

GOD WITH US : DARKNESS

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[0 : 00] Father, we ask again that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us, gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Father, you know the things that we're afraid of, you know the things that we should be afraid of, you know the things that we're anxious about.

We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would come upon us, that your Holy Spirit would still and quiet and calm our mind and heart and will so that we might know more of you and that your Son Jesus would have a deeper role and place in our lives.

So Father, draw us to Jesus. In this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. The last I heard, it was 148 people who were killed in Peshawar, I hope I'm pronouncing that correctly, Pakistan earlier this week.

148 was the number that I heard. The overwhelming majority of them were children. And as one person said in the paper the other day, we see in what happened in Pakistan pure evil.

Whether or not it was pure evil, but it's probably as close to pure evil as we're about to see on this, on this, on the earth. Part of what made it such pure evil was that these men who came to the school in Pakistan, the majority of the children that were shot, were shot by a single gunshot to the head.

[1 : 37] So it wasn't just indiscriminate killing, but that as each child probably begging for mercy, some gunmen would come and look at them and shoot them in the head.

And then we'll go and do another child and another child and another child. Until almost 140 children and 148 in total were killed. And I think we all have to agree that if that is not pure evil, it's so close to pure evil, we don't want to get any closer to pure evil.

It was a completely and utterly horrendous, dark, evil act. And it happened just this week.

I didn't... It's also been a week where, I mean, we could... You know, the events that took place with the woman who killed the nine children and the fellow in Sydney.

You know, we could say in those cases that there maybe was some type of mental illness and instability, but you can't say that about what happened in Pakistan.

[2 : 45] Now, some of you might say, boy, I'm so glad I came to church. George is talking about pleasant, uplifting things. You know, George, isn't Christmas time and it's just a few days before Christmas?

Isn't Christmas supposed to be when we talk about things like kindness and generosity and the good parts of human nature? And that is, I think, largely how most Canadians understand Christmas.

But, you know, for Christians, the Christmas story, God, as he tells us the Christmas story through his word, he wants us to spend some time reflecting on darkness and the darkness in the world.

And so if you have your Bibles, turn in them to John chapter 1. If you don't have Bibles with you, there's Bibles up at the front always, and you're always welcome to take one, to use it, to keep it if you want as a gift.

This Sunday, like the last couple of Sundays, we're actually going to be saying a lot of the scripture over and over and over again, because we're going to really reflect primarily upon two verses. But you might have heard me read the gospel text a few moments ago, and you know that it culminates in John 1, verse 14, which is one of the great Christmas passages.

[3 : 54] The word became flesh and dwelt among us. The word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory. Glory is the only son from the Father, full of grace and truth. But before it gets to this great acclamation of Christmas, it has a profound sentence on darkness and evil.

So God wants us to reflect upon darkness in the context of reflecting upon the birth of his son. So John 1, verse 1, let's just sort of get the context up until we get to verse 5.

Verse 1, Here are the two verses which we're going to primarily focus on this morning, although we'll look at the three verses that follow as well.

But here's the two verses that we're going to really focus on. Verse 4, Last week we talked about verses 1 to 3, and primarily it was a little bit about how God, Jesus, is the word, and the word has been with God from all eternity, and God has created all things.

And some of you might have wondered, if I say that God, if the Bible teaches, and it's not what it says here, it says it very, you know, verse 3, all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

[5 : 48] All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. Does that mean that God created evil? In fact, I was going to talk about it last week, but then I thought, no, I'm going to wait to this week, because I realize this is the better week to talk about it.

Is the Bible saying that God created evil? I just had a conversation with somebody this week who said that God created evil, and we had a bit of a conversation about it.

I don't know if I did a very good job in helping to understand what the Bible teaches, but when it says here that God makes all things, does that mean he makes evil? Well, Andrew, if you could put up the first scripture text, verses 4 and 5, could you read this with me?

Verse 4 and 5, I should have written down my verse.

I'm going to have trouble reading it. I'm going to have to say it, and you folks will just have to read it. So here's the first thing, and the first point about this passage of scripture, and all of it we're talking about is this, something about God.

[7 : 03] God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. That's the first point, and if you're wondering if that sounds familiar, St. George, that's a very clever way to put it.

Andrew, if you could put up the first point. It's not that I thought of it. It's actually in 1 John. It's chapter 1, the second part of verse 5. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

When the text is saying, in the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, he was in the beginning with God, all things were made through him, and without him was not any other. Anything made that was made.

In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not mastered it. When the Bible is saying this, it's making an affirmation that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

In fact, it's very, very interesting. When it says in verse 4, in him was life, what the text is saying is it's saying that God, the Son of God, the second person of the Trinity, who we'll see in a moment, takes on flesh, that he doesn't have life.

[8 : 09] He is life. He doesn't have life. You and I have life. But God, the Son of God, is life.

That's who and what he is. And then when it says that this life is also light, you know, we might have, you can say that we can see sort of the light of the intellect, you know, the light of conscience that we might have.

when you talk to somebody, you can see, oh, you know, they have a gleam in their eye, you know, they have some joy, they have some happiness, they, you can see the spark of intelligence. We use these different analogies for light to talk about things of conscience or creativity or goodness, you know, or intelligence or wit.

And these are things that we have, but the Bible is saying that God doesn't have them. He is light, and he is life. And just as if you have a room which is completely light, there can't be any darkness in it.

And if God is life, there can't really be death in him in a sense, where darkness, if he is life, then the Bible is making this very, very strong claim that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

[9 : 26] So, the Bible is saying that if, there's certain things you have to understand about God that, in fact, you know, what the Bible is doing is it's struggling with a sort of a thing that missionaries have to struggle with.

all of the time is that if, you know, if you go to be a missionary in a remote part of China, or if you go to be a missionary in a place like Kazakhstan, or you go to be a missionary, you know, in some place that only knows a particular tribal religion, you have to use the words that the culture knows, but over time, you have to try to help them to understand the words in different ways.

And so, in our culture, when people think about God and his relationship to good and evil, there's many people in our culture who will say that God is above good and evil, that good and evil don't

really apply to God, that he's above them, that good and evil is just something that we think or we understand, but God is neither, he's above them.

And some believe that, in fact, that there's two principles at work in the world, that there's a good principle and a bad principle, and that these principles are always at work, and you have to choose which principle it is that you're following.

And some people say that God just merely decides that certain things are good and certain things are evil, and he just sort of makes these decisions up just out of his head one day as he's sitting around, and it's just merely a matter of God just declaring that certain things are good or certain things are bad.

[10 : 47] And there's other people who think that, in fact, good and evil are both in God, and that he has to struggle with these things himself. And these are the very, very common views in our culture.

And so even when people think, you know, when you use the word God to somebody, and in their mind, they're thinking, oh yeah, God is above good and evil, or God is beneath good and evil, or God, good and evil doesn't apply to God, or whatever.

And the Bible here is trying to clarify that when, all the way through the Gospel of John, when you read and see the word God, it wants us to understand that it's saying that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all, that he is God of light who is light, that he is the God of life who is life, that that's who we are talking about.

So some of you might say, hey George, that's very interesting, but you didn't answer the question. You're doing what politicians do. Sorry, I didn't mean to put down politicians.

Actually, this is true. You know, a few years ago, I had to be interviewed in the paper a lot about a controversial issue, and I got interviewed on TV and radio, and so I had some media training, and one of the things they tell you in media training, so this is how you have to understand politicians when they're at their best, is that what they tell you in media training is that you have two or three or four things that you want to say, and whenever the questioner asks you a question, you just pick one of the four things that you want to say that's closest to the question, and you ignore the question, and you just say what you want to say over and over and over again, and so it's a little bit of a challenge.

[12 : 31] The reporter keeps trying to break you from just saying the four things that you want to say, and you're just trying to just stick with the four things, and anyway, so I'm not doing that.

So the question was, George, does God, if God creates all things, okay, granted that God okay, you're saying that God is light, he's only good, and you're also saying that God created all things, and I'm not sure what that means, George, aren't you still, does God create evil, or is it a matter that God sort of created things, and then that was like a long, long, long time ago, you know, like the Big Bang was billions of years ago, and sort of God is now really distant, he has other things on his mind, he's not preoccupied with what's going on on earth, or he's powerless to deal with things on earth, because God is distant, is that what you're saying, George, is that what the Bible is saying? Well, let's say verses four and five again, if you could put them up, God, in him was life, and the life was life in the night, and the light shines on the darkness, and the darkness has not mastered it.

That's the text that we're thinking about, and what this text is saying here, and Andrew, if you could put up the next point, sorry, the true and living God created all things good.

He did not create evil. Evil is a blinding, breaking, bending, hiding, blurring, emptying of the good.

[14 : 08] That's what the Bible is telling us. It's going to maintain, if you read Genesis, if you read the Bible, you're going to see it's a very, very consistent understanding of the biblical worldview, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

God is never evil, and he never does evil. That's why anybody who says that part of their spiritual growth means forgiving God, they haven't understood who God is, because God has never done anything evil to them.

That's what the Bible claims. And the Bible says that God has created all things, he creates all things good, he did not create evil, and therefore, evil in a sense is always a breaking or a misuse or an emptying or a blurring or a hiding or an exaggerating or of some good thing, and by the emptying, emptying, removing, bending, breaking, blurring, darkening of that which is good, that is what evil is.

That's what Christians believe. That's what this text is saying when it says, in him was life and the life was the light of humankind. The light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not

mastered it.

That's what the text is saying. It's saying that evil is real, it's not an illusion. That's another thing that many people believe is that evil is just an illusion.

[15 : 46] It's not real. Peshawar was real, wasn't it? Was it, I think, it was the president of Pakistan said it was a very, I thought it was a very, very wise thing.

I hope I get the quote right. The lightest casket is the heaviest burden to carry. The lightest casket is the heaviest burden to carry.

And I know that even as I, as we look at this text this morning that there's people in the congregation who've been raped, who have been victims of sexual abuse, who've witnessed genocide. Some of us might have lived relatively safe and protected lives, but there are some, maybe many, in our congregation who know that evil is never an illusion, that evil is real, that darkness is real.

And the Bible affirms that, but it affirms that it's always a bending, breaking, distorting, misuse of that which is good. I mean, even think of this terrible thing in Peshawar. You know, the fact that the men had ability to plan is a good thing.

The fact that men had strength and health and all of those things, those are good things. You know, we pray for those things in our kids, don't we? That they can plan, that they can be strong and that they can be healthy and that they can accomplish their plans, that they can have determination and will.

[17 : 13] And yet, all these things that are good are completely and utterly misused and we wonder what on earth goes on in their souls, in their minds, in their hearts. Like, what did they put to death?

What did they cancel out? What did they exaggerate? How could they possibly take the normal, good human concern for your group, which is a good thing to have a concern for your family or your group?

That's not a bad thing to have a concern for that, but how is it that they so exaggerated that concern and put to death anything to do with human compassion and how could they exaggerate and darken and remove and bend and misuse so that the good things in them were used to create something which is, if not pure evil, really close to it.

And that's what the Bible claims. That's what the Bible claims. In God, there is no darkness. In God, he is only light.

He is only life. To walk towards the true and living God is to walk towards light. To walk towards the true and living God is to walk towards life. To walk towards Jesus is to walk towards life.

[18 : 33] Always. And the darkness, which is real, not an illusion, is a bending, breaking, distorting, misuse, emptying, blurring of good things.

And that's why it is, on one hand, we have this sense that surely if there is a God that does exist, he must be good. We have problems as to why these things happen. I'm not going to talk about that very much in the sermon.

But we have these dual senses that that is evil and that there is this thing which is good and that to be human is to choose goodness. To be human is to try to move towards goodness.

And we believe that. the Bible teaches, in fact, I would say that only the Bible, the biblical worldview, properly articulates in both ideas and grand narrative that fundamental human sense that, you know, many of you, maybe some of, maybe only a few of you know that for me when I was on my, in my early, I became a Christian in grade 12 and I had many, I've had times of doubt throughout the years but most of my, my real doubts were when I was at university and then in my two different times in graduate school.

And, but, you know, for me, as I was struggling with different things about whether the Christian faith was true, for me there was sort of always a bit of a touchstone early on and that was a statement by Dostoevsky that if God is dead, all things are permissible.

[20 : 10] If God is dead, all things are permissible. And I, I actually think that outside of the Christian faith that's unanswerable. I think it's unanswerable.

And, um, if God is dead, all things are permissible. And, um, and that was always part of the thing that helped me to frame it that other systems of thought weren't really wrestling with this that amongst other things, whether, whether I was just dealing with the claims of science or, because I, I did sociology, social science backgrounds, which as you know have a, a leeching effect of taking away the Christian faith.

There are far fewer sociologists or psychologists who are Christians than physicists. Um, that's a whole other topic of conversation as to why that would be. There's a physicist in the room. You might want to talk to him after, after the service, get his thoughts about it. But, um, but if God is dead, all things are permissible. But how could what happened in Peshawar be permissible? How can it not be the case that that is wrong? How could it not be? So some of you might say, okay, George, so you reject evil as an illusion.

[21 : 24] Um, and you're really also saying that the idea that evil is just an opinion, that it's a social construct, that it's just somebody's view. You think it's evil, but other people don't think it's evil. That things like Peshawar show that that's not the case.

But, George, don't you sort of maybe think that, um, you need to have some evil and darkness in the world so that you can understand what's good? Um, a couple of weeks ago I saw on DVD the movie *The Giver*.

And, um, and part of that, in fact, is, uh, that's actually part of the dialogue in the movie. It's a very, very common thing. I've heard many people say it to me in coffee shops, I've seen it in many movies, that, uh, the reason there's darkness, the reason there's evil, is because you need this to be able to see and understand, uh, the light.

You need it to be able to see and understand goodness. Is, is that sort of what the Bible is saying here? Is that why there's sort of evil in the world? Well, let's say verses four and five again, if you could put that up. There we go. Say it with me.

In him was life, and the life was the light of humankind. The light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it.

[22 : 29] That's the verse which we're looking at. And, um, so first of all, um, you'd see that if God, if, if God is good in and of himself, then he doesn't need evil to be able to understand him.

Um, and if God is light, like, you can understand light without there being darkness. You can understand that, but, but the Bible's gonna actually say something, uh, far more profound. It's going to say, and if you could put this up, Andrew, evil is real, but it cannot master the uncreated light which shines on.

Evil is real, but it cannot master the uncreated light which shines on. You know, you look at verse four, in him was life, and the life was the light of men.

It's saying that Jesus, God, the son of God, is uncreated life, and that he is uncreated light.

[23 : 36] Unless some of us have had some type of a mystical vision of God, all we see is created light. But there is an uncreated light behind all light, and an uncreated life behind all life.

And in Jesus, that's what we see. We see uncreated life and uncreated light. And in, in verse five, actually, Andrew, could you put up verse four and five again?

Could you say it with me again? In him was life, and the life was the light of humankind. The light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not mastered it.

The Bible here is saying that evil is real, but it cannot master the uncreated light which shines on. And in some of your Bible translations, probably none of your Bible translations uses the word mastered.

Most of your Bible translations probably either use that the word can, that the evil, darkness, has not overcome it, or it says that darkness has not understood it.

[24 : 46] And this is a very interesting thing. In the original language, the word that John chose means one of those two things. And it means both of those two things.

And most scholars believe that John chose the word precisely, and phrasing it in this precise way to try to communicate these two ideas at the same time. And that's exactly what John intended to do. But because in English, generally speaking, you can't do it until actually just a translation just written a couple of years ago suggested that mastered it captures it better because you can talk about mastering a subject in terms of knowing it, and you talk about mastering something in terms of overcoming it, you know, that you mastered your opponent or you mastered your subject. It's still not perfect because the word means both understand and overcome. And the first thing it's saying is that darkness can never understand light, that evil cannot understand goodness. It just can't. Like, do you think that those men who killed those 148 people, do you think they could understand Mother Teresa?

[26 : 05] I mean, let's be honest, most of us couldn't understand Mother Teresa, and we're not nearly as wicked as them. You know, and you just think about it in general.

Like, can a man who's captivated and consumed with lust in pornography, while he is consumed with the lust and the pornography, can he appreciate the goodness?

Can he create, can he at that moment understand the goodness of sex in its proper place, or the goodness of a woman? when one of us is consumed with anger, when we're just so angry and maybe storming around the house and yelling, at those moments that we are filled with anger, do we understand peace or quiet?

Do we understand turning the other cheek? Do we understand stillness and self-possession? sobriety? In fact, you know, when a person is completely drunk, do they understand sobriety at that moment?

Like, if you think about it for a second, isn't all evil, isn't all darkness, do something which stops the human being from being able to understand that which is virtue or good?

[27 : 27] And that's what the Bible is saying here. The light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. And it's also saying, and it's here, scholars think that John is in some ways already pointing to what's going to happen at the end of the gospel, the fact that the God, the Son of God, the uncreated light, the uncreated life will come and walk amongst us, he'll die upon the cross, and that that moment that would for darkness seem as if it was darkness's greatest victory with God, the Son of God dying upon the cross, is in fact the moment that darkness is completely and utterly defeated.

It doesn't understand that the wrong thing to do was to put Jesus on the cross to kill him. And that it's moment of appearing to overcome God, the Son of God is the moment that it's defeated, and that Jesus, tasting all there is to taste of death, after he's tasted all there is to taste of sin and evil and hostile spiritual powers, rises triumphant over sin and death and all hostile spiritual powers in his resurrection, because the darkness has not overcome it.

And that's why it says the light shines on. I chose the net version of the Bible because it emphasizes that the light shines and that it shines on. You see, friends, this is the reason that as texts like this enter into our heads, that's why it is, in confidence of this text, that we can walk towards darkness.

Not walk towards darkness so that the darkness will overwhelm us. The darkness will claim that it has to always exist. The darkness will claim that it's necessary for us to understand the good. darkness will claim that we have to make our peace with it, that we have to make our peace with our alcoholism or with our addictions or with pornography or we have to make peace with prostitution or all sorts of other things that we need to make peace with this because these things are somehow necessary, that we need to make peace with people who will butcher 148 innocent people and evil and darkness will always say that it is necessary and this text says that the light shines on and that we are to walk towards the darkness to shine light, that the darkness will be no more.

[29 : 58] We understand that the darkness, that that final overcoming the darkness will only happen when Jesus returns in his second coming and the new heaven and the new earth are brought in, but on this side of the grave still we walk towards the darkness in our own life.

No, I do not have to make peace with my addiction. No, I do not have to make peace with these memories that completely torment me. No, I do not have to make peace with the voice of accusation in my head.

No, we do not have to make peace with darkness in the world. We can walk towards it because the light shines on and the darkness has not mastered it and never will.

It is the basis to walk towards evil, evil, to humbly walk towards evil, to resist it, to say no, to shine light, the light of life, the light of truth, the light of goodness, the light of mercy, the light of peace, the light of justice.

So some of you might say, oh, George, now you just all of a sudden, George, I thought you said that you were a marsh wiggler.

[31 : 09] All of a sudden, you sound like some blind optimist. Good grief, George. What happened to George, my marsh wiggler puddle glum friend at the front?

All of a sudden, the evil is not the final word and the words of Winston Churchill. We will fight it on the beaches. We will fight it in the fields. We will fight it street to street.

We will fight it in our hearts. Well, you see, the fact is, let's look at the text and then let's look at what happens just after verses 4 and 5.

I wonder if you could put verses 4 to 8 up there on the screen and let's read it together. There we go. Please read it with me. In him was life and the life was the light of humankind.

The light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.

[32 : 18] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. all of a sudden it goes in verses 1 to 5 of these profound philosophical, theological, spiritual categories and ideas, and all of a sudden it shifts to history.

Notice that? There was a man sent from God whose name was John. John. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. And now John is starting to narrow it, the gospel is starting to narrow it as he's introducing Jesus to talk about Jesus of Nazareth.

In fact, if you could put up verse 14, Andrew, you folks could say that with me. And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth.

See, the Bible is saying a most profound thing. John wants to introduce Jesus. He wants to say, here's Jesus. Who's Jesus? And John chooses to introduce Jesus in these grand narrative, in these grand philosophical, theological, spiritual ideas, and he's saying, if you could put up the point, Andrew, that Jesus, Jesus of Nazareth, in a sense, is the uncreated light made flesh.

He walked among us where darkness is. That's what the Bible is saying. That's how John is introducing Jesus.

[33 : 58] Who is Jesus? How should I talk about Jesus? Jesus is real. He was a person in history. He had an adopted father, he had mother, he had brothers and sisters.

brothers. We don't know, but if you went back in time, you'd be able to find out that he probably thought his mom's homus was the best homus in the world. Just like probably most Jewish boys thought their mother's homus was the best homus in the world back then.

I don't know, maybe still, I don't know. And all of a sudden it comes to history. But this person, born in Bethlehem, but known as Jesus of Nazareth, he really is the uncreated light made flesh, and he walked among us where darkness is.

I mean, we remember the Roman Empire for its many great things, but we also have to remember that it was a place that one-third of the people who lived in the Roman Empire were slaves.

One-third.

One-third. Isn't that mind-boggling? One-third. And he walked among us. And that's why you see that John is going to actually, as all of the gospel writers and all of the gospel witnesses, they'll make claims that Jesus really did exist, that you read the gospels and you read the other early Christian witnesses and they get the historical details.

[35 : 31] They try to get them right and they do get them right. And they get the details right and they tell the story right and they want to communicate that this guy actually did walk amongst us and he had a three-year ministry and that he really did perform these miracles and that here we're giving you a copy of the things that he actually said and they're going to culminate with this other massive historical claim that he really did die upon the cross, that he was sentenced upon death, that he died upon the cross, that he was buried in a particular tomb on the outskirts of Jerusalem on a particular day of the week and that on another particular day of the week that there were women who went to go and anoint the body as a sign of respect and the body was gone and other people went and the body was gone and the stone was rolled away and many people could have gone to see that the body was gone and then people claim that they'd seen him alive and not alive as a person who'd been crucified.

In fact, in all of Roman history, in all of Roman history, there were thousands and thousands, hundreds of thousands of crucifixions in all of human history. There is only one record, one record of one man who ever survived crucifixion and that was with crucifixion interrupted and medical help immediately there to try to care for him and he barely survived.

all of history, one survival of crucifixion and it is undeniably historically the case. Mentioned in Roman and other historians that Jesus died upon the cross and John and others want you to say and understand that this same Jesus of Nazareth predicted that he would die upon the cross, predicted that he would rise from the dead, that the tomb was empty, that the historical records show it, that there's historical records that he appeared alive, fully, completely, massively alive to many people in many locations in over 40 days and that the resurrection of Jesus vindicates the

person and the message of Jesus, that Jesus was uncreated light, made flesh, who walked among us where darkness is.

Now, this week I've had two conversations about God and evil. The first one was with a person, I won't say anything more, but she shared with me that any time she starts to feel getting a little bit drawn towards the Christian faith or some other religion, she goes to Netflix and she watches the movie *Frailty*.

I haven't seen it yet, it's on my to-do list, but I read the Wikipedia summary, it's about a man who comes and tells his two boys that God has told him to start murdering people.

[38 : 35] And the movie then is about the man, with or without the help of his sons, murdering people because that's what God has told him to do. And my friend said that any time she starts to feel that she's getting close to accepting something to do with spirituality or religion, to cleanse her mind, she watches that movie.

And a fellow just told me, we had a long talk in a coffee shop just yesterday, just before I started to work on this, finish up the sermon, and he was talking about what just went on in Peshawar, and he was saying, George, that's what religion and that's what spirituality does.

It creates within you that I'm right, that we're right, that our tribe is right, everybody else is wrong, therefore we can go and kill and do whatever we want because we have some divine special place. And he said it justifies evil, it justifies cruelty, it justifies wickedness, it's justified in Christianity, it justifies in Islam, in Buddhism, in every religion.

That's what it does, George. Let's read the text again, if you could put up verses four to eight. Could you read this with me?

[39 : 56] In him was life, and the life was the light of humankind. The light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it.

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. What I said to my friends are a little bit different than what this text is similar, but I said to the first one that Christians should never feel that they're special, and Christians should never feel that somehow their ideas or their sacred text, text, or their poetry or their philosophy, that if a Christian doesn't understand that they're a beggar who's received something from God completely undeserved, they haven't understood the Christian faith.

I told her, I am one beggar telling another beggar where to find bread. people who are a Christian faith in the world. I said to my other friend that the problem of evil and the problem of murder is not a religious problem, it's a human problem, and that's why the countries that he posits or points to as being spiritual but not religious, high percentage of people saying that that's what they are or that they don't believe in any God, that one of those nations that is very high and that is China, which is one of the worst abusers of human rights on the planet.

Another one is North Korea, the worst abuser of human rights on the planet. And I said that the atheistic states that have existed like the Union of USSR, terrible abusers of human rights.

[41 : 48] And I said the issue isn't whether or not evil happens, but whether your philosophy and your worldview can understand it and has the resources and the help to deal with it.

See, here's the thing to understand with all of these things. You know, so far I've said that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. I've said that the true and living God created all things good.

He did not create evil. Evil is a blinding, breaking, bending, hiding, blurring, emptying of the good. And that evil is real, but it cannot master the uncreated light which shines on. And that Jesus is the uncreated light made flesh.

He walked among us where darkness is. And here's the thing we have to understand when we hear this. The fifth point. The dividing line between light and darkness, good and evil, is not between people.

It is a line within every person. The dividing line between light and darkness, good and evil, is not between people.

[42 : 55] It is a line within every person. If you leave here thinking we are the people of light and out there is darkness, you've misheard the scripture.

If you go away from here thinking that Canada is the place of light and the rest of the world is darkness, you've misheard the scripture. If you go away thinking that all Christians are light and the rest of the world who are not Christians are darkness, you have misheard the scripture.

The scripture wants to understand that Jesus walked amongst, walked among us where darkness is and that he looks you and me in the eyes and he sees that the dividing line between good and evil runs right down the center of who we are.

That part of us is darkness and part of us loves darkness. And in fact that there is something within us which is good and beautiful and whole and that the line between them is often very blurred and confused and we are often very blurred and confused in terms of what we want.

because the line between light and darkness runs down the center of every single person who is here. See in fact the Bible is trying to tell us that if God is light and in him is no darkness at all how can we come to God when darkness clings to me and darkness darkness clings to you and you cannot shake the darkness and you never can shake the darkness and even in great moments of moral triumph you often can end up being proud of your moral triumph and so the darkness rears its head.

[44 : 56] We're not going to read the text. Just listen to me as I read part of the text. In verse 7 it said he came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, that's John the Baptist, but came to bear witness about the light. And in verse 7 when it says the word believe it says it gives us the most important verb in the book of John.

The word believe will occur 98 times. It sort of gives you an idea that that's what John wants us to do is to believe in Jesus.

In fact, if you could put up the final point, Andrew. The Bible is teaching us that Jesus of Nazareth did it all in his life and in his death upon the cross.

And when I believe in him, I receive it all. See, that's what the text says.

[46 : 07] It's pointing to why Jesus comes, that Jesus in whom there is no darkness takes upon himself my darkness and your darkness. That Jesus in whom there is no darkness and evil takes upon himself the consequences of our darkness, the punishment that our darkness deserves.

He takes that upon himself when he dies upon the cross in our stead. And he goes into the place of death, into the place of darkness, into the place of sin.

He tastes all there is to taste of that with nothing left over. And he does that in my stead and in your stead, in our place. And then he rises from the dead, triumphant over sin and death and all hostile spiritual powers in his resurrection.

And when we put our trust in him, believe him, receive him, we receive all that he does for us.

That's what we receive.

He does it all. You know, in fact, which is very interesting in the Gospel of John, there's 98 times where the verb believe happens, and not once is there an adjective or an adverb with it.

[47 : 19] What that means in simple English is that it never says strong belief, pure belief, deep belief, full belief. It never qualifies it.

Because, you see, if John qualified it, then it would be a type of work that we have to add to what Jesus does for us on the cross. That I have to have my discipleship in order.

I have to be exemplary. I have to have the right psychological condition. I have to have the right type of emotional experience. I have to have the right type of life. I have to get the right types of things organized in my life because I have to add these things to belief.

But the Bible is telling us that we are to understand ourselves as beggars who can only stand empty-handed and say to the Father, Father, darkness clings to me.

There is a darkness which is in within me, which I am powerless to overcome and to rid myself of. And I thank you that uncreated life came and walked amongst us and died upon the cross.

[48 : 25] And that in his death upon the cross and resurrection, that he accomplishes something that I cannot accomplish by myself. And so, Father, I come to Jesus.

I invite him to come into my life. I give him permission to be in my life. And all I can do is ask that I can receive that which only Jesus can do and has done for me.

All I can do is receive Jesus. All I can do. And as I receive Jesus alone, he changes me.

He leads me to change us. We're gripped by the gospel. We realize that we can walk towards the evil in our culture and walk towards the evil in our society. That we can walk towards the evil in ourselves.

That we can walk towards it to deal with it. Because the idea that Jesus walked amongst us and that the uncreated life will never be mastered by darkness is not now just an abstract, optimistic truth, but a real lived experience as the gospel grips us.

[49 : 35] That I might not have the power to overcome the darkness, but I am carried by the one who has overcome all darkness. And so, as I am carried by him, I can walk towards darkness to shine light.

Darkness outside and darkness within. Please stand. Thank you. Just bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you see us perfectly and still you love us. We give you thanks and praise, Father, that you have known us from the moment of our conception to this very moment.

And, Father, since all things are present for you, you even know, well, Father, you know whether I'm going to live another day or live another 50 years. And, Father, you know me from the moment of my conception to the moment of my death.

And you know me perfectly. Father, you know the dreams I have at night that I do not remember when I wake up. You see every mask that I wear. You see every how I move from mask to mask.

[50 : 53] Father, you see everything there is to see about me. You know, Father, the darkness in me. You know the darkness that clings to me. You know the darkness, Father, which I am blind to and which I'm afraid of.

And you know the darkness I delight in. And still you love me, seeing me so perfectly. Still you love me. And still your Son, knowing who I am and knowing who we are, died on the cross for us. Uncreated light dying for us who have darkness within and clinging to us. Father, we thank you that you know us so perfectly and that your Son still came to rescue us and to deliver us.

We thank you for his sinless life, his mighty miracles, his mighty teaching. And most of all, we thank you for his death upon the cross on our behalf and his mighty resurrection.

Father, instill within us, grow within us, a simple belief and trust in Jesus. May we be disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, who now live for his glory.

[51 : 57] And this we ask in Jesus' name, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.