

Jesus Is: Jesus is the Light of God John 1:4-5

Intro:

As Pastor Eric said last Sunday we are working through the Prologue of John's Gospel for our Advent series. Last Sunday Eric covered vv. 1-3 and we saw that Jesus is the Word of God, the very God Himself who created everything.

This morning I will cover vv. 4-5 and we will see in the text that Jesus is the Life and Light of God for all mankind. There are two major themes in vv. 4-5 that are in the prologue that are woven throughout John's Gospel: the themes of light and life and to a lesser degree, the theme of darkness. Here are my points this morning:

- I. Jesus is the Life of God (v. 4)
- II. Jesus is the light of God (v. 4)
- III. Jesus is the victorious life and light of God (v. 5)

I. Jesus is the Life of God (v. 4) "*in him was life*"

What does John mean when he says, "*in him was life*?" As Pastor Eric said last Sunday John is establishing that Jesus is God in the flesh. As the prologue unfolds, we learn that Jesus as the Word of God is the exegesis of God Himself. Do you want to know what God is like then you must look at Jesus, as He is revealed in Scripture, for He is God.

When John says, "*in him [Jesus] was life*" he was connecting Jesus to Creation's story. John, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is connecting Christ coming into the world with Creation's story and he is using the themes of life, light and darkness to help us see it.

But let's go back to the phases, "*in him was life*". The life that was in Jesus was not just any life. He is not simply saying that Jesus was alive. He is saying Jesus possessed a very specific kind of life. He possessed an eternal life, a spiritual life. He is saying that Jesus possessed the same life as God AND because He possesses that kind of life He can give life just as He gave life when He created the world. Think about it, Jesus the Creator God, who created life at creation, is still creating life. He is still giving eternal spiritual life to people.

Application: Stay with me. Listen. Why is this important?

- **It is important because dead people need life.** Those who are spiritually dead need the life of God breathed into them. Without Jesus giving us life we will not have life. Only God can raise the dead to life and Jesus does just that for His people. **Ephesians 2** reminds us that we were dead in our trespasses and sin but in Christ we are made alive by grace we have been saved.

Friend if you are here this morning and you think Christmas is just a nice holiday where we exchange gifts and enjoy family then you are missing the point. Christmas is the time we reflect, remember and celebrate that Jesus the Son of God, the very God Himself humbled Himself, came into a world as infant born to a lowly virgin mother. He came into a world where death reigned and by His death on the cross and resurrection from the dead He defeated death and now gives life to those who have trusted Him by faith.

John 14:6 Jesus says He is the Life and no one comes to the Father except through Him. Have you trusted Him today as your life? Receive the ultimate gift from God Himself this Christmas, the gift of eternal life in Christ Jesus.

- **Brother and sister in Christ, we need to remember that we have been given life by Jesus and are called to join Him in His rescue mission to see Him create life in those who are spiritually dead.** We come here each and every Sunday to be reminded of the life given to us and to celebrate and to enjoy life so gracious given to us. When this service is

over today it is not the closing but the refreshment of our lives by the risen Christ. He renews our lives, our calling and sends us out to be on mission with Him. We take the life-giving message of the gospel into the dark places of life.

TRANSITION: This leads us to v. 4.

II. Jesus is the light of God (v. 4)

Listen to v. 4 again, *"In him was life, and the life was the light of men."* Light is the second major theme in John's Gospel. It is amazing how Creation's account parallels the opening of John's Gospel.

But here in v. 4, we find another major difference. In Genesis, light was created but it is not created in John's Gospel. Jesus is the God of Creation and He is the Light. The sun was the light in the creation account but in v. 4 light takes on new meaning and instead of focusing on the physical light of the sun we learn that the light of Christ is to be the center of the solar system of our lives.

What we find in Scripture is that the physical properties of light find their spiritual fulfillment in Christ. So from the time we learn about light in **Genesis 1** it begins to take on new meaning as God's plan progressively unfolds.

- In **Exodus** we learn that the glory of God is like light.
- Then in **Psalm 27:1** King David writes that *the LORD is his light and his salvation.*
- **Psalm 36:9** says, *"For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light."*
- **Psalm 119:105** says that the word of God is light, *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path."*
- Then in **Psalm 104:1-2** light is what God dresses Himself with, *"Bless the Lord, O my soul! O Lord my God, you are very great! You are clothed with splendor and majesty, ² covering yourself with light as with a garment."*
- John writes in **1 John 1:5**, *"God is light; in him there is no darkness at all."*
- The ultimate fulfillment of the image of light found in Scripture is in **John 8:12** where Jesus says He is the Light of the world. All of the meaning of the image of Light has been pointing to its fullness of meaning in Christ. Jesus is the fullness of the revelation of God as Light.

Application: What does it mean that Jesus is the Light of God? Well . . . if there is light then there must be darkness or we would not need light. If Jesus is the Light of God then there must be a spiritual darkness.

Spiritual darkness affects us in two primary ways: First what we learn is that since the Fall of Adam in Garden of Eden we have all been born into spiritual darkness, which is also called spiritual death. Second Christians still wrestle with the darkness when they forget the gospel.

First: The sad reality is we are all born into spiritual darkness (spiritually dead). Spiritual darkness is the same as spiritual blindness or spiritual death. What this means is that if Christ is not our Light, then it means that we are stumbling through life in the dark. Jesus said in **John 12:44-47**, *"Whoever believes in me, believes not in me but in him who sent me. ⁴⁵ And whoever sees me sees him who sent me. ⁴⁶ I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness. ⁴⁷ If anyone hears my words and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world."*

Is there any hope for being in spiritual darkness? Yes there is!! Jesus came into the world as light! Do you want to be rescued from the darkness? Believe in Jesus. Trust Jesus. Turn from your sin and to Christ as your Light.

Second: The second way to be in darkness is to forget the gospel. Here is what I mean. Even Christians have periods of life where it seems the darkness will not lift. Yes they know the Light of Christ but the difficulties and struggles and afflictions of life have caused them to seem like they are in a dark prison.

John Bunyan spoke of this in his book *The Pilgrim's Progress*. He told the story of how Christian and Hopeful were caught by the Giant Despair and trapped in the dungeon of Doubting Castle. The story goes that Christian and Hopeful were traveling along the King's Highway and saw a meadow and decided to travel through it because the path looked easier. They soon lost their way, got tired and took a rest. Not long after that the Giant Despair fell upon them and beat them until they were almost dead and threw them in his dungeon in Doubting Castle. He would not let them out and would regularly go down to the Pilgrims and beat them within an inch of their lives. Finally after a long period of doubt, despair and depression the Pilgrims began to pray and sing and call upon the Lord. Then Christian said as someone half amazed, *"What a fool I am to lay here in a stinking dungeon, when I could have just as easily walk at liberty! In my coat, next to my heart, I have a Key called Promise. I'm persuaded it will open any lock in Doubting Castle."* *"That's good news, Brother"* said Hopeful. *"Take it out and try."* He pulled out the key and the chains fell off and the bolt on the door unlocked. They moved toward the outer gate and it unlocked the gate as well. As the giant tried to chase them his bones and muscles were weak and he fell into a fit and could not pursue the Pilgrims.¹

Christian and Hopeful experienced the darkness that some Christians go through in their lives. Doubt, despair and depression press in and beat on the heart, mind and soul of the believer. It is a dark place in which to struggle. Despair is like a giant that regularly storms into his or her life and beats on him or them until they feel black and blue and near death. Many Christians experience this regular beating of the darkness of depression like Hopeful and Christian.

What does a believer do when the darkness will not lift? What we must do is continue to pray, sing and seek the Lord. We must be continually reminded of the Key of Promise that unlocks the dungeon of Doubting Castle. It is the promise of the Gospel that sets us free for our Hero has overcome the darkness and it is in the One who killed the Giant Despair that we must trust.

TRANSITION: This leads me to our last point

III. Jesus is the victorious life and light of God (v. 5)

Darkness is the third image in the prologue of John's Gospel. John is still connecting his prologue creation's story and here we find the shadow of the Fall. In creation's story we find the creation we find light and darkness as the normal part of creation but then in **Genesis 3** we learn that Adam and Eve sinned and death came into the world and darkness took on the opposite meaning of life and light.

The image of light was emblematic of the glory of God, of truth, of beauty and righteousness but darkness took on the meaning of death, evil, sadness and heartache. It is no accident that when we are struggling or know someone struggling we may refer to it by saying, *"They are in a dark place, a hard place."* Darkness reminds us of being lost, confusion and things that are scary.

Darkness is opposite of the light. It is like they are in conflict with one another. Light represents the knowledge of God and stands for warmth and goodness but darkness represents coldness, spiritual ignorance and reminds us the world is perishing. Light leads us in good paths but darkness is the realm of the lost and the blind. Light brings life but darkness brings death.

Yet the struggle between darkness and light is not like the cultic understanding of the *yen and the yang*. It is not dualism where the darkness and light are on equal footing and no one knows who will win.

It is not the story of Jedi and the Sith where the Jedi is the representative of the light of the force and is in conflict with the Sith on the dark side. There is no equal struggle here.

¹ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, 147-155.

While John's Gospel reminds us of the struggle between light and darkness that is as old as creation, he is doing more than simply reminding of the Victorious Hero of the story. This is the Hero that has been promised since creation. Now the Warrior of Light has come to do battle with the darkness and defeat the darkness once and for all.

This is the language we find in v. 5. Listen to v. 5 again, put your finger on the verse, "*The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*" This verse is translated two ways: (1) "*the darkness has not understood it*" or "*the darkness has not overcome it.*" The translation *understood* is not a bad translation but it does not get at the force of the word. The Greek word is *katalambánō*² and the meaning and idea of the word is that the darkness does not overpower the light, does not defeat the light. It cannot not stand in the presence of light, it must flee.

I love what Paul Tripp says in his advent book, Come Let Us Adore Him, "*When you look into that manger in Bethlehem, you need to see a warrior. Jesus came to do battle with the Enemy and to defeat him for our sake. He would defeat the Devil in his life, he would defeat him on the cross, and he would defeat him by the empty tomb. Each victory was for us so that we would be able to resist the Devil's deceptions and temptations in our lives. Because Jesus came to defeat the Devil, a face-to-face battle with the Devil was inevitable. The life of the baby in the manger would march toward a moment when the devil would throw everything in his arsenal toward Jesus. All of history hinged on that battle.*"³

Jesus is the revelation of the Light of the glory of God. He has been manifested in the flesh and He is the Hero of the story who defeats the darkness. **Hebrews 1:3** says that Jesus is the *radiance of the glory of God*. He is the brilliance of the display of the very life of God that defeats the darkness.

But how . . . how did our Hero, Jesus Christ, ultimately defeat the darkness? As the gospel story unfolds what we learn is that when Jesus died on the cross, the darkness fell over the land. It seems the Light of the World had been extinguished. It looked like the enemy had finally won and the darkness would overpower the light because after darkness fell over the land the final act was the when the darkness of the tomb engulfed the body of Christ and a stone rolled over the entrance so no light could get in.

But this did not defeat the light of Christ. The darkness of the enemy cannot defeat the Light.

- The Light of Christ *katalambánō(ed)* defeated the darkness when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day.
- The defeat is made all the greater when Jesus, the Light of the World, descended into darkness of this world in order to rescue His people and bring them into His marvelous light.

Conclusion

1. Friend if you are here this morning and you have never trusted in Christ as your Savior, your Hero, then receive the ultimate gift this Christmas by trusting in Christ. Jesus will lead you out of the darkness of sin and despair into His marvelous light. This was the experience of the great hymn writer, Charles Wesley, when he wrote the hymn, *And Can It Be*:

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,

Fast and bound in sin and nature's night:

Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,

I woke, the dungeon flamed with light:

My chains fell off, my heart was free,

² Simply pronouncing this Greek word sounds like violence.

³ Paul David Tripp, *Come Let Us Adore Him: A Daily Advent Devotional*, 115.

*I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.*⁴

If you hear the Savior's voice calling you this morning, follow Him. He is calling you out of the darkness into His marvelous light.

2. Brother and sister in Christ if it seems like the darkness will not lift for you because you are trapped in Doubting Castle by the Giant Despair please talk to another believer who will pray for you. Talk to Pastor Eric or me or one of our elders so we can help you through this period.
3. Finally Christian, Jesus said He was the Light of the World and in **Matthew 5:14** He called those who follow Him the light of the world. We do not take His place but we gather as little lights in churches that might be called Light Houses in this dark world. If Jesus is your light, how is he using you to penetrate the darkness of this world?

⁴ Charles Wesley, *And Can It Be That I Should Gain*, 1738.