

December 15, 2024

## “Jesus, the Light of the World” John 1:4-5

FCF: Our struggle with the “darkness” of this age

**PROPOSITION:** (anchor) Jesus is the Light of the world.  
(magnet) Turning to Him is the only way to face the darkness.

### **SCRIPTURE INTRODUCTION:**

“What It’s Like to Live without the Sun” - the title of an interview I read with a resident of northern AK. The biggest challenge of daylight deprivation is said to be insomnia. To cope, a wristwatch is essential. And keeping your lights on for half the day and then keeping them off for the rest. Now, such measures should tell us something. We’re not made for darkness.

Jesus was born in the dark of night. Because it really was dark. Those were times of poverty, nationalism, war, corruption, competing worldviews and faiths. Much like our own.

It was dark then. In many respects, it is dark now. Which means that the announcement of One described as “the Light of the World” is just as relevant today as it was then. And the news is just as good as it was then. Why? Because Jesus really is the Light of the World.

**SCRIPTURE READING:** [John 1:1-5](#)

### **PRAYER FOR ILLUMINATION**

### **SERMON INTRODUCTION:**

One of my fondest holiday memories is that of the luminaries every Christmas Eve in my childhood neighborhood. Up and down every street you could see these paper bags filled with sand and a little candle inside. On the straight stretches, as we drove along in the car, it was like you were a plane coming in for a landing. It was often so well lit that drivers could turn off their headlights and navigate by these little candles as they lit the way, dispelling the darkness. It’s something like that here in John 1 – images of the deepest darkness and the greatest light.

Let me remind you of what we talked about last week. John’s Prologue is much like the foyer of a great expansive house. Here we learn of Jesus as “the Logos” – the Word of God – before all things and behind all things, that He was the agent of God in creation, that He is without beginning and without end. And Christmas marks the time when He took on flesh, entered history, and came into this world. It is, as has been wisely said, “the one true tall tale”.

He has forever been the Logos. And the Light. This is what John is telling us – that into the midst of the deepest darkness came the greatest Light. Jesus is the Light of the world. And turning to Him, the Light of the world, is the only way to face the darkness of this world.

### **I. THE LIGHT AS LIFE**

John helps us to see that by showing that Jesus, this Light, is the Life ([READ John 1:4](#)).

#### *A) Explanation of “Life”*

##### 1. Not just physical life

Now what does John mean here? Well, if all we had to go on was the first three verses, we might think this is speaking again to Jesus’ role in creation. And His role was astonishingly real.

##### 2. But eternal life

But this mention of the Light as Life is not just about physical life but eternal life. It's not so much quantity but quality of life. That is to say, it's not just life everlasting but ever-deepening.

*B) Jesus as "the Life"*

1. Not just a possessor of life

In that sense, Jesus is "the Life." And, while He's very alive, He's not just a possessor of life.

2. But the bestower of life

He is the source, the bestower, the giver of life (**READ John 5:25-26**). Listen to Jesus' words to Martha by Lazarus' tomb (**READ John 11:25-26**). Or His words to Thomas (**READ John 14:6a**).

What we're seeing here, as the Puritans used to say, is the life of God in the soul of man.

*Illustration:*

A great image is Jesus' description of the relationship between the Vine and the branches (**READ John 15:5**). Or just think in terms of fresh-cut Christmas trees. They look good. And they smell great. But why do the needles keep dropping? Because the tree is dead. It's been cut from its source of life. And so, for all practical purposes, it's dead. The life is really gone.

*Application:*

Jesus as the Light is the Life that brings life. Despite what you might have heard, turning to Jesus does not rob life of life. It brings it. So many stories could be told of people through the years who, after turning to and trusting in Jesus, are awakened to the wonder and beauty of this life! Let me give you a contrast - the life of Charles Darwin, the father of evolutionary theory. He turned his back on God and in doing so, according to his biography, lost his taste for life. As he grew older, he said he got less and less out of poetry, music, or art. Wonder and joy were lost.

But turning to Jesus does not rob life of life. It brings it. Now I know some of you are saying, "*But what about those Christians who have no love of life?*" I get that. But the problem is not that they've taken their faith too far. The problem is that they haven't taken it far enough.

Jesus is the Light who is the Life. And to face the darkness, we need to turn to Him.

## **II. THE LIGHT SHINING**

He is the Logos who ever was and is the Light shining (**READ John 1:4-5a**). Some of you may know Jesus went so far as to declare this of Himself at a festival (**READ John 8:12**).

*A) Explanation of "Light"*

What is behind this imagery? How should we understand it? Well, what does light do?

1. Reveals

For starters, it reveals. We walk into a dark room and turn on the light in order to see.

2. Guides

Light guides. It guides when you're out looking for your lost dog at night. You use a flashlight.

3. Warms

And light warms. When you come in from the cold, you head not for the fridge but the fireplace.

*B) Jesus as "the Light"*

All those things would have been on the mind of John and his readers here.

1. Reveals

Jesus, as the Light, reveals God. Man was living in spiritual darkness, ignorant about God.

2. Guides

Jesus, as the Light, guides. Like the glory cloud that guided Israel. Or as a shepherd his sheep.

3. Warms

Jesus, as the Light, warms. He draws us from our dark ways and changes, warms, our lives.

Jesus, the Life, the Light of men, has come as One shining in the darkness.

*Illustration:*

A nostalgic favorite for our family this season is *The Charlie Brown Christmas Special*. Made in 1965, it is one of the few that mentions the birth of Jesus. It beautifully captures the impact that has as the Light begins to warm you. How? When Linus drops the blanket. His character had been tied to a security blanket since 1954. But in this TV special, as he shares “what Christmas is all about” and comes to the words in Luke 2 “Fear not,” the words of the angel to the shepherds, Linus drops the blanket. Go back and watch it. It’s really something.

Charles Schultz, the creator of Peanuts, was a committed Christian. He had gone toe-to-toe with the CBS executives about including the Christmas story in this special. What was he saying? That Jesus frees us from our fear. The Light warms us. His coming transforms us. Which means we don’t need to hide or pretend or posture any more. We can drop our blanket.

*Application:*

How does that land on you? This was the purpose of the first Christmas lights. It was part of the celebration of the Light who has come. Is that how you see them? Let me encourage you here. As you’re moving about over these weeks and you see those lights, wherever that may be, let them remind you of the One who is the Light - the One come to reveal, guide, and warm.

Again, Jesus is the Light of the world, the only way for us to really face the darkness.

### III. THE LIGHT AGAINST DARKNESS

That said, John does then speak to this darkness directly ([READ John 1:4-5](#)).

*A) Explanation of “Darkness”*

1. Universal image

Like light, darkness is a universal image – especially in a historical context that was a pre-electrical age when the darkness of night was just that. Darkness keeps some bad company.

2. Particular usage

It is the absence of light. It means ignorance, folly, falsehood, loss or lack of truth. Yet the Bible goes further and speaks of darkness as a spiritual force, reflecting the reality of a cosmic battle.

*B) The Struggle between Light and Darkness*

There is a struggle implied here in John’s words – one trying to “overcome” the other.

1. Long history

It is a struggle with a long history. And the contrasts couldn't be greater. Light versus darkness. And that struggle can be seen in our day as well, playing itself out in innumerable ways.

## 2. Sure outcome

That said, the outcome is sure. Darkness has not “overcome” the Light. It can't extinguish it, put or snuff it out like a candle. However much it has tried, is trying, and will keep trying.

And in the midst of all that, John is making clear that Jesus is the Light of the world.

### *Illustration:*

A funny thing about darkness. If you have ever been in a cave and been told by a guide to switch off your lamp, you may feel like you have experienced it. But quantum physics has found that you are in fact surrounded by light you cannot see, for true darkness does not exist. Light particles—photons—exist throughout the known universe and beyond it. Even in the cave.

### *Application:*

The light always pierces the darkness. How does that land on you? Will you turn away from the Light? Or will you confess the darkness He has revealed in you and come to Him, receiving His life? Will you turn from Him or will you turn to Him? There is no third option.

Here's the thing. This world and our hearts are full of darkness. We know that, however much we try to cover and hide it. And you will never get rid of the darkness within you with a self-help, self-improvement program. As one author put it ([READ](#)), “You don't take a bucket into a basement to bail out the darkness; you turn on the light and the light chases it away.”

Jesus is the Light of the world. And turning to Him is the only way to face this darkness.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Think of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. There have been so many plays, cartoons, and films - George C. Scott, Michael Caine, Patrick Stewart starring as Ebenezer Scrooge. Ah, Scrooge ([READ](#)) “a squeezing, wrenching, grasping, scraping, clutching, covetous, old sinner! Hard and sharp as flint... secret, and self-contained, and solitary as an oyster.” Christmas was a humbug and its celebrants were fools. There are a lot of interesting images in the story. Warmth and cold, light and darkness. The brilliance of Christmas past, the bounty of Christmas present, the darkness of Christmas future,. Here's how Dickens describes the first ghost ([READ](#)):

But the strangest thing about it was, that from the crown of its head there sprung a bright clear jet of light, by which all was visible; and which was doubtless the occasion of its using, in its duller moments, a great extinguisher for a cap, which it now held under its arm.

And, interestingly enough, when Scrooge gets the chance, he presses that cap down over the spirit's head to extinguish the light. But he couldn't. It refused to go out. Then comes the great change later in the story. Scrooge laughs for the first time in years. His heart overflows with generosity and kindness. And his demeanor is such that people actually greet him on the street.

What has happened? Dickens is conveying a picture, a parable, of a man who has come to see Jesus as the Light of the world and the change this brings. And that can be our story too.

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