

His Light Gives Us Life

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[0 : 00] Amen. Kiddos, you are now excused to your King's Kids class.! He 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 anything made that was made. In Him, the Word was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John, JTB, John the Baptist. 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. The true light, the Word, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He, the true light, the Word, was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.

He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him, but to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name. He gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.

[1 : 36] May God bless the hearing of His Word. Christmas time is crooner time. If you're not familiar with who a crooner is, typically a man, smoother operator, singer, like Dean Martin, Frank Sinatra, Bing Crosby.

Jenny and I started watching Holiday Inn last night. Modern day crooner, Michael Buble. And of course, Nat King Cole. And Nat King Cole's version of Hark the Herald Angels Sing is iconic. Does everybody agree? All right, let me just remind you of the third stanza of Hark the Herald Angels Sing. We're going to close the service by singing Hark the Herald Angels Sing, but listen to this.

Hail the heaven-born Prince of Peace. Hail the Son of Righteousness. Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings.

Mild He lays His glory by Philipians 2. Born that man no more may die. Born to raise the sons of earth. Born to give them second birth.

[2 : 55] Hark the Herald Angels Sing, glory to the newborn King. Now, wouldn't it be nice that when we do sing this at the end of the service, that all of us would be singing this song with crooner-like voices?

Wouldn't that be great? I mean, we all know there's only two men in the room who have crooner-like voices, Zach and myself. And so, it's okay.

We'll all make a joyful noise together. I don't know why you're laughing. What this Christmas carol gets at, this born to give them second birth, is why Jesus Christ, the Word, became flesh.

To give a second birth. Or, as I'm going to argue this morning from this passage, His light gives us life.

So, believe in Him and live. Last week in John 1, 1-8, we learned that the Word is a He, a person.

[4 : 03] He was in the beginning. And that's a Genesis 1-1 shout-out. In the beginning, He was distinct from God the Father, yet He was in relationship with God the Father, yet He, the Word, was totally God.

And He, the Word, is the uncreated creator of all things. In Him was life. Not just physical life. Eternal, spiritual life.

And that life is the true light of God's salvation shining into the darkness. Think of Jesus as God's revelation of His salvation for sinners.

So, the question we're going to ask this morning is, how do we respond to this light of life shining into our darkness? Well, our culture responds to this incredible good news with seasonal sentimentality.

You know what I'm talking about. Just Christmas comes and goes in our culture. Our culture doesn't pause to think about the good news of God becoming flesh.

[5 : 18] But for Christians, we're always celebrating Christmas because Jesus, once He became fully human, has been fully human ever since and will remain fully human.

Totally God. Totally man. He is right now the light shining into the darkness of our world in 2025. And so, by His light, we live.

So, I'm going to make three points this morning. Reality, response, result. A bright reality, a believing response, and a born-again result.

His light gives us life. So, the way to respond is to believe and live. So, let's look at a bright reality. We see it in verses 9 and 10.

Let me just remind you of that. The true light, which gives light to everyone who was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him. Yet, the world did not know Him.

[6 : 22] So, let's define some terms. The true light. That word true is the first time that John uses that word in this gospel.

And when you hear the word true, you need to be thinking real. You need to be thinking what is. But what we'll see is that John doesn't just use the word true to speak about reality.

John uses the word true to speak about ultimate reality. Let me give you two examples. In John 6.32, Nate Olson touched on this yesterday at the men's meeting.

Jesus refers to Himself as the true bread from heaven. And what He's saying there is that unlike manna, which God gave to Israel in the Old Testament, they ate it and then they got hungry again. The true bread from heaven, you eat of Him and you will never be hungry again. You eat of Him and you will be satisfied. And so, what's being said there by Jesus Himself is that I am the ultimate bread.

[7 : 32] The real, ultimate, soul-satisfying bread. And then in John 15.1, Jesus calls Himself the true vine.

And what Jesus is saying there is that He is the ultimate vine. We'll get there. I'll explain that more when we get there months from now. But in both examples, bread and vine, they are both life-giving examples.

And so, when we read about the true light, this is God's ultimate reality of salvation in Christ for the entire world.

It is the full and final revelation of God's salvation. And so, do you remember Hebrews chapter 1? Long ago at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets.

But in these last days, He has spoken to us by His Son. The full and final revelation of God and His salvation is in this true light shining in the darkness.

[8 : 42] And we read that He was coming into the world. This is the first reference in the Gospel of John of the incarnation of the second person of the Trinity.

How did the second person of the Trinity, who is eternally existent from eternity past, How did He become a man? Well, John 1.14 says, And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.

Well, how did He do that? How did He become a human being? Well, we know from the Gospels that the first person of the Trinity, God, conceived the second person of the Trinity, fully God, fully man, by the third person of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit, in the Virgin Mary's womb.

That's a miracle. That's a triune miracle. And that fulfills Isaiah 7.14. The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel, God with us.

So, this true light was coming into the world. It's actually ascending. John 3.16, remember that? For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.

[10 : 05] And it's that word world that I just want to make sure we're all on the same page on. If you look at verses 9 and 10, you will see that the word world, it appears four times.

And my guess is when you hear the word world, you equate it with Earth. You hear the word world, and you think of that iconic 1968 photo from the Apollo 8 space mission of this picture that's titled Earthrise.

It is a spectacular picture of the Earth. But it may surprise you that John doesn't always equate world with Earth.

Sometimes, even more often than not, John equates world with humanity. And not just a neutral understanding of humanity.

Specifically, when John uses the word world, he is speaking about sinful humanity in organized rebellion against God. And that's how he's using it here.

[11 : 20] The true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. The darkness. He was in the world. Sinful humanity in organized rebellion against God.

And the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. Do you know, this is just crazy. The uncreated creator comes into the world that he made, and the world doesn't recognize him.

It's shocking. It's deeply ironic. That the uncreated creator would come to his own as one of us, but the world didn't recognize him.

The darkness, this sin in each of us, this sin in each of us, which Paul David Tripp describes like this, but if the greatest danger to all of us lives inside of us and not outside of us, then the radical intervention of the incarnation of Jesus is our only hope.

It is this new, bright reality shining into our darkness. It's glorious.

[12 : 43] Have you ever wondered why our culture doesn't celebrate the Christ of Christmas at Christmas time? Because they're blind.

Living in the darkness. They're trying to make sense of Christmas without Christ. I used to do that. This spiritual blindness that's a result of living in the darkness, of being dead in our sin, it goes by another name.

It goes by the name unbelief. The true light of life is shining today, but the darkness of sin blinds us to this bright new reality, this new creation that has dawned and is shining into our darkness for all to see, but not everybody is going to see it.

So we move from this bright new reality, this true light shining, God's salvation shining into our darkness, and now let's talk about how to respond.

A believing response. How do we who are spiritually dead and blind, how do we respond to the true light shining in the world?

[14 : 05] Well, this passage in verses 10 and 11 shows us two responses. Those in darkness respond to the true light in one of two ways. Either you will not receive Jesus, or you will receive Jesus.

You will not have eyes to see Him, and you will respond to Him in unbelief, or you will be given eyes to see Him, and you will respond in belief, in trust.

Let's look at this first one. Those who do not receive Him. This unbelief. We already saw in verse 10, the world sinful humanity in organized rebellion against God.

Well, they did not know that. They didn't recognize Him because of their sinful blindness, their moral blindness, their moral wrongdoing. And if you turn just a couple pages in the Gospel of John to John 3, not 16, but 19, you will see why people do not see the Christ.

We read this. And this is the judgment. The light has come into the world. The Word is shining. And people love the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

[15 : 32] They were blinded. You see, what ultimately is going on here is a heart condition for those who are apart from Christ. If their hearts, they love the darkness more than the light, and so they remain blind to the light shining around them, to them, through Christ.

in verse 11, we learn that not only did He come to the whole world, He came to His own. And He's speaking of the Jewish people.

And of all the people on the planet, His own, the Jewish people, should have recognized Him and received Him, believed in Him, submitted to Him, found life in Him because the Old Testament Scriptures had been testified to the coming of this one since Genesis 3.

Genesis 3.15 speaks of this offspring of Eve who will crush the head of the serpent. That's the first, it's called the proto-evangelium.

It's the first gospel of the coming of the second person of the Trinity. In Genesis 12 and in Genesis 22, we learn of this offspring of Abraham in whom God will bless all the nations of the earth.

[16 : 57] In 2 Samuel 7, we learn that David, there will be a descendant of David who will sit upon His throne forever.

Psalms 110 fulfills that. Isaiah 7.14, a virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and His name shall be called Emmanuel.

Isaiah 9.6 and 7, there's this child born, the son given, and His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, which is a reference to kingship, Prince of Peace.

Of His government and of peace, there will be, of the increase of His government and of peace, there will be no end. Isaiah 40, Isaiah 53 are all anticipating this one coming, but His own people, they were unwilling because they were living in darkness, loving the darkness more than the light. They did not receive the promised Messiah. And the result of rejecting the true light of God's salvation is steep. It's not something that's easy to hear.

[18:16] It's God's judgment you face. It's God's wrath you face. It's eternal suffering you face. If you look at John 3, not 16, not 19, but 36, whoever believes in the Son has eternal life.

Whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. Not to receive the Word, the true light, will result in eternal condemnation.

That's what it means is to not receive him. It's spiritual blindness, it's spiritual deadness, it's unbelief. But now let's look at what it means to receive him.

And what it means to receive him is spiritual sight, it's belief. And what we read in verse 12 is this, but to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

When we talk about believing in his name, what we're not talking about is thinking that if you just chant the name Jesus Christ enough, you will be saved.

[19:47] In our culture, when we talk about a name, we're talking about primarily designating one human being from another. Like, there's Jim and there's Lisa.

We're designating them. There's Mike and Matt. We're separating them. We distinguish them from one another. But in the culture that this was written in, a name carried all so much more.

It represented that person. It's to believe in his name is to believe in who he is and what he's done. To believe in all of who he is.

To believe that he is the true light, shining. To believe that he was in the beginning, that he was distinct from God, but with God. To believe that he's fully God and yet fully man.

It's to believe that he is God's salvation shining into the darkness, miraculously conceived. Lived a sinless life, died a substitute for sinners, raised from the dead, reigning on high, will one day return, will judge all, and then he will recreate the heavens and the earth where we will be with him forever face to face.

[20:58] When we believe in his name, we are saying we believe that he is Emmanuel, God with us, the fullness of that. When we say we believe in his name, we're saying you are the wonderful counselor.

You have the best, wisest counsel of all. We believe that you are mighty God, that you are God in the flesh, all powerful in all that you do.

When we say call him by name and say you are the everlasting father, we are saying you are the everlasting king from here on out and we bow our knee to you. When we say you are the prince of peace, we are recognizing him as the one who brings full shalom comprehensively to our lives now and ultimately we'll bring the full and final version of that when he returns.

So when we talk about believing in his name, we're talking about believing in all of who he is and what he's done. He was born to give us second births.

I just want to camp out on this idea of this word believe because I think that there's some misunderstanding out there what this means. In 112, but to all who did receive him who believed in his name, to receive Christ is to believe in his name.

[22:27] When we use the word believe, we generally use it in one of two ways. We use it as like passive acknowledgement. I believe there's a Bigfoot.

Or we use it in terms of like active trust. I believe the stage can hold my weight and I'm demonstrating that belief by standing on it. I live by Lincoln Park and Lincoln Park is home of the Lincoln Park Lagoon.

Anybody been there? Yeah. Anybody be on the bridge? Yes. Right now it's frozen. Let's say you and I are, you and me, you and I, we are standing on the sidewalk looking at Lincoln Park Lagoon and it's frozen.

I pull out a crisp \$100 bill and you're like, ooh. I'm like, yeah. I pick up a rock. I wrap the \$100 bill around the rock. I wrap some elastic bands.

I drop it into a very bright yellow festival bag. Wrap the end and I toss it into the middle of Lincoln Park Lagoon so it's sitting on the top of the ice in the middle of the lagoon.

[23 : 40] And I look to you and I say, it's yours for the taking. What would you need to do in order to make that \$100 yours?

You would have to exercise faith, wouldn't you? You would have to step out on the ice. Now, if you're standing next to me and I look to you while the yellow bag is in the middle of the lagoon and you say, oh, I believe that.

I believe that ice can hold my weight. I will say to you, no, you don't. You don't believe that. You say you believe that, but you don't believe it.

Why? Because you're standing next to me. Now, if you walk out onto the ice, pick up the bag, and you're like, I believe.

I would say, yes, you do. That \$100 is yours. You see, when it comes to belief, what we're talking about is the object of your faith.

[24 : 49] What you're actually trusting in. What you're actively trusting in. Not what you think you're trusting in, but what you're actually trusting in.

And when it comes to Jesus Christ and salvation, passive acknowledgement does not save you. Even the demons believe.

It is this active trust. It is stepping out onto the ice of Jesus, of His name, of all that He is and what He's done.

And you might walk out there and you're like, is it going to hold my weight? He will hold your weight. That, if you want to push the analogy, that ice, like, goes through the entire planet Earth.

It is, He is fully trustworthy. And when it comes to your salvation, there's no one else that can save you. there's no other true light.

[25 : 55] There's no other God in the flesh who paid for sins. He's the object of your faith. And that act of trust is what it means to be convinced.

It's biblical faith. It's biblical trust. Now, if you are not a Christian in the room, I've got a couple questions for you. Are you aware of your own sinfulness towards God?

That when you do something wrong, not only are you aware that you've disappointed yourself and you've hurt others, but your sin is against the God of the universe. Are you aware of that?

If you are aware of that, that is God's kindness to you. He's making you aware of your sinfulness so that you can become aware of His salvation in Jesus Christ.

And to receive Christ is something you must do to rescue you from the darkness. And it's not some kind of passive acknowledgement.

[27 : 03] If you're not a Christian, you need to step out onto Jesus and He will hold your weight.

And then you keep stepping out onto Jesus for the rest of your days. that is the life of faith, trusting in Jesus again and again.

Now, if you are a Christian, are you actively trusting in your Savior?

Or are you passively acknowledging Him? Have you just kind of gone seasonal sentimentality with the Christmas season and you're just kind of going through the motions?

Don't go through the motions. Just give yourself fully to Jesus. Go all in with Him. Go out fully on the ice. Find joy in Him this Christmas season that will go beyond the Christmas season.

And by the way, there's no havesies. There's no half in, half out. There's no one foot in the darkness of the world and one foot in the kingdom of light.

[28 : 12] You know what? You've seen those videos of like someone getting on a boat and that boat is moving away from the dock. They've got one foot on the boat and one foot on the dock and it's spreading and eventually it's not going to be good.

You need to make a decision. I used to live that way as a young man. It was miserable.

If you're a non-Christian, if you're a Christian, go all in. Full all of your weight, all of your trust, all of your salvation, all of your future onto Christ.

Two responses. not to receive Him, unbelief, eternal destruction, or to receive Him.

And what we see happen is the next point. The born again result. And this is in verses 12 and 13.

[29 : 16] Let me just read it for you. But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. I hope your heart, Christian, just rises to that.

Who were born not of the blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but born of God.

Miracle! The immediate result of not receiving the true light is to remain in the darkness, is to remain dead.

And eventually, the ultimate result of that unbelief is to be cast out into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, if I may quote Jesus.

But when you believe, when you come into the knowledge, when the light is shining, and you're like, I am a sinner, and you're becoming aware of these things, life has come!

His light gives us life. And there were two ways in this two verses that that shows up. It's a new status and a new birth.

[30 : 32] The new status is verse 12, He gave us the right to become children of God. He gave us the right to become children of God. We believe, and He gave us the right to become children of God.

The best way to understand that is through kind of a legal framework, a change of your legal status in God's eyes. You've heard us talk about justification along these lines.

The same applies to adoption. Before, when you were in the world, you were spiritually dead, blind. You were a rebel under God's wrath.

But now, the light has shone. there's life that's resulting in a belief that you see, that you see who God is, you see who you are, and when you believe, it's evidencing that you have been given new life, and you're made a child of God.

Have you ever needed to bring your birth certificate somewhere to prove your identity? You need to bring your papers? If you believe in his name, not passive acknowledgement, but active trust, you have been legally declared a child of the living God.

[32 : 03] You're legally his. John 1.12 becomes your adoption certificate. you're like, oh, I don't know why I believe, but I believe in Christ alone for the forgiveness of my sin.

I believe who he is. I believe what he's done. I believe apart from him, there is no salvation on those grounds by believing you have been given the right of sonship, of daughtership.

God's irrevocable. Once you've been legally adopted by God, you'll always be God's child.

It's status. It's legal status. And if you're in the room right now and you're thinking, well, isn't that convenient?

I just need to call upon Jesus, I'll be declared a child of God, and then I can do whatever I want to do. Blank slave, you know, got a blank check.

[33 : 15] Do you know how someone, how you can see if someone's a legitimate child of God or not? Has this faith in his name resulted in life change?

When you believe in the Son, when you believe in him, it will result in becoming like him. When you have a new status of becoming a child of God, it will result in a new way of living as God's children.

So you have a new status. But you also, it comes from the result of a new birth. In verse 13, we were born, not of blood, nor the will of the flesh, nor the will of man, but of God.

You could also read it as you were born of God. Those who believe in his name experience a new kind of life. In John 3, Jesus meets with a Jewish religious leader in the dead of night.

His name is Nicodemus. And Jesus tells him, you must be born again. And then he goes on to explain to him that this being born again is a working of the Holy Spirit of God.

[34 : 42] And the way you know that the Holy Spirit is moving, it's like the wind in the trees. You can't see it, you see the results of it. It's not of blood.

It's becoming a child of God, being born of God is not the result of your bloodline. Becoming a child of God is not the result of the will of the flesh, of sexual union.

It's not the result of human procreation. It's not that. That's not how you become a child of God. Nor is it the will of the flesh. No, excuse me, the will of man.

You cannot will yourself into becoming a child of God. Nor can you will someone else to become a child of God.

And what these three little statements have that are all like negative statements, not of blood, nor the will of flesh, nor the will of man, what all these have in common is a denial of a human centered cause to becoming a child of God.

[35 : 52] We don't make ourselves children of God. We don't have the ability to make ourselves or others children of God. Only God can cause this second birth.

Only God can make us his children. We must be born again. That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the spirit is spirit. And what Jesus is talking about is this new creation that dawned at his birth, at his coming.

This new creation in which this new light of life is shining into the darkness. And that if you can see him and see your sin and believe in him, you will be made new.

You will be born again. This is fundamentally a different kind of life. This is eternal life. This is spirit-given life. And this starts at conversion.

[36 : 57] Now the question that this can raise is a chicken and egg question. Which comes first? Belief or birth? Do you believe and then you are born again?

Or are you born again and then believe? And what we're talking about, we are, we are, this is a very nuanced debate. I believe that the Bible teaches that we are so sinful, we are so dead in our sin, that we are spiritually flatlined, incapable of anything, anything towards God.

We're dead to God. We're so blind that we are unable to believe without the spirit of God first giving us life.

In other words, God must give us a new heart in order to believe. It's this regeneration miracle. And these things happen so quickly that they're very difficult to parse out.

In order for you to see the true light that is shining, that gives life and believe, it is all a work of God's grace beginning to end.

[38 : 23] To truly live, you have a new status because of the new birth. And you know what it makes you want to do? If you're getting this, it makes you want to sing.

It makes you want to like, glory to God in the highest. It makes you want to say, God, you are amazing to do this.

You, Jesus, were born to give me second birth, to give you second birth. The appropriate response to this is worship.

His light gives us life, and we believe in him and live. A bright reality, new reality, a believing response, and a born-again result.

Because we've been able to see the true light and believe, if you're a Christian, we are now children of God, and so you are. We're going to finish up in a second.

[39 : 31] I'll pray, and then we'll sing Hark the Herald, Angel Sings. But if this morning you've realized you're not a Christian, you've just been doing this passive acknowledgement of who Jesus is, after we sing, will you come down front?

Let's talk. Because today, today, you can become a child of God. Let's pray. Father God, thank you so much for your kind work of your spirit.

Lord, we want to behold your son in his glory. We want to behold his face. We want to behold your glory, God, in the face of Jesus Christ.

God, would you do a work in us this December 2025, that you would move us from a seasonal sentimentality into a deep, abiding, active trust in you.

God, as we sing, hark the herald angels sing, would you stir our hearts all the more towards you. In Jesus' name we pray.

[40 : 51] Amen. Amen. Amen.