you've experienced darkness for a long time. Maybe you've become cynical...the world around you has hardened your heart. And so, "light in the darkness" sounds good...but it's just not something you can believe. Or for you...it's one thing after another with the people around you...and though you have seen God bring about light and life in circumstances that you didn't understand...you may be wondering – when is it ever going to end. Or inside – you may be wrestling with something that has been going on for years and year...no matter how hard you've tried to stop, get rid of, not pay attention to, change...whatever. So when we talk about this idea of God...and who He is and what He does – you may believe it – but you just haven't experienced it to the full extent that God is working and moving in this space.

I think that's when we have to really lean into John's expression in v. 5 – the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. I like how the New Living Translation says it...it says: The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it. The Common English says: The light keeps shining in the dark, and darkness has never put it out. The Message says: The Life-Light blazed out of the darkness; the darkness couldn't put it out. **The reality is this...no matter how much darkness YOU experience...and no matter how much darkness is around us – NOTHING can extinguish the light of Jesus. NO ONE and NO THING can surpass the all powerful king of Kings and lord of Lords – who if you just give open a pin sized hole< to him in those dark places – the light will FLOOD in and illuminate everything.**

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I remember once going with **my granddad to a cave in Alabama** that marketed being able to show you what TOTAL DARKNESS was. So before we went down into the cave they made us turn all of our phones off and take off any digital watches to ensure no light was in the cave. But my granddad was wearing one of those old timex gold watches – and he had forgotten that it had a glow in the dark feature on the arms of the watch. So we go down, and they slowly start lowering to lights to total darkness. And granddad had his hands in his pocket...and as they finally got to the "total darkness" phase – he pulled his hand out of his pocket and his watch lit up the whole area around him. And everyone turned and looked at him and he put his hand back in his pocket again.

I remember that like it was yesterday. And there's a sermon in that story too – because in any other setting – that watch wouldn't have illuminated. **But when there was total darkness – the light was powerful.** And the truth we see in scripture and in life is this – **THE DARKER IT IS, THE MORE POWERFUL LIGHT BECOMES.** And you don't have to go to a cave to find this out – just take a look at the difference in the night's sky when you're in a city, vs. when you're in the country. In the city – the city lights drown out the lights of the moon and the stars. But find yourself in the country – you can literally see with great detail the edge of the Milky Way and stars and galaxies billions of light years away.

So, if you're in a place like that – or someone you know is in a place like that – or the world when you look around seems like a place like that – remember...**the darker it gets...the more powerful the light becomes.** And that's why we need Jesus – because no matter how dark it gets...and the more dark it gets...there's no darkness that will overcome the light of Jesus.

But it's not just light – it's light AND life to all he brings. It's important to remember – that even though it may seem like the darkness around us is growing darker and darker...**Christ is the overcomer.** He gives hope and life in the face of death, pain, and suffering...those dark things. **Life is why Jesus came at Christmas – to give the world life. He came to bring us life...and that life was the light of all humankind.**

In the Gospel of John – Jesus carries this theme with him all throughout. The word life is mentioned 35 times throughout John...and the verb "live" or 15 times. John would speak light and life in the beginning of the Gospel and proclaim the reason for writing the Gospel at the very end of the book was ³¹...*that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.* Jesus would say in chapter 5 that he regretted that men would not come to him even after knowing about the testimony from the Scriptures about the messiah – so that they could have life (5:40). He declared that he came to offer abundant to the world in John 10:10...which is a great story that illustrates the difference between darkness and light – the thief, who is Satan, and Jesus. Jesus says that he is the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE (14:6).

Jesus brings both light AND life. **Which means that, in hopeless situations – Jesus brings hope. Where there is sorrow, Jesus brings joy. Where there is addiction and captivity, Jesus brings freedom and breaks chains. Where there is brokenness, Jesus brings about restoration. Where there is anger, bitterness, and hurt...Jesus brings about forgiveness, a change of heart, and peace.** He doesn't want us to stay in the dark...he wants to shine and bring about life in the places where death or destruction or chaos or turmoil is the reality.

It also means that Jesus wants to be our **never-ending source of life.** A life that is, as Paul would describe, *"hidden in Christ"*. It's a life that is opposite of what is to come for all who do not receive the gift of life in Jesus – **destruction, condemnation, and death.** Simply put – darkness is the absence of light...and death is the absence of life. John 3:16 reminds us that...*God loved the world so much...that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish...but have eternal life.* **It's the simple reminder that if Jesus is absent from our life – then the life and light that Jesus brings does not exist within us.**

Christmas brings about one of the greatest opportunity to proclaim this. It's not about Christmas trees and presents...**Christmas is about salvation! Why in the world did Jesus come to earth? To save the world and the point us in the direction of God,** who is creating and bringing about life and light! There's no greater time to recognize the miracle that Christmas is - God came down to rescue His people. He came down to shine in the darkness so that we would follow Him and give our lives to Him...to walk in His direction. The prophet Isaiah says, *"A people*

*walking in darkness have seen a great **light**. For to us a child is born..."* The gift of God is that life and light came into the world, so that we might walk OUT OF Darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9)

1 John 5:5-7 says, ⁵This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: **God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.** ⁶If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. ⁷**But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.**

So, that's where we land today and begin our focus over the next few weeks. God created...and spoke light. John described it as the light shining in the darkness that will never go out. And for me and you today – we live with the reality and the truth...**that the Light of Life is bringing light and life into your life every day.**

Communion.