

# Christmas Eve Homily - John 1:5 “Light in Darkness”

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. You may be seated, unless you are a kid and you get to come take a seat up here on the steps with me.

Okay. We're going to talk for just a minute. All right. Is everybody excited for Christmas? Just find a seat where you can see me, all right? See if you can see my face. Uh-oh, we're running out of steps. If you want to sit right down there on the floor, that's just great too. Okay. It doesn't have to be on the steps. Hey, you can be on the floor if that's easier. Okay. It gets very exciting this time of year with Christmas coming up. It's so close, isn't it? You know, one of my favorite, it is tomorrow. You're right. One of my favorite parts of Christmas is Christmas lights. Do y'all like Christmas lights? Like the ones on these trees or even candles, like pretty candlelight. Do y'all like pretty candlelight? Maybe you'll get to hold one in just a little while. You know, all of those lights at Christmas time, they remind us that Jesus is the light of the world. Can you say that? The light of the world. Let me show you a little bit what that means. Okay. Now we're going to make it a little bit darker. It was already dark in this room, wasn't it? We're going to make it a little bit darker, but it's going to be all right. Okay. Just stay with me. Okay. Hold on. I was, it's kind of dark. It won't last long, but I was going to read you a verse from the Bible, but I can't even see it anymore. I can't see to read. Do you know, does anybody have any, where could we get, look, there's a light over there. Do you see that light?

Yeah. You know, does that light help me? I still can't read. What if that light came over here closer to me? Do you think that would help? Oh, wow. Look, but I can't get up. Thank you so much, DJ. Look, oh, look, now I can read. Listen, listen to what the Bible says. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not overcome it. Can y'all sit down for just a second while we talk so everybody else can see? Awesome. You know, it's a dark world sometimes, isn't it? So many things, so many things we can't understand. There are, there are bullies in the world and monsters in the world. I know it's scary. In fact, there's even sin in our own hearts, isn't there? Times when we don't want to obey our parents. We just want to do what we want to do. It's very dark and we need light, don't we? And just like DJ brought me this light so that I could read, the light shines in the darkness. Who did we say is the light of the world? Jesus.

Jesus is, you know, that is actually what Christmas is all about. Hey, listen to me just once. We're almost finished, okay? Listen, listen. Jesus didn't stay far away in heaven, did he? He came all the way down to bring his light to shine close to us. He was stronger than all the bullies and the monsters.

[ 3 : 42 ] He even beat sin and death so that our sin could be forgiven and we could live with him forever. That is the good news of Christmas, that Jesus is the light of the world and that he's come close to us, okay? So listen, when you see Christmas lights tonight or when you hold a candle that has a light, I want you to remember something, okay? Every one of you, as you hold that light, remember that Jesus is your light who comes close to you and he never leaves you and he never goes out, does he? He's always our light. Jesus is the light of the world who came into the world to defeat all the darkness, all right? Can we pray about that? Let's pray and thank Jesus for being our light.

Jesus, thank you so much for loving us. Thank you for not staying far away but for coming into this world to be born and live and die and rise for us. I pray that every one of these precious kids will know that you're with them and that you love them and that they'll celebrate Christmas because of that and we ask it in your name, amen. All right, hang on one second. We're going to wait for some lights to come back on. There you go. Now you can go back calmly and safely, I hope, to your

seats. Thank you so much.

Can you blow it out for me? Can I do it? Thank you. Ethan! Love you. All right. I think I'm going to give us just a minute.

And I am really sorry if that causes any difficulty going to sleep tonight.

It was darker than I anticipated. This Advent season here at Southwood, we have walked through Matthew's account.

[ 5 : 55 ] of Jesus' birth, tracking his family tree back to Abraham, Emmanuel, God with us, wise men coming to worship the king. Tonight, in case you hadn't noticed, we've been reading Luke's account of the Savior coming into the world.

There are angels singing and shepherds worshiping and Mary pondering. And now John goes back a bit further than both of these to tell us about Jesus' entrance into the world.

John starts, not just at a manger scene, but he starts with very familiar words, in the beginning. He's going way back.

Okay? John chapter 1. This is God's holy word. 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.

[ 7 : 12 ] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. I want to spend just a few more minutes tonight reflecting on that one phrase, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The reason is that I'm not sure that there's a more hopeful truth in the entire Bible, especially when you feel the darkness.

See, that statement, that the light shines in the darkness, clearly acknowledges the reality of the darkness, doesn't it? The darkness that we live in.

The darkness many of us feel right now. The heaviness of the darkness that's in us, and that's around us, and that often hangs over us like a heavy blanket.

It may just be me. Sometimes pastors feel things too much. But my sense is that more of us than usual are feeling the heaviness of that darkness at the end of this year.

[ 8 : 30 ] There just seems to have been a lot. Maybe a lot in this church family, in this community, in this world. We're feeling the weight of the darkness.

Maybe for some of you, the darkness you feel is from grief, loss in your own life, and the life of those around you, those you love and care about.

The hopelessness that sometimes sets in in the midst of that. Maybe your darkness, your feelings from the evil in the world around you, the wars, the injustices you see that aren't rectified, the abuses of power, even in the name of good, just infuriates you.

Maybe for others of you, it's from failures in your own life. You thought you'd be better by now, but you've messed up again.

Or just this sense of darkness that the Bible describes where you don't really know where you're going. You're living life, you're getting by, fine, but you don't really know where it's all headed, where life's going.

[ 9 : 44 ] There's no real clear sense of purpose and direction for you. So the darkness feels thick and deep and sometimes overwhelming.

In fact, I'd like to try to be really honest tonight without ruining your Christmas Eve. Sometimes it seems darkness is winning.

It does sometimes feel that way. I like to go up on a mountainside overlooking Huntsville and watch the sunrise. It's beautiful so often.

There's these beautiful oranges and purples right as the day is breaking. It's glorious. But sometimes it's not that.

Sometimes I get up on the mountainside and it's sunrise time and I'm double-checking and all you can see is fog, clouds, darkness.

[ 10 : 48 ] I've shared this with some of you, this sense of not being able to see or to feel the sun at all. No heat and warmth, no light. I can't even see where to walk.

It appears from everything that I can tell on those days that darkness has overcome, has won. That's what it looks like. That's the evidence as I look around me.

And so I love that John says the darkness has not overcome it because I can tell that God knows that it sometimes feels as if it has. I think that's why he says it.

Because he knows that many days seem to us as if darkness wins. In fact, in the story that he tells of Jesus, there are many moments where it looks like from everybody looking on that that's true. It's that way from the start. I mean, who's going to win this battle of light versus darkness? I mean, you tell me, who's going to win? The little baby in the manger or the big strong king who intends to kill him?

[ 11 : 58 ] Who's going to win? The child of two poor people or the rich and powerful Jewish leaders and establishment? Who's going to win?

A humble Jew or the mighty Roman Empire? Come on. The light of the world doesn't seem to stand a chance.

The same is true, by the way, toward the end of the story when we're told that the world literally goes dark in the middle of the day. As the Christ, the Messiah, the King of the Jews hangs on a cross and cries out and dies and it's dark and the powers of darkness celebrate.

everyone is picking darkness to win. Not so fast, my friend. God doesn't deny the reality of darkness.

He just comes to assure us that light is stronger. It's what he's told us since the days of the prophet. We read that at the beginning of the service.

[ 13 : 14 ] The people walking in darkness. He sees them. They've seen a great light. He knew that we were going to feel this way that darkness shall cover the earth and thick darkness all the peoples but the Lord will arise upon you.

Arise, shine for your light has come. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. He knows and he's telling you how the story goes.

Look what we learn about this unbeatable light here. How can we be sure tonight that the light will win? What is it about this light that lets us grab onto it and have hope?

First, the light is loving. In other words, it's personal. John is not talking about some vague force that may or may not last.

You know, good vibes, karma. It's not even some mysterious logos, the word, a power out there that will magically turn evil to good.

[ 14 : 25 ] No, read, it's a person. The true light that gives light to everyone wasn't staying far off but was coming into the world.

Verse 9. Verse 14, the word became flesh and made his home in our neighborhood, walked on our dirt.

The light John is talking about then is indisputable. Jesus really came and lived here, we know this, with this inexpressible love that has changed the world, healing the sick, welcoming the lonely, challenging the powerful, comforting the grieving, teaching the confused, forgiving the sinners.

The loving light pushes back the darkness. But you might say, yeah, great, but didn't he die? Yep. In fact, his death on the cross is as historically attested as the rest of his life. life. This light overcomes darkness because Jesus is the living light, absolutely invincible.

[ 15 : 44 ] Here's how we know it. Look at verse 4. In him was life and the life was the light of men. Life, yes, he died, but the third day he rose again from the dead, never more to die.

That midnight darkness in the garden of his betrayal, the midday darkness at the cross, the early morning darkness at the tomb is replaced by the light of resurrection life and that's so that we can know that in our darkest moments and moments you've known even this year, moments like tragic death, moments like devastating miscarriage, moments like terminal diagnoses from which you look around and say there is no hope in this life.

Even then, still, darkness does not win. it feels like it, right?

You may have had those days, you may be in those seasons and you look around and you say, all I can see, all I can feel is the darkness, but the light of life has come into our world so that we don't face even death as the final chapter.

It's not. Listen, there is good news. The darkness has not overcome Jesus, the light. The grave could not hold him. Death could not defeat him.

[ 17 : 30 ] Darkness could not overcome him. So you can stare death in the face and say, I hate you. I hate you. You can even weep with Jesus.

It'll be right there next to you and through those tears, you can say, but death, you don't win. You will not win. The game is not over.

The living light shines. A living person, so many saw and felt and touched it and one day I'm going to feel it again.

I'm going to see it again and it may not be today, but I know the sun is still there. It's behind those really heavy clouds.

I know it is. I'm going to feel its warmth. I'm going to see its light again. The darkness has not overcome it. And the last reason you can be confident that this light is a divine light.

[ 18 : 36 ] The word was with God and the word was God. There from the very beginning, creating the entire world, breathing life into each and every one of us who's ever walked in this world.

See, God is light. In Him there is no darkness at all. But we wouldn't know that. How would we know that if God stayed far away from us all the time?

If God hid from us far away, if we stayed with our hearts and minds in darkness about Him, we wouldn't know. John says, verse 18, no one has ever seen God.

Problem. But God, the only Son, has now made Him known to us by coming near to us.

Son of God loves pure light. We're going to sing it. Now Jesus comes to help us see God's light.

[ 19 : 49 ] You ever wonder what God would be like if you got up really close to Him? How would He respond to you? What would He say?

How would it go? You don't have to wonder anymore. Jesus shows you. Are you grieving tonight? not sure you'll ever stop?

He weeps with you. He blesses the mourner. He wipes away tears. Are you confused?

Hopeless? Not sure your life matters anymore? He sees you. He calls you by name.

He shines the light of the world so that you don't have to walk in darkness anymore. Are you sinful? Are you failing again?

[ 20 : 51 ] Are you not sure that you can acknowledge that God is there? That you could ever get close to Him without being destroyed? He eats with you.

He eats with sinners. He is destroyed for you. He forgives your sins forever so that you can be with Him.

See, the baby born at Christmas is God come to be with us. But even then on that first Christmas night it's only the dawn of redeeming grace.

It's the first little glimmers of sunlight breaking through. But He's headed to a cross and an empty tomb where redeeming grace shines brilliantly.

We've never seen anything like it. It's at full strength and it will never be put out. It is inextinguishable this light. The glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

[ 22 : 01 ] The divine light living loving always overcoming the darkness. See the light shines shines present tense in the darkness then now and always the greatest reality in all of history is that the light shines in the darkness.

Amen. That's the greatest truth you can count on. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. It may feel really dark tonight but light shines in Jesus even if there's no other light.

In him God promises the darkness is already passing away and the true light is already shining because of the tender mercy of our God the sunrise shall visit us from on high to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death to guide our feet in the way of peace the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not will not cannot overcome it.

Let's pray. Oh Jesus we thank you we thank you that you did not stay far off but that you have indeed come near to us you've entered into our darkness so that we will know the light of life would you shine that light into the darkest places of this world of this room of our hearts even now as we meet with you we ask you to do that Amen it was a dark night it was a night when the son of God was going to be betrayed to be killed on a cross and Jesus sat with his disciples to celebrate the Passover meal and he took bread and he broke it and he gave it to them as I ministering in his name give this bread to you he said take and eat this is my body given for you he knew where it was going do this in remembrance of me and then in the same manner after supper he took the cup and said this cup is the new covenant in my blood shed for many for the forgiveness of sins drink from it all of you for as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim my death until

I come this is a table tonight where you can come and eat with Jesus it's it's not the table of Southwood or of the Presbyterian church it's the Lord's table he's the one who set this table and extended the invitation to you to come if you are one of his if you're one who has received his light shining into your life so that you say I'm not the source of light I don't have it in me I'm not enough but he is and he knows what to do with the darkness in me then if you've professed that as your hope publicly if you're a part of his church anywhere come and eat with us tonight and more importantly with him he's come near you to meet with you I know there are many of you here tonight that may have come with family or with friends maybe you're not used to being in a church service like this maybe you're a kid who's usually not in the sanctuary during this part of the service look we're so glad that you're all here one of the things we love to do at

[ 25 : 50 ] Christmas Eve during the Lord's supper is to pray with every group that comes up and if you'd be comfortable with that then we'd love for you to come and let us pray with you if you're not one who's actively trusting Jesus if you're not old enough yet that you've professed your faith in him and join the church that's you're welcome to stay exactly where you are our heart for you would be that you know about the light of the world and that you meet him you don't have to take bread and wine tonight for that to be true Jesus meets you wherever you are he shines into whatever darkness you're feeling and so we're thrilled that you're here to celebrate with us I'm going to pray and our for what we celebrate at Christmas that you haven't left us alone that you don't stay far away that you don't leave us in the dark and you don't hide from us you've entered in and we give you thanks and so would you take these very common elements would you use them to do something special in our hearts that we would in a fresh way remember that you're with us that your light is with us now and will never leave us would that be our hope even this

Christmas we ask it in your name amen for more information visit us online at [southwood.org](https://southwood.org)