

Rev. Lex DeLong / General Adult

2025 Christmas / Christmas / John 1:9–14

Despite the world's offerings, the True Light grants the power of divine transformation to those who intentionally clear space in their crowded hearts to receive Him.

Our Text today, **John 1:9–13**, is a theological bridge between the literal story of the manger (no room) and the spiritual application (welcoming the Light).

The Main Idea

Despite the world's offerings, the True Light grants the power of divine transformation to those who intentionally clear space in their crowded hearts to receive Him.

Introduction: The Incognito God

C.S. Lewis, in his book *Letters to Malcolm*, penned a haunting observation about the reality of our spiritual lives. He wrote:

"We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito." C. S. Lewis

"Incognito." That is a strange word to use for the Creator of the Universe. We tend to think that if God were real, He would be undeniable—like a thunderstorm. We think if we can't feel God, it must be because He is distant. But Lewis suggests—and the Apostle John agrees—that the problem is not His absence. The problem is that our world is already "crowded," and it crowds our attention so much that we risk completely missing His presence.

We live in a noisy age. Every day, the world brings us a thousand different **offerings**. It piles up clutter: the clutter of notifications, the clutter of anxiety, the clutter of ambition. We are so stuffed with this "world's clutter" that the Creator Himself can walk right past us, "incognito," and we miss Him completely.

In **John 1:9-14**, the Apostle paints a picture of a world that was made by God, yet was too full of its own "stuff" to see or recognize that He was there.

But John offers a promise: The True Light doesn't just shine; He cuts through the crowd.

But before He does, there is the problem mentioned in John 1:9-11. The problem is that...

I. The world misses the True Light because it is captivated by the Flicker of the Counterfeit (John 1:9-11)

This is the conflict between the Eternal Person of Jesus and the temporary "Flicker" of the world, but there is hope because...

A. The presence of the Genuine exposes the emptiness of the Counterfeit (v. 9)

Centuries before John wrote these words, the prophet Isaiah promised, "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light" (Isaiah 9:2). The world had been waiting in the dark for a guide.

John declares that the wait is over. The "True Light" is not a metaphor, it is no longer just a hope; **it is a Person**. Jesus is the Genuine—the uncreated, eternal Source, **The "True Light"** that Isaiah foresaw and John speaks of here.

Today, the world offers us "Counterfeit Lights" that try to mimic Jesus' glory. These "Counterfeit Lights" are Flickers—the flicker of political power, the flicker of viral fame, the flicker of material wealth. They flash and buzz, demanding attention and training us to think about and give in to them all day long, every day, but unlike the Great Light of Isaiah, they eventually burn out and another replaces them.

You see...

B. We are blinded not by darkness, but by the frequency of the flicker (v. 10)

The Text: "...yet the world did not know Him."

The world system (Kosmos) keeps us in a state of constant distraction. We are so mesmerized by the flicker of the immediate (what is happening right now) that we miss the steady presence of the Eternal Light, Jesus.

Illustration: The Joshua Bell Experiment

The Story: On a cold January morning in 2007, a man stood in a Washington D.C. subway station and played the violin for 45 minutes. He played six of the most intricate pieces ever written by Bach. During that time, approximately 1,100 people swept past him, most of them on their way to work.

The man was **Joshua Bell**, one of the best musicians in the world. He was playing a **Stradivarius violin worth \$3.5 million at that time**. Two days earlier, he had sold out a theater in Boston where seats averaged \$100.

In the subway, amidst the "flicker" of the morning rush, only **seven people** stopped to listen. The rest were too consumed by the "world's clutter"—their schedules, their urgency, their notifications—to recognize the beauty standing right in front of them. He made a mere \$32 in change during those 45 minutes.

The commuters were driven by the **Counterfeit Clutter** of their schedule—the urgent need to keep moving, to check the box, to beat the clock. In the midst of that frenzy, *True Beauty* was playing. They chose the twitchy, artificial flicker of "busyness" over the steady, beautiful reality of presence. In the midst of that frenzy, True Beauty (a reflection of the Creator) was playing.

Often times, that is our struggle too, when it comes to feeling, seeing, or sensing the Lord's presence.

C. We often tragically substitute religious symbols (flashy flickers) for the Savior Himself (v. 11)

The Text: "...His own people did not receive Him."

"His own" people had the Temple and all its "flickering" things, but **they missed the God of the Temple**.

At times we do the same when we let the "Flicker" of religious activity (events, programs, noise) or the offerings of this world be substitutes for the quiet, steady relationship with the Person, **Jesus Christ**.

The world misses the True Light because it is captivated by the Flicker of the Counterfeit.

Then why do we struggle so to see, feel, or experience the presence of Jesus in our daily life?

Here is the point that the Holy Spirit, through John, was trying to get across.

II. We experience the True Light only when we intentionally clear space to receive Him (John 1:12)

This is the shift from the passive flicker (clutter) of this world to actively making space for His presence in our hearts and minds.

A. The invitation is open to anyone willing to stop chasing the flicker and make space for and receive Him (v. 12a)

"But to all who did receive Him..." (This is the focus past the clutter of the world's flicker, so we can see the light of Jesus).

B. True belief requires turning our eyes from the flicker of notifications to His Name (v. 12b)

The literal Meaning of "Believed" (pisteuō) implies placing one's full weight of trust into all that "His name" represents about Him. That requires us to turn away from the clutter and actively look for Jesus.

Visual Illustration: The Lock Screen Avalanche

"Think of your soul like the lock screen of a phone. In the quiet of the morning, it starts peaceful—clear and receptive. But then, the 'World's Clutter' begins to ping.

Ding! A Breaking News alert offers you fear.

Ding! A Social Media notification offers you envy.

Ding! A Work Email offers you stress and a marketing notification reminds you of what you don't have that might make your life better.

Ding! One by one, these banners stack up. Eventually, the stack gets so high that you can no longer see the background image at all.

The beauty is still there in the background—just like the fact that God is still present despite the clutter and flickering of the world—but He has been completely buried in our minds by the urgent clutter of the immediate.

Let me give you three habits you can adopt that can help you look past the flicker and noise of the world and by believing in the name of Jesus, see His light.

Three Habits for Overcoming the “flicker” (noise) of the world:

1. ++**The “First Light” Rule:** Do not touch the “clutter” (phone/screen) until you have spent 15 minutes in the “True Light” (Reading the Bible).
2. ++**The “Analog Hour”:** Designate the first hour of each day as a screen-free zone during which time you can let the Word dwell.
3. ++**The “Breathe Prayer”:** At noon, stop for 60 seconds. Pray: “Lord help me empty my hands of this clutter, and open them to receive Your grace.”

When you actively steer your attention away from the counterfeit flicker of the world and look for Jesus, you will start your day seeing Him, looking for Him, and feeling His presence.

You see, ...

III. When we make room for the Light, He grants us the power of divine transformation (John 1:13-14)

The result of our focus? —The “Right” to become children of God.

A. He grants us the legal authority to claim a new identity (v. 12c)

He gives the "right" (exousia) to become children of God. This is a **legal** change in status.

B. This transformation is birthed by God's power, not by human striving (v. 13)

John dismantles human effort. This transformation is not "of blood" or "will of man." It is a **monergistic** work of God.

Our part only comes after His transformation, when we then cooperate with the work He has and is doing in us. That is not the transformation part, that is the sanctification part.

If we have made the choice to "believe" in His name, believe in all that His name represent about Him, then we **ARE** transformed and we now have the legal right to be children of God.

As children of God...

C. The Word tabernacles within us to display His glory through our lives (v. 14)

Literal Meaning: "Dwelt" (skēnoō) means "to tabernacle."

When we clear the clutter, the "tabernacle" of God takes up residence in our lives. We stop reflecting the artificial flicker of the world and start radiating the glory of the Father.

Conclusion

We talked earlier about a D.C. subway station, watching people rush past a masterpiece because they were chasing the clutter of 'the urgent.' Now we must look at the 'subway station' of our own hearts. Is it quiet? Is there room for the Master? Or is it so packed with the world's clutter that God is walking through your life — "incognito?"

Invitation "I am going to ask everyone to bow their heads. We are creating a moment of 'cleared space' — of quiet right now.

1. For the one who needs to Receive Him for the first time: You may now understand that the lights you have been chasing are counterfeits. If you want the True Light, pray something like this in your heart:

'Lord Jesus, my hands are full of things that cannot save me. Today, I give them to you, I surrender them. I believe You are the True Light. I receive You now. Cut through the clutter and turn on the light' in me.

2. For the Believer who needs to Clear Space: You are a child of God, but you are living like a distracted commuter. The 'Lock Screen' of your heart is full. If you are ready to push back the noise—to start the 'First Light' rule or the 'Analog Hour', what John tells the church of Ephesus about how they need to return to their first love—pray, *'Lord, I am making room.' Take all that these hands respond to all day, every day, and slow them down enough that they only respond to You.'*

As you go into a crowded world, may you go with a quiet heart. May the Word dwell richly in you. May you distinguish the Flicker from the True Light. And may you be a light that the darkness cannot hide.