

John 1:6-9 (PM)

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Date: 12 December 2021

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[0 : 00] Well folks, I'm going to take a couple of minutes now and just share some thoughts on our passage of scripture. If you are visiting our church, we have been going through the first little section of John's story of Jesus in the Bible.

But before we get there, can I just tell you about something that really annoys me? Would that be alright? It's when I try to find a recipe online and I just, literally I just want the ingredients.

Like I just want the ingredients. But the recipe starts like this. My sister got married in the spring.

Like I google some, you know, Greek baked dish or something and I expect to see spices.

And I read, my sister got married in the spring in a field of daisies. The wind smelled like peaches.

And I get 1500 words of something I don't care about.

And I just have to scroll, scroll, scroll, scroll to get to the ingredients. I hate this. I'm trying to cook some moussaka. I just want to know how many eggplants I need.

[1 : 25] But I have to scroll, scroll, scroll, scroll, scroll to get to the really important stuff. When John wrote his story of Jesus, he did it right.

You know, he did it right. He started with the most important thing. He started with the most important thing we can know about Christ. Let me read the first five verses to you.

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. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness shall not overcome him. That's all talking about Jesus, and it's saying that Jesus is the eternal God who created all things.

And this Jesus wants to give you life, a certain type of life, a life that's eternal and hopeful and joyful. So that's where we got up to last week in our sermon series.

[2 : 29] This week, we're looking at verses 6 to 9. And 6 to 9 feel a little bit abrupt, because we've been hearing about Jesus, and all of a sudden we start hearing about this other guy.

So let me read 6 to 9 to you. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, and all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but he came to bear witness to the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. So just for a few minutes, let me look at these verses here and try and make some sense of them.

So verse 6, there was a man sent from God whose name was John. Right, first, who's this guy John? Because it's a bit confusing, isn't it? Because when you hear the stories about Jesus, there are actually a few different Johns.

This John is not the John who wrote the Gospel of John. This is talking about a guy called John the Baptist. Now that guy, John the Baptist, was a very big deal back in the days.

[3 : 35] He was a preacher. He lived in the desert. And huge, huge crowds would come from all over to see him. On to verse 7.

He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him. Okay, there's a lot in that sentence. But it says John came as a witness. Witness, that's courtroom language, isn't it?

It's saying that John's job was to testify about someone else. So ultimately, John is not trying to build his own religious thing.

It was all about someone else. But who? And that's in the next bit of the sentence. To bear witness about the light. So what's that about? What's all this light business? Well, it's talking about Jesus.

We know that. So far it's said, God sent this guy John to tell us about Jesus. And it says it in very lovely poetic words.

[4 : 31] But that's what it's basically saying. Now it's interesting, isn't it? Why doesn't it use the name Jesus? Why use this word light instead of just Jesus' name? It's because it's a really rich word light.

It's rich with meaning. For example, we need light to survive, don't we? We need light to survive. We know about light deprivation in Vancouver, don't we, right?

Some of us have sunlamps to help with that stuff. When you're deprived of light, physically it really affects us. Well, spiritually, the same thing is true.

And that's what the writer is getting at. If we stay out of the light of Jesus, we're depriving ourselves of something essential. Staying out of the light of Jesus means sort of pushing them off to the edges of our life.

And you might say, well, that's actually okay because I actually get my spiritual light from somewhere else. Great point.

[5 : 39] What do I say about that? Well, I'd point us to the Bible here, which in the passage, it says that Jesus is the light. See, there's a definite article there. We don't miss that.

Jesus is the light. So the claim of these early believers who were with Jesus was this. Jesus is not a light. One of the optional lights to get your light from.

One of the light options. He was the only source of light. I remember when I was a young man being at a party, and someone handed me some glasses.

And they said, try these glasses on. And I didn't wear glasses in those days. And I put them on and we all had a bit of a laugh because, you know, it changes our face when we wear glasses. We're all laughing about that.

Have these glasses on. And then, I was at this party. I was in, I remember this so vividly. I was in a kitchen. And I picked up a can of soda there. And it was sort of laughing away. And then I looked at the side of the can.

[6 : 38] And I realized for the first time in my life, I could actually read the really tiny print on the side of the can. You know, where it says where the drink was, you know, manufactured.

I didn't think anyone could read that. I actually thought they printed that blurry. I didn't realize that I was a bit blind.

And I didn't know what I was missing out on. I didn't realize I was missing out on such clarity. By calling Jesus the light in verse 7, it's saying when you intentionally or sort of casually reject who Jesus is, you're in the dark.

You're like me without glasses all those years ago. And you're missing out on so much. And often you actually, you just don't know. You don't realize it. Jesus is called the light.

Because when you believe in him, what John says about it, when you believe what Jesus says about himself, changes how you see everything.

[7 : 50] Changes how you see everything. You start to see everything as it really is. I mentioned this last week, but I became a Christian when I was 17. It was through a friend who really simply just explained who Jesus was to me.

What he had done for me. Why the world was like it was. And I thought, that makes complete sense. I thought, it just makes complete sense.

And it was like, it was like that. It was like a light had been turned on in my life. Here's the thing. It wasn't just that all of a sudden I understood stuff.

It actually changed the way I lived. And we get a hint of that in the passage. John, believing in Jesus, lived this radically different sort of life.

Look at verse 8 here. He was not the light, but came to be a witness about the light. John wasn't the light. Jesus was. But John's job was to point people to Jesus.

[8 : 54] And that all sort of sounds like, oh yeah, that's cool. That's like his job right there. But remember, John was a pretty big deal. He was a celebrity.

He was a big name. He had a huge influence. He had his own disciples. But he was consistently reminding people, It's not about me. It's not about me. It's not about me.

I'm not the light. I'm not the Messiah. And that attitude is not to be sneezed at. That is a remarkable attitude. In chapter 3, there's this great story. It talks about when Jesus shows up to be baptized.

John redirects his own followers, his own disciples to Jesus. And after a little while, some of John's really hardcore disciples come to John and say, Listen man, Jesus has taken away all your people.

Your career is over. You know, they were panicking. And how does John respond? What does John say about all this? Verse 29, he says, My joy is now complete.

[9 : 55] He must increase. I must decrease. My joy is complete. How is it that John can have that attitude? How could he give up all that power and influence?

Because he had been given a vision of a life much bigger than his own. A life much bigger than just pursuing his own success. And it's such a hardcore way to live, isn't it?

But it's actually where the light is. And it's where there's joy, peace, and hope, and all of that good stuff. And the science backs it up. Think about our time, our sort of cultural moment right now.

There's a professor out of San Diego called Jean Twenge who writes about generational changes. I won't quote her. I'll just read the title of one of her most recent books because it's a really long title. And it's all in the title. She wrote a book called Generation Me. Why Today's Young Americans are More Confident, Assertive, Entitled, and More Miserable Than Ever Before.

[11 : 02] She basically says that nothing will make us more unhappy than self-absorption. When your life is all about you, your success, proving yourself, it's a disintegrating life.

Relationally, socially. And the Bible says that's like living in darkness. A life of self-absorption. It's like living in darkness.

Because you're not meant to be your own king. You're not meant to be your own queen. You're not meant to be your own light. Despite what spiritual gurus will tell you, you don't find the light inside of you.

It's not inside of you. No. It comes to you from the outside. It comes to you from your creator.

Doesn't that just make sense? That that would be the way it works.

John knew this. Which is why he could direct all his talents and all his influence away from himself.

Now how would I summarize all this so far?

[12 : 12] I'd say this. Jesus is God. The creator God. And when you believe all the claims about him, it's like a light is turned on in a dark room.

And it changes everything. It changes your priorities. It changes your aspirations in life. And it's the pathway to joy and peace and hope.

Now when I say this, you know, trust in Jesus. Follow the light. I know some of you may hear me saying, make a deal with God.

Some of you may hear me saying, make a deal with God. A deal like God. I promise I will be a better person. And I will try and be just exactly like Jesus.

And if I do that, you will let me into heaven, right? That's a common misconception about what the Christian faith is. No, the Christian faith is not a negotiation with God.

[13 : 13] The Christian faith is not about negotiating with God. The Christian faith is about surrender. We surrender to him because of what he did for us.

And that's what verse 9 is about. Let me read it to you, this last verse. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. The light had to come from the outside.

How did it happen? God wrote himself into the story. He took on flesh. He became a baby. See, this passage here is about the Christmas story, isn't it?

Now, why a baby, though? Why a baby? What's God's strategy? Why become human at all? Well, the short answer is, God became flesh and blood, a human, so that he could be vulnerable.

So that he could be hurt. So that he could die. See, God's plan for reconciliation and forgiveness is good news.

[14 : 20] And it was a radical plan, and it worked. So you see, the Christmas story tells us that the Christian faith is not about trying to make a really great deal with God.

It's about accepting the fact that God became a baby to rescue us from darkness. I'm going to finish up here.

But if you're a new Christian, or perhaps a skeptic, who is interested in finding out more about the Christian faith, we are running a discussion group here early in the new year.

It's called the Come and See Sessions. And it's a place to learn, ask any questions you like, to meet really interesting people. If you go to the events page in our website, you'll see all the details there.

Or you can just come and ask me after the service or email the office, and I'll tell you all about it. But now, before we finish, let's pray.

[15 : 27] Would you just pray with me now? Father, when it comes to your truth, we are grateful that you do not let us wander in darkness.

That you have sent your Son, the light of the world, to help us, to save us, to rescue us.
Help us, Lord, to get a hold of that truth and hold on to that truth above all things this Christmas.
Amen.