

After Darkness ... Light!

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- [0 : 0 0] Good morning, dear church family. Please stand for the reading of God's Word. Our sermon text today is John chapter 1, verses 1 through 14.
- We'll be preaching through the gospel of John, verse by verse. John 1. 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 anything made that was made. In Him 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. 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, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him.
- [1 : 0 5] 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 of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- 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.
- This is the Word of God. Thanks be to God. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. We confess that You are eternal, infinite, and unchangeable in Your power and perfection, goodness and glory, wisdom, justice, and truth.
- Nothing happens except through You and by Your will. And You have willed to reveal Yourself to us, Your creation, that we could worship You and enjoy You forever.
- We thank You, Lord, that You continue to speak even today through Your Word, by the power of Your Holy Spirit, the same power which raised Jesus Christ from the dead and inaugurated the new creation.
- [2 : 3 5] Lord, we long for Your return. Come quickly, Lord Jesus. Please speak to us, call us to You, draw us, prepare us to heaven. We ask, Lord, that with every breath of this sermon and with every meditation of each heart, that You will be pleased, that You will be glorified, Father, in the name of Jesus and by the help of the Holy Spirit we ask.
- Amen. The title for today's sermon is, After Darkness, Light. And that was the battle cry, the motto of the Reformation. After Darkness, Light.
- Darkness means death. In 1922, 57 cult members believed a lie. In a Russian bunker, they were taken underground where they lived, and children were born in that bunker, who as they grew year after year, never were exposed to sunlight.
- And the scientists who helped care for them, they made several observations. And we can learn from this how darkness means death. Sunlight deprivation leads to chronic diabetes, tuberculosis, no vitamin D, which can create undeveloped bones, teeth, nails, and it can ultimately lead to throat spasms and suffocation.

Darkness means death. We read in verses 4 and 5 that life is light.

[4 : 08] Look with me at verses 4 and 5. In Him, Jesus Christ was life. And the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

That's what I want to talk with you about today. If you reject Christ, you are dead in darkness. Believe in Him and live. Look at verse 14.

This Word, this God, the Son, who created the world, this 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.

How can this be? The Dutch theologian Herman Boving said, it is entirely incomprehensible to us, how God can reveal Himself. But mystery does not mean contradiction.

In His kindness, our Creator makes Himself known to you, the created being. See, in Christ, we have eternity brought into time, immensity into space, infinity in the finite, immutability in change, being in becoming, the all, as it were, in that which is nothing.

[5 : 34] This mystery, says Boving, cannot be comprehended. It can only be gratefully acknowledged. If that's true, that life is light, and darkness is death, and if it's true, that if you reject Christ, you are dead in darkness, but if you believe in Him, you live, where are you today?

And this is how I've been praying for each one of you in preparation for this sermon. Some of you, you decide if this is you. You are still in darkness, and you battle against the light of God.

My prayer for you is that the Word of Jesus will convict you of sin in your life and in your heart before the Holy God. There are others of you who are in darkness, but you, for a reason you can't explain, you don't find yourself battling the light of the gospel any longer.

My prayer for you has been that the great love of Christ for sinners such as you and me will be made real in your life once and for all, that you'll no longer remain in darkness, that you'll believe and have life in Christ.

There's a third category. It's those of you who are in the light of Christ. But you are not battling the darkness of sin in your own heart.

[7 : 07] You've become worldly. My prayer for you is that the darkness of sin in your heart, yes, it's still there, will be overcome by the love and the light of Christ so that you will battle darkness and sin in your life.

And my final group, it's those of you who are in the light and by God's grace, every day you do battle the darkness of your own thoughts in your heart.

My prayer is simply that with this sermon, your faith will be strengthened and you will be convinced once again that the light of Christ overcomes all the darkness, the hard things and trials that you endure in this life as you continue to battle sin and walk in the light of Christ.

Well, before we have the sermon, I want to introduce the book. Who wrote it? What else did he write? What is his writing style? And what is the purpose of the Gospel of John?

So first, who wrote it? Well, five times in the Gospel we're given this phrase, the disciple whom Jesus loved. We can narrow it down to being one of the three disciples among the twelve who were at the Lord's Supper and the three then who accompanied Jesus to the garden, which were Peter and the two brothers, the sons of Zebedee, James and John.

[8 : 35] Could it be James? We can rule out James because of what we read in Acts 12, verses 1, 2, and 3, which is this. King Herod, this is early on, still King Herod, as the Christian movement grows, he laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church.

He killed James, brother of John, with the sword. When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. So having eliminated Peter as being a separate man from these two sons of Zebedee and knowing that James was killed early on, we deduce that the disciple whom Jesus loved was the younger son of Zebedee, John.

What else did John write? He wrote, in addition to this gospel, three epistles, 1, 2, and 3 John in the magnificent apocalyptic book of Revelation.

This gospel of John was most likely written toward the very end of his life, just like the book of Revelation, perhaps also from the island of Patmos. So many of the doctrines that the church had been wrestling with, he is speaking to and clarifying as the final living apostle.

His style is bold and poetic. Take, for instance, what he writes in Revelation 22, verses 1 and 2. Listen for the theme of death, life, and new creation.

[9 : 56] Remember, this is the same author. John wrote, See that bold, poetic style?

He was also direct and simple, but not simplistic. In fact, he's very deep, but he throws down sharp contrasts in what he teaches. Take, for instance, 1 John 5, 16, the same author John wrote, We know that we have passed out of death into life.

There's our theme again. How? Because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. And John is also perhaps the most Trinitarian of all New Testament authors.

He gives us jaw-dropping insights into the Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, our triune God. His gospel has been called like an eagle because it takes us to the soaring heights of heaven itself, the fellowship among Father, Son, and Spirit.

Steve Lawson said that the gospel of John is the theological Mount Everest, the highest, most soaring peak. In the Old Testament, you're approaching on the foothills and then you get into the pinery and the snowy tops before you know you're in the highest realms of heaven itself in John's book.

[11 : 33] Why did he write this book? The purpose of the gospel of John, we get this very clearly in John chapter 20. Please turn there. I want to point out a phrase to you which is, you believe.

That phrase, you believe, or to believe, or that you may believe, it's used 96 times in the whole New Testament. In the other gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, it's used only between three and six times.

The next runner-up in the whole New Testament is the book of Acts which uses that phrase that you may believe nine times. But here in John, it is used 46 times.

And what is his purpose? We read in John chapter 20, verse 31, These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.

We're reinforced this purpose with John chapter 5, verse 24. Jesus himself says, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life.

[12 : 32] He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life. And in John 6, verse 47, Jesus says again, Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me has eternal life.

In John 8, 24, Jesus says, I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he, you will die in your sins. Well, what can we conclude from this introduction to the Gospel of John?

It's the same message that we read in the prologue, that if you don't believe in Jesus Christ, you remain a slave to sin. Satan, death, and darkness.

But like we read in verse 14, Jesus Christ, who is full of grace and truth, came to save you by his glorious light to give you life in him. So my proposition for you this morning is from verses 4 and 5.

Look there again. John chapter 1, verses 4 and 5. We read, So what does John mean by the darkness?

[13 : 57] Well, Andreas Kostenberger, New Testament scholar, says, Darkness, in John's Gospel, is the world alienated from God, spiritually ignorant and blind, fallen, sinful, dominated by Satan.

Now look at verse 1, John 1, 1. In the beginning, now if you grew up in a Judeo-Christian upbringing, a family, you would have been very familiar with those first three words, in the beginning.

And the next word that would automatically pop in your mind, everybody say it, in the beginning, God. But here the author wants you to think in the same way and instead of saying the very familiar term, Yahweh, he says instead, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

So what that means is that the Son is God, and the Son was with God, and the Son is God's Word.

So the author of John, he wants you to know that Jesus, the Son of God, who took on flesh, he was with God in the beginning, and through him everything was created.

[15 : 16] And I want you to see the darkness, the reference to the beginning and the thought of darkness, I want you to see that in Genesis chapter 1, verse 2. Please turn there in your Bible.

Genesis chapter 1, verse 2. In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now look at verse 2. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep.

Well, let's take each phrase. The earth was without form, you can picture chaos, and void, you can picture emptiness. Somehow, this chaotic emptiness was also like a black hole.

Darkness was over the face of it. It's like a black hole that's going to suck you in and consume you in the midst of chaos and death and destruction. And even though nothing existed, it was like the face of the deep.

For an Israelite who had been a slave in Egypt their whole life, entering now the wilderness promised land, when they hear the deep, they would be picturing the Mediterranean Sea, perhaps. They'd be picturing this scary ocean that they would never sail on, that at nighttime, it's chaotic, and it's like a darkness that could consume you and destroy you.

[16 : 33] And that's how God describes the world before the Word of God speaks it all into being. See, the darkness of the world is so black, that's the best comparison for what Christ came to do in this earth.

God's revelation needed to bring order, a new creation into the darkness of man's sin in this world. Now look at verses 6, 7, and 8.

See, the world was so dark that God had to, he had to shine the light on the sun. And that's what John the Baptist came to do, and we're going to talk more about him next week. But look at verse 6.

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

He was not the light but came to bear witness about the light. the true light which gives light to everyone was coming into the world.

[17 : 34] We read in verse 10, although God was revealing himself ultimately through Jesus, fulfilling all that the prophets had prepared, in verse 10 we read that the world did not know him.

And now look at verse 11. Jesus came to his own and his own people did not receive him. the light of God who gives life rejected by the very ones God sent him to preach to.

Jesus says in John chapter 3 verse 19 that the people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil.

See how it was their love for darkness and evil that kept them blind to the light of Jesus. John 12 35 Jesus said if you don't walk in Christ then the darkness will overtake you.

The one who walks in darkness does not know where he is going because the darkness is the opposite of the light of God. First John 1 5 through 6 we're told that God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

[18 : 46] So why did the people reject him? Again, John 3 19 the people loved the darkness rather than the light. So darkness is not only the absence of God's light as D.A. Carson says the darkness in this prologue of John it is an aggressive intentional unrepented and enslaving lust for evil.

That's what darkness is. See because of sin all people became like J.R. Tolkien and the Lord of the Rings like his orcs and trolls. These are ugly creatures that fear the sunlight they shun it they can't be near it and under Morgoth's power of darkness for them the night time became a time of peril unseen of fear without form an uneasy vigil or a haunted dream leading through despair to the shadow of death.

that's what it's like to be in the darkness of sin it's to be an orc or a troll if you reject Jesus as your king you remain infected by sin you remain a slave to Satan you are trapped in dreadful darkness a spiritually dead soul with eternity only one faint heartbeat away a shallow breath away or a tragic car accident away from everlasting judgment of your soul before the holy God do you realize that this is the state of your soul if you are not walking in the light of Christ if you don't see your own sin before God you are blind you cannot see the glory of Christ you need surgery how Psalm 90 verse 8 we're told

God's word sets your sin before him your secret sins in the light of his presence that's how God cuts you to the heart that's how he performs his surgery to heal you from blindness to see his glory ask God to show you your sin ask him to allow you to see the glory of God and you will feel like Charles Wesley wrote long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night but thine eye diffused a quickening ray I woke the dungeon flamed with light my chains fell off my heart was free I rose went forth and followed thee when God performs a heart surgery on you he changes you you become like that young man in the colonial period who had some smooth heavy stones in his pocket walked out to the field he was mocking

George Whitfield an evangelist preaching the gospel and he was ready to throw these stones and see if he could smash break the head of that preacher he let him get through his prayer and took the first stone out Whitfield read from God's word and the Holy Spirit cut this young man to the heart he confessed later I came to crush his head but instead the word of God broke my heart pray that God will do that to you what is the light that overcomes such darkness that's our promise in verse five do you see that the light of Christ shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it what we read in John we read verse one how does the light of God do this work look at verse two he was in the beginning with God and all things were made through him this is referring to the word of God without him was not anything made that was made you need to be thinking now of creation that darkness of chaos and emptiness and death the word of God speaks six times

[23 : 13] God said God said when God spoke when God's word went forth it was effective to create to bring physical new life just as God's word going forth today is effective to bring spiritual new creation in Psalm 33 verse six we're told by the word of the Lord the heavens were made and by the breath of his mouth all their host God breathed through Jesus Christ and the stars took their places in the sky God's word is also personal it's personal near associated with God's essence Isaiah 55 10 and 11 say my word that goes out from my mouth it shall not return to me empty it shall accomplish that which I purpose and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it says the father the son goes forth as the word of

God and the son does not fail in his mission he accomplishes what the father gave him to do do you hear the word of God and John connects the word of God to the actual person of Jesus Christ the word was God look at verse 14 the word became flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory thanks be to God the word was with God and the word was God two distinct persons one God Jesus is God Jesus was with God the Nicene Creed says that the son is of the same substance of the father God of God light of light true God of true

God begotten not made of one substance with the father God in man God take on flesh the same person should have both the glory and a grief Stephen Charnock said what a wonder that two natures divine and human infinitely distant should be more intimately united than anything in the world in the person of Jesus an infinite joy in the deity and an inexpressible sorrow in the humanity that in God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle the thundering creator be a weeping baby and a suffering man the incarnation astonishes men men upon earth and angels in heaven look at verse 9 this is the true light Jesus who gives light to everyone coming into the world he was in the world and the world was made through him he came to his own and his own did not receive him the life giving word of

God must break into darkness and who is it that God saves look at verse 12 to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God well then who is it that can believe in him who isn't still dead in sin look at verse 13 we're told it's those who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man you cannot will your way into the kingdom of God you must be look at verse 13 the last words you must be born of God you cannot make yourself born again because your flesh cannot believe in God on its own so you see how God must get all the glory when a sinner is saved look at verse 14 one more time the word became flesh and dwelt that word is tabernacled set up a tent so the purpose of the tabernacle the tent was to shield sinners from the glory of

God so they don't get consumed and killed by it and now look what John says God dwelt among us and we have seen his glory because he was tabernacled in the flesh of a man Jesus it's the glory as of the only son from the father full of grace and truth so when Jesus became flesh and brought the glory and truth of heaven to earth and his fleshly body he made it possible for a sinner on earth to be united to God himself so what does this mean for you today do you see the glory of Jesus as of the only son from the father do you see Jesus full of grace and truth there's no life apart from his light Andreas Kastenberger again said that life and light attest to the blessing resulting from

[28 : 38] Jesus coming into the dark world to bring new eternal life through his death for who for you who believe in him he saves you from death to life from darkness to light from this present evil age into his new creation he saves you from Satan's dungeon into the kingdom of God Jesus satisfies all the psalmist longings everything the psalms long for is fulfilled in Christ and he makes possible all highest aspirations every expectation that was placed on the shoulders of the coming son of David Jesus accomplishes and he paves the way for the fulfillment of that abundant eternal life in the presence of the holy creator himself for all eternity that we read in all of the apocalyptic literature and why does it matter for you that God took on flesh because the eternal son in his resurrection body is your only hope for eternity in 1st

John chapter 3 verse 2 we're told we shall be like him body and soul mark jones explains it this way we yearn for the day when our bodies and souls both will be transformed into the likeness of christ glorious body the incarnation of the son explains why heaven will be forever why is that because we are united to christ for heaven to end one of two things would have to happen right this is what mark jones writes number one jesus would have to pass out of existence or god would have to sin see you're united to christ like a marriage and god would never dissolve your marriage to his son it pleases the father that you the church belong to christ and jesus because he is god will never pass out of existence both of those possibilities are non-existent the union between christ and his bride the true church would have to be dissolved but neither god nor our loving savior will ever allow this to happen christ holds his church forever that's our hope of heaven so does isaiah 9 to describe you are you one who once walked in darkness but now have seen this great light are you one of those who has dwelt in a land of deep darkness but on you this light has shone like verse 13 says have you been born of god maybe you're wondering and how do you know how does god regenerate and give new life one puritan pastor explained effectual calling this way he had taught the catechism what is effectual calling then he asked now you know this memorized can anyone say the catechism as your own words and upon his proposal solemn silence followed many felt its vast importance but none had courage to answer one young man who had other times not taken the

Bible study seriously finally stood up and with every mark on his face of a broken and contrite heart he said with a trembling voice the catechism in his own words effectual calling is the work of God's spirit to convince me of my sin and misery enlightening my mind in the knowledge of Christ in renewing my will it's when God persuades me to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to me in the gospel the spirit convinced him through being catechized in the church to God's glory and to the comfort of the other believers when he was done the congregation was bathed in tears that's new creation power creation through the word in the beginning the new birth what was dead is now alive in

Christ the light shines in that darkness and the darkness has not overcome it because in the words of Augustine about 1500 years ago man's maker was made man the bread of life was made to hunger the fountain was made to thirst the light to sleep the way to be tired on the journey the truth to be accused of false witness the teacher to be beaten with whips the foundation to be suspended on wood the strength made to grow weak the healer was wounded the life laid down his life for a sinner such as you and me Jesus who was full of grace and truth came to save you by his glorious light to give you life in him don't reject him as king of your life any longer believe in him bow to

God's prince as your savior your only hope in life and in death and enjoy life in him forever where do you fit into this story painted in this time shattering world rocking prologue to the gospel of John if you are in darkness and you are battling the light that means you are still blind and I exhort you today may God turn your life upside down if you are in darkness and you are not battling the light anymore this is the Holy Spirit working in your life and may God's Spirit reveal the glory and the grace of Jesus to you that you have life in him if you are in the light but you are not battling the darkness of your own sin this means you are unhappy may the

[35 : 10] Lord who began a good you finish it like he promises in John 8 verse 12 I am the light of the world whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life if you are in the light and you are battling the darkness of sin in the world in your own life then you are a stranger and a pilgrim in this dark world this present evil age my exhortation to you is that may the Lord strengthen and encourage you proverbs 4 18 says for you keep me make this your prayer keep me on the path of righteousness which like the light of dawn shines brighter and brighter until the full day if you live to please God then you listen to his words and keep his commands they show you the way to go for to follow his directions and you will get if you don't follow it you will get lost in the dark but if you remember his teaching you will grow wiser and stronger until you see

God let's pray Lord you promise that your people in Psalm 36 will feast on the abundance of your house and that you will give them drink from the river of your delights and we trust that with you is the fountain of life and that in you do we see light Amen