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The Light of the World
John 1.4-5
Series: Songs of the Incarnation
December 24, 2021
Christmas Eve Service
The Village Church at Shell Point

- I. Text
 - A. John 1:1–5 (ESV) —
 - 1. 1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 - 2. 2 He was in the beginning with God.
 - 3. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.
 - 4. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
 - 5. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- II. The Word as Light
 - A. Major theme in John’s gospel, and in all his writings, is light
 - 1. Here it concerns the Word become flesh, the Lord Jesus
 - 2. The Word is light
 - B. John 1:4 (ESV) — 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.
- III. God as Light
 - A. And just as John has evoked images of the creation narrative in Genesis
 - 1. Compelling his Jewish reader to make the connection
 - 2. Once again, he compels us to see Deity in this Word become flesh
 - B. For in the Bible, it is God who is identified with light
 - 1. Psalm 36:9 (ESV) — 9 For with you is the fountain of life; in your light do we see light.
 - a. In this Psalm – the very same two themes that John introduces in his gospel – life and light – are seen as essential elements of the Deity Himself
 - 2. Psalm 104:1–2 (ESV) — 1 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, stretching out the heavens like a tent.
 - C. John himself expresses the characteristic of light as integral to God’s nature
 - 1. 1 John 1:5 (ESV) — 5 ... God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.
- IV. Qualities of Light
 - A. Light is wonderfully apt to capture the essence of the “Godness” in God (Piper)
 - B. E. M. Blaiklock (New Zealand scholar):
 - 1. God is light. The image is satisfyingly complete. Light *penetrates* the unimaginable depths of space, far beyond the limits of human vision. In all

the vastness of the great globe of vanished millennia into which the telescope can probe, the gleaming galaxies float, or tell in the light how they once floated, when the effulgence which we see today began its endless journey.

2. Without light there is no *vision*, no view of reality, no confident journeying, no *growth* save of chill and evil things, no *health*, no *life*. ...
3. But light, like God, *exists by itself*, apart from that which it illuminates.... Light on earth is a *medium*, a means by which we see this and that object. It picks up and *reveals* the loveliness of shape and color. But light exists by itself and apart from that which it gilds and glorifies. It is an *environment*, a condition, a *wonder* which fills and floods the whole immensity of space.

C. The image of light is rich with wonder and illumination so that it wonderfully expresses the nature of God

1. And the nature of God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ
2. The Word become flesh
 - a. Flesh in the person of the baby in the manger
 - b. Flesh in the person of the One who grew and taught and healed
 - c. Flesh in the person of the One who suffered and died
 - d. Flesh in the person of the One who rose from the dead in the flesh
 - e. Flesh in the person of the One who ascended into heaven, sitting on the right hand of the Father
3. He is the true light which came into the world on that first Christmas eve

V. Light in Personal Engagement

A. But John's point is not simply to theologize on light as an expression of the Godness of God

1. He gets personal
 - a. And once again, as the consummate story-teller, grabs us and drags us all into the narrative

B. John 1:4 (ESV) — 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

1. The light – not just the light
 - a. But the light of men
 - b. The light of humanity

C. The light functions in personal encounter with God's morally accountable, image-bearing creatures

1. God as light is not satisfied to be described as a metaphor, as valuable as that description certainly is
 - a. God seeks an encounter with His image-bearers
 - b. With those created by God the Word
2. That's why He sent God the Word
 - a. To be the light of men – the light of the world
 - b. To be light for us
3. To illumine our paths
 - a. To reveal our need
 - b. To expose our sin
 - c. To display His glorious plan of redemption

- D. The Word – the Lord Jesus Christ – is light in personal engagement
 - 1. The light of the glory of God in the face of Christ has come seeking His children
 - 2. The cosmic light of the universe has come home
 - a. Come home to each one of us
 - 3. This is the personal light

VI. Light and Darkness

- A. John 1:4–5 (ESV) — 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
 - 1. And now comes the conflict
 - a. Light and darkness
 - 2. Like oil and water, two elements which cannot easily coexist
 - a. So now the story becomes real
 - b. For we know that human stories are conflict driven
 - 3. And so, the story of Jesus is conflict driven
 - a. And the conflict is characterized by the contest between light and darkness
- B. The Response of the Darkness
 - 1. John 1:5 (ESV) — 5 The light shines in the darkness, ...
 - 2. The Word comes as life and light
 - a. But He comes into the darkness
 - b. The darkness of the world
 - c. The darkness of humanity
 - 3. In case anyone hasn't been paying attention to what kind of world we live in
 - a. We live in a dark world
 - b. Dark in its troubles
 - c. Dark in its corruptions
 - d. Dark in its contentions
 - e. Dark in its dysfunctions
 - 4. And let's not forget that our most immediate encounter with darkness is within our own hearts
 - 5. John 1:5 (ESV) — 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- C. The Victory of the Light
 - 1. "The darkness has not overcome it"
 - a. Overcome, or comprehend = katalambano – to seize, or hold fast, or to possess
 - 2. John 12:35 (NASB95) —
 - a. 35 So Jesus said to them, "For a little while longer the Light is among you. Walk while you have the Light, so that darkness will not **overtake** you; he who walks in the darkness does not know where he goes.
 - b. Light and darkness – katalambano; same concepts
 - 3. So Jesus – God the Word – comes as life and light

- a. Light as the light of men
- b. Men of darkness
- c. Darkness which does not understand the light, flees from the light, seeks to suppress the light, rebels against the light, even ignores the light
- d. And yet, Jesus, the Light, is not overcome by the darkness
- 4. As dark as the darkness is – yet the light of Christ still shines
 - a. The darkness cannot prevail
 - b. Using the astronomical metaphor – which is certainly appropriate – the darkness did not and cannot eclipse the light
- 5. The darkness cannot overcome the light of God the Word, the Lord Jesus Christ

VII. The Light of the World – Right Now

- A. John 1:5 (ESV) — 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
 - 1. John writes this verse in the present tense – the light shines in the darkness
 - a. Shines – right now
- B. But at the time John wrote those words Jesus had departed
 - 1. He had died, been raised from the dead, spent time with the disciples, and then ascended into heaven
 - a. Where He sits right now at the seat of divine sovereign authority
 - 2. But when John wrote His gospel, all those events had taken place
 - a. Jesus Himself – the Word become flesh – was no longer on this earth
- C. So how could John say such a thing
 - 1. That the light shines in the darkness
- D. He could say so because the light of the world right now is you and me
 - 1. We who have been born again, who have received the new birth
 - a. Who are spiritual children of God through Jesus Christ
- E. John 9:5 (NASB95) — 5 “While I am in the world, I am the Light of the world.”
 - 1. But Jesus Himself affirms Matthew 5:14 (NASB95) — 14 “You are the light of the world.”
 - 2. We Christians are called upon to be Christ to our neighbor
 - a. We are to be the light – perhaps the only display of the glory of God our neighbor will ever see
- F. Are you living as the light of the world?
 - 1. Not your own feeble light – as remarkable as that might be on a human level
 - 2. But the light of Christ and His light shining through you
 - 3. Shining through you as the Spirit of God enables you to live the life of Christ
- G. Does the light of Christ
 - 1. Illumine you?
 - a. Giving you guidance and direction?
 - b. Dispelling the remnant darkness in your own soul?

- c. Giving you order and peace within the surrounding chaos?
 - H. You are the light of the world – right now
 - 1. The very light of Christ in a very dark world
 - I. I trust you are
 - 1. For you will not find light in any other worldly element
 - a. Not in the world’s literature
 - b. Not in today’s media
 - c. Not in our highly secularized culture
 - d. Not in our political movements
 - 2. You will only find the light of Christ in those who are filled by the Spirit of Christ
- VIII. Candle Lighting Service
 - A. The service we’re about to experience is a visual display of the truth just described
 - B. We begin in darkness
 - 1. Just as we live and move in a world of darkness
 - a. Only the light of Jesus shines at the beginning
 - C. Jesus Christ is the true light
 - 1. The origin of the light we all receive
 - 2. His candle is the source for the light we will all share
 - D. Then the light of Jesus spreads
 - 1. From one disciple, one believer, one Christ-follower to another
 - 2. Then another
 - 3. Then another
 - E. Until the whole world is filled with the light of Jesus
- IX. Instructions
 - A. Take care of the flame
 - 1. Don’t tip lighted candles; tip the unlit candle into the lighted candle
 - 2. Keep the candle away from body, clothing, hair
 - B. Keep the candle lit until the singing of Silent Night is concluded and you are instructed to extinguish it
- X. Prayer

Benediction

2 Corinthians 4:6 (NASB95) —

6 For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.