

the presence of God. The Psalms often describe God in terms of light.

Psalm 76 verse 4, you are radiant with light. Psalm 104, God wraps himself with light as a garment. And the Apostle Paul would say in 1 Timothy 6 that God dwells in unapproachable light.

So John is very specific and he's saying this message that God is light and in him is no darkness at all is a message he heard from Jesus. Colin can pick me up on this if I'm totally off beam, but I can't help but think of Jesus' words, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life. Especially because verses 6 to 7 in this chapter also talk about walking.

It says, if we walk in the darkness, we do not practice the truth, but if we walk in the light, as he is in the light. It talks about walking here. Jesus talks about walking. I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.

So it could be that, or maybe it's just the way that John summarizes the teaching of Jesus about God in general. God is light. In him is no darkness at all. Our second point, Jesus is light.

[9:12] Jesus is light. Not only was Jesus' message that God is light, Jesus himself was light, is light. You see, there's a big difference between you, me, and God. A huge difference. He is holy and pure and sinless. We're not. He's divine in perfection, and we openly say, don't we, well, nobody's perfect.

He is light, but we have this great problem called sin. There is a darkness in this world. There's a darkness in all of us. We all know deep down, don't we, that this world is not the way it's meant to be.

And don't we all long for a better world, a world where there's no more inequalities, injustices, a world where there's no more conflicts and violence and grief and death. And the good news of the Bible is that world is coming.

It's called the kingdom of Jesus, and it's coming. The world that you and I all want is coming. You see, the Bible story is not that we die and go to heaven. Sorry if that's a shock to you. That's not the Bible's message. The Bible's message is that if we trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, we die and our soul goes to be with Jesus. But then we come back, we get a new body, and we get a new earth, and we live in the new earth with God forever. Look at Revelation 21 and 22. God comes down to live with his people on the earth. That's our hope. The earth that we all want, the perfect world that we long for, is coming. But only those who have their trust in Jesus will be there. It's going to be a world of light with no darkness in it whatsoever. The Bible paints this dark picture of the world. It says the world is in darkness. It says that we are in darkness.

The Old Testament speaks about the prophesied birth of Jesus like this. Those who dwell in darkness have seen a great light. As I say, we know that to be true, don't we? We know there's darkness in this world. We've all felt it. I know you have. We've felt the pain that death brings, sickness, lies, deception, fear, sin, sorrow, evil. So much that is dark. The world is not as it should be.

[11:26] We are not as it should be. Every week in the news, there's something else, isn't there? There's conflicts breaking out. There's war. There's bloodshed. There's government scandals and corruption.

There's no doubt. Dare I mention iPads? No, I better not. And maybe we ourselves have been betrayed, bereaved, left bereft, heartbroken over some things. We know the truth that there's darkness in the world and that darkness will touch upon each and every one of our lives at some point or other. That great philosopher, Bruce Springsteen, once said, no one leaves this world unscathed. It's true, isn't it? There's darkness. So what does this world need?

What do you and I need? We need light. What does light do? Light gets rid of the darkness. No matter how dark it is, it cannot stand against the light. Light gets rid of the darkness.

Light shows us the way. It helps those who are lost find their way home. And when we speak about God being light, Jesus being light, these things are true as well. The world was lost and in darkness. You and I lost and in darkness. But God's Son comes into the world. Jesus is God in the flesh. And he comes into the darkness to be the light. God is light and Jesus comes into the world and he is the light of the world. As he said to himself, and I, in the world, I am the light of the world. He comes to give you and I light. John, who wrote this letter, also wrote the Gospel of John. And it's interesting when you read his beginning to the Gospel, how often he talks about light. Let me just read a few verses to you. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made. Without him

nothing was made that has been made. Here's the first mention. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so through him all might believe. He himself was not the light. He came only as a witness to the light. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. John seems almost obsessive about this idea of light, doesn't he? Just those first nine verses of his Gospel. Jesus in John 8 said he was the light of the world. In John 9, but I, while I am in the world, I am the light of the world, said Jesus. So what does it mean for us to say that Jesus is the light of the world?

[14:08] Well, it means that he shows us God, first of all. He shows us what God is like. We're no longer in the dark when it comes to understanding who God is. Jesus reveals God. We don't have to guess. We don't try and figure it out by ourselves. Quite often you might hear somebody saying, well, I like to think about God like this. We don't have liberty to make up for ourselves who God is and what God is like.

In Jesus, we're shown who God is and what God is like. He shows us God. We know who God is. We know what God is like because of Jesus. And what is he like? He is love. He is light. He is mercy. He is kindness.

God loves you. And that alone can lighten our darkness, as we were thinking about last night. But in all our struggles and our pains and our circumstances in our life, we are loved and we are not alone because of who our God is. He makes those promises. Be strong and courageous. Do not fear. Do not be discouraged.

For the Lord your God goes with you wherever you go. I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. God says that we are seen, that we are known, that we are cared for, that we are loved. And the heart of God that Jesus reveals to us is a heart that wants to rescue and to save. Jesus came into this world to save. To save sinners. To save you and to save me.

[15:35] And that shines like a light in the darkness. There is hope. There is a way home. There is a way to be forgiven. There is a way to have eternal life. There is a way to know God. And his name is Jesus. Jesus shines like a light to show us the way home.

And the Bible says that if we trust in the Lord Jesus, his presence will always be with us. The Lord will be our shepherd. And though we go through dark valleys, he promises he will take us out to the other side until he takes us to be with him in the Father's house for all eternity.

Jesus comes into this world and he's a sinless man. He embodies the holiness and purity of God. And you see, revealing God is a bit of a double-edged sword. The more we see God, the better we see ourselves.

The more we see his holiness and purity, the more we see our impurity. See, just the other day, the sunlight, sometimes the sunlight does shine in Invergordon. It does appear twice a year or something like that.

And the sun came in the window and shone in our telly and suddenly all these little handprints appeared all over the screen. I'm assuming they're our child's, not my wife's or anything like that. But these little handprints suddenly appeared. You couldn't see.

[16:44] It's a bit like that with us and God. The more we get to know God, the more we get to know ourselves. The two things are related. They're connected. But what Jesus reveals is a God who saves sinners.

Who came into this world to save and to forgive, not to condemn. And that's exactly why Jesus went to the cross. It's what we're going to remember today in the Lord's Supper. That the cross, something remarkable happened.

The light of the world stepped into darkness. Now, it's true to say when Jesus came into the world, he stepped down into darkness. But when he died on the cross, there was many supernatural things that happened.

And one of the things was a supernatural darkness covered Calvary for a number of hours while Jesus hung upon the cross. The light of the world literally died in the darkness.

He literally was swallowed up in this supernatural darkness for three hours. And Jesus did that for us. He went into the darkness for you and for me.

[17:48] He went into the darkness of death for you and for me. And why does he do that? He does that so you and I can have an eternity of light. So that you and I could be at home with God forever.

We cannot be more loved than God loves us right now. Jesus did the unthinkable to bring us home to be with him forever.

And all you and I need to do is believe in him. All you and I need to do is trust in him. You know, the darkness that Jesus embraced on the cross, it was real.

It was a real event in history. But it also was symbolic. The Bible pictures those who are lost eternally as a place of darkness, doesn't it?

Outside of the presence of God in the outer darkness. A place of wailing and gnashing of teeth.

God's presence is a place of light. To be out with the presence of God is a place of darkness.

[18 : 51] At the cross, Jesus is punished in our place. He loses the sense of the Father's love for him. He cries out in his agony, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

And isn't it fascinating how in the Bible they've left those words in their original language? Do you ever think that's weird? You're reading in English and all of a sudden you read, Eloi, Eloi, Lamaz, Sabachthani. Isn't that weird?

Why have they done that? Why have they not translated those words? It's almost as if the biblical authors want you and me to hear Jesus saying these words as he would have said them. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Eloi, Eloi, Lamaz, Sabachthani. He embraced the darkness so we need never experience it. He felt alone so you and I will never be alone.

He took the punishment for our sins so that we could be free and forgiven eternally. The Bible speaks of heaven as a place of light. It says that we won't need the sun or the moon in the new creation because the Lord himself will be the light.

[19 : 56] There will be no night there, the Bible says. No darkness at all. So Jesus brings hope. We live in a world of darkness and it hurts. And as we said, maybe we're feeling the effects of that today.

But in Jesus there is a promise. And in Jesus there is a hope. That one day the sun will rise. One day the day will break and the shadows will flee and the darkness will be gone forever.

Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away. There's a world coming where there's going to be no darkness forever. When Jesus comes again all tears will be wiped away.

Sorrow and sighing shall flee away. Sin and death will be no more. Won't that be an amazing world to be in? Won't that be an amazing world to be a part of? You can be there.

You will be there. If you trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. So Jesus is the assurance that our present sufferings are not forever. Jesus is the assurance that what is to come is better by far.

[20 : 58] Jesus is the assurance that God is real and that God cares and that God is there for us. And Jesus is the assurance that if our trust is in the Lord, our sins are forgiven fully and freely.

He is the way, the truth, and the life. See, truth in many ways is a hot topic these days. You know, don't we live in a world of conspiracy theories? On the way down the A9, I don't think there was a bin without flat earth or a road sign written flat earth society or whatever written all over it.

We live in an age of conspiracy theories. And I have a theory. Might be a conspiracy theory too.

Who knows? But at the root of all these conspiracy theories lies a question you find in the Bible.

What is truth? Who do I believe? What is truth? Well, if you want to know truth, and we're conditioned to be skeptics, aren't we?

I mean, we are Scots. There's an innate skepticism. I think Thomas in the Bible might have been Scottish. He comes back, and they all say, Jesus has risen from the dead. And I can imagine him in a Scottish accent going, aye, right.

[22 : 02] I'll believe it when I see it. There's something innate in us, isn't there, that's to be skeptical. We don't believe what our leaders tell us. We don't believe what we see in our newspapers. We don't believe what's told us on the TVs.

We don't believe what we read on social media. We don't believe it. Because we're conditioned to think everyone's lying, spin, half-truths. But Jesus is not like that. He is the truth.

His word is the truth. He doesn't deceive us. There's no hidden agendas. There's no spin. Jesus is light. He's transparent. He's honest. And he speaks to us what is true.

He is the way, the truth, and the life. So maybe you're in the dark today. Jesus is the light of the world. And he wants to bring light for you to you.

He loves you. And he will be there for you. And he wants you to know that. And he wants you to turn to him and trust him. God is light. Jesus is light. Thirdly, finally, you are lights.

[23 : 04] Both Jesus and John use the same imagery. You see, Jesus in Matthew 5, somewhat startling, he says to the believers, You are the light of the world.

It's easy for us to get our head around Jesus being light of the world. But Jesus turns it on its head. And he says in the Sermon on the Mount, You are the light of the world. You see, the church is where the light of Jesus shines from.

We're called to be a city upon a hill, shining in the darkness. How does the church shine when God is there? When God is present?

Colin and I were just chatting about this last night. We can have all the strategy plans in the world. Please don't. There's one strategy. The presence of God.

It's the greatest evangelistic strategy and witness there can be. Seek the presence of God. And this church will shine like a light. And people will be drawn to the light.

[24 : 00] It's the presence of God that people need. It's Jesus that people need. He is the jewel at the heart of our faith. We are called to be this city on a hill, shining in the darkness with the presence and the love of God.

And as we go into the world, we're called to be salt and to be light. But if you look at 1 John 1 that we read, there's been some issues in the church he was writing to.

Some false teaching had crept in, which led to the believers not living lives honoring God. And so this light was dimming. And John in this chapter is using the statement that God is light to tackle this.

It's worth pausing at this point. I've often had conversations with people in our congregation. They say, I'm not interested in theology. I'm just going to go do evangelism.

I'm not interested in theology. It's heavy and it's irrelevant. Well, I hope we wouldn't agree with that because John wouldn't agree with that. See, notice what he does here.

[24 : 59] He gives us some theology. He says, God is light. And then off the back of that theology, he teaches us how to live in the light of that. It's the theology that influences how we are to live. He says, God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

And then he goes into, so if we say we've got fellowship with this God who is light, while we walk in the darkness, we don't practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

So you see how he's transitioned there from theology, this is who God is, now transitioned into, now this is how you're to live as those who follow Jesus. You see, he was battling against a false idea that had crept into the church.

Verses 6, verses 8, verses 10, this phrase keeps cropping up. If we say, did you notice that? Verse 6, if we say, verse 8, if we say we have no sin.

Verse 10, if we say we have not sinned. So people were making these claims in the church. People were saying these things in the church and John is challenging them.

[26 : 05] And he's saying to the people of God, God is light and so you are to walk in the light, to follow Jesus. Walk in his ways. Don't walk in the darkness, walk in the light. You know, light's not always welcome, is it?

Sometimes you lift a rock and what do the creatures living underneath in the dark do? They scuttle away. And it's a long time ago now. I remember my teenage years. Someone would come in and put the light on when you've just woken up and you go, oh, it's too bright.

Put that light off. Put that light away. Light's not always welcome. But John is saying essentially that a sign that we know, a sign that we know God is that we love what God loves and we hate what God hates.

It's quite simple. If we know God, we love what God loves and we hate what God hates. We don't walk in the darkness. We don't lead a double life.

It's easy to do that, isn't it? We can turn up for church on Sunday and look really good, but Monday to Saturday we'll be living a very different existence. John is clear.

[27 : 11] And there's great comfort, by the way, before we come to communion in these words. He says, if we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar. So we should all cue, breathe sigh of relief. You don't have to be perfect.

If you say you've not sinned, you're a liar. You ever notice it's strange? There's only two places in the world where everyone's fine. The church and the doctor's surgery.

You ever been in a doctor's waiting room and you see someone, you know, oh, how's it going? Oh, yeah, fine yourself. Yeah, we're fine. Everyone you speak to on a Sunday, it's fine. It's miraculous really, isn't it? But we're all sinners.

And so John is saying, if we say we're perfect or have no sin, we're a liar. That's wonderfully comforting to me and it's wonderfully comforting as we come to the Lord's table. The standard to take communion is not to be perfect.

It's not to have no sin. So sometimes I hear people say, well, I can't come and take communion. I'm not good enough. I'm such a great sinner. That's the whole point. The communion is given to you to help make you stronger to follow Jesus.

[28 : 16] The same logic would be, I feel really sick, but I'm going to wait until I get better until I go to the doctor. That's the same logic to say, I'll wait until I'm better before I take communion. The whole point of this is to make you stronger.

So if you feel, but I'm a sinner. Yes, but if you put your trust in Jesus, you're a forgiven sinner. One of the Scots worthies, I forget, might have been Rabbi Duncan, went to a lady in his congregation who wouldn't come forward to communion.

He went to her with it and he said, take it girl, it's for sinners. And we'll be saying the same shortly. If we say we have no sin, we're a liar, but what John is talking about here is the idea of habitually, continually walking in sin and it not bothering us, not repenting of it.

It's a determination to choose sin and darkness as where we're going to live rather than God's light. How we live will show what we believe. And this idea was sneaking into the church, hey, I follow Jesus, so how I live does not matter.

And John's catching that saying, well, it's true to say that you're saved by nothing you do. That is absolutely true. You're saved by faith in Jesus alone. But if you know this Jesus who is light, that is going to show in the way that you live.

[29 : 33] What a calling you and I have. What a calling you have as a congregation to go and to shine as light in the world for Jesus. Or maybe I should rephrase that, to let Jesus' light shine in you.

Sometimes we just need to get out of the way. How do we do that? Focus on Jesus. Make much of His love for you. Abide in Him and you will bear much fruit.

Maybe we need to repent of something this morning. Maybe a hidden sin that we won't let go of. Maybe public defiance of the rule of Jesus. John says to us, if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

God is light. And may His light shine on us and this congregation for many years to come. Amen. Amen.