

Sermon Series Four: Believe and Live
(The Gospel of John: Signs of the Messiah - 1:1-12:50)

John 1:3-9

Who is Jesus? (Part 2: Life and Light)

When I look around me nearly everything that I see has a time when it came into being - a beginning (the seas, the mountains, the stars...). But there are some things that never began at all. They are eternal. Among these are “life” and “light.” These are not creations of God, but part of the very nature of God. They exist wherever and whenever God exists.

John is answering the question, “Who is Jesus?” And in these verses he introduces **two dominant themes** throughout the book. I gave a number of the years of my life to the study of music. And one of the things I discovered is that in every great musical work the composer would declare a theme (a motif) and then allow it to recur again and sometimes again throughout his work. This is notably true in Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony*. Well again and again throughout the Gospel of John we will see that **Jesus is life and Jesus is light**. Further, we will also see that not only do believers receive life and light from Jesus Christ, but we have the high and holy privilege of passing on that life and light to others. So let’s take the time to explore these two themes together.

I. Jesus is the Giver of Life (1:3-4a).

The book of John begins and ends with this theme (John 1:4; 20:30-31). “*In him was life.*” The word life occurs 36 times in John. But what do we mean by “life.”

1. Jesus is the source of your physical life. Every single thing that has a beginning, every single thing that has been created was made by him. You are a special creation by God with special abilities and a special personality that he wants to use as part of his grand and glorious purposes for the universe. Now if you say “well I’m just common and ordinary” then let me remind you that when God formed man he did not use gold or silver but dust. He used a common earthy substance and breathed into it life. Donald Grey Barnhouse remarks that “dust that exalts itself is hateful, but dust that acknowledges its dustiness finds favor in the sight of the Lord.” God is all about using common ordinary people (for example, his disciples) to do uncommon extraordinary things.

2. Jesus is the source of your spiritual life. Ephesians chapter 2:1 says that you once were “dead” -spiritually lifeless- with no inclination or responsiveness toward God and no ability to please God. In fact, in many ways you lived in open rebellion towards God. You were, for all intents and purposes, a rotting corpse slowly decaying away. But then something indescribably wonderful happened! Jesus stepped into your world and the moment you placed your faith in him you

received eternal life. Now there are two wonderful qualities about this life. First of all, it is eternal in duration. It will never end and it can never be taken away from you. But it is also an abundant life - a magnificent quality of life. With Christ as your shepherd you never lack anything of true value. Instead of having to live a miserable life and constantly having to complain about it, you have been given a fully satisfying life in Christ. As the “bread of life” he can satisfy all your hunger and as the “water of life” he quenches your deepest thirst. (***)Did you know that a sheep never eats or drinks when it is lying down? It only lies down when it is fully satisfied. Christ makes us to “lie down in green pastures” because in him we find a quality of life that is filled with peace and contentment.)

3. Jesus is the source of life that you bring to others. It is not enough for Jesus to be your life; it is vital that he becomes an important part, indeed a supreme part, in the life of others. You have the privilege of sharing the gospel that brings eternal life to others - a life that is wholly transformative in every way!

- In the middle of the twentieth century, after destroying all of the Christian seminary libraries in the country, Chairman Mao declared that ... Christianity had been permanently removed from China, never to make a return. On Easter Sunday in 2009, [however] amp;hellip; the leading English language newspaper in Hong Kong published a picture of Tiananmen Square on page 1, with Jesus replacing Chairman Mao's picture on the gigantic banner, and the words "Christ is Risen" below it.
- I have also been in the Middle East and marveled at the commitment of young people who have risked their lives to attend a Bible study I have talked to CEOs of large companies in Islamic nations who testify to seeing Jesus in visions and dreams and wonder what it all means.
- The British author A. N. Wilson, who only a few years ago was known for his scathing attacks on Christianity ... celebrated Easter [in 2009] at a church with a group of other church members, proclaiming that that the story of the Jesus of the Gospels is the only story that makes sense out of life and its challenges. [Wilson said], "My own return to faith has surprised none more than myself My belief has come about in large measure because of the lives and examples of people I have known—not the famous, not saints, but friends and relations who have lived, and faced death, in light of the resurrection story, or in the quiet acceptance that they have a future after they die."
- Matthew Parris [a British atheist who visited Malawi in 2008] wrote an article titled "As an atheist, I truly believe Africa needs God." [Parris wrote], "I've become convinced of the enormous contribution that Christian evangelism makes in Africa I used to avoid this truth ... but Christians

black and white, working in Africa, do heal the sick, do teach people to read and write; and only the severest kind of secularist could see a mission hospital or school and say the world would be better without it."

II. Jesus is light (1:4b-9)

1. Jesus has surrounded you with physical light. Everywhere we look in the universe we see light. We see it in the explosion of a star known as a nova. We see it in the brilliance of the sunset, and the fluorescence of creatures in the deepest sea... One day we will see it in the blaze of God's glory. What that clearly demonstrates is that God is light! In contrast, where light is absent we have the thick blackness of midnight and no view of the wonderful shapes and colors around us. Truly there is something warming and uplifting in the light, but there is something depressing and frightening in the blackness of the night. Interestingly, in the book of Genesis, Jesus stepped into the darkness and chaos and dispelled it and through his creative hands brought life and order - an Edenic world.

2. Jesus brings you spiritual light. He is the Light of the world. Jesus is the supreme light (the light above all others), the eternal light (that pre-existed the universe), the universal light (that has come to every tribe and nation) and yet he is a personal light (that confronts and comforts every person). Now by spiritual light, we mean a number of things:

1) **Jesus brings illumination or understanding to your mind so that you can comprehend things concerning God and salvation.** He "*shines in the darkness.*" He removes confusion and gives absolute clarity as to how to become a child of God, how to live the Christian life, how to make moral decisions that are in accordance with the will of God, etc. (**Sue and the clicker)

2) **Jesus conquers and dispels the darkness.** "*The darkness has not overcome the light.*" The darkness of this world cannot extinguish or overcome the light of Christ. In the spiritual conflict, the Light is preeminent over the darkness. It is interesting that in the physical world, light always wins. Wherever light enters it cuts through the darkest or gloomiest night. Even the light of a candle can be seen a mile away in the pitch black dark. (**)

3) **Jesus reveals what is in the darkness.** Just as a searchlight, a floodlight, or even a flashlight reveals what is lurking or hidden in the darkness, so Jesus reveals the lies, the hypocrisy and true evil and depravity behind what is often an appealing world system. (**Carpet Cleaning Business: black light) He also reveals sinfulness and hypocrisy in a Christian's life. Next to the light of God's glory, Isaiah saw his sin and cried out "Woe is me." Paul proclaimed himself to be the worst of sinners and Peter spoke of himself as "a sinful man." The very best of our righteousness is revealed to be nothing but putrid rags compared to the purity that is found in Jesus Christ.

4) **Jesus is the true genuine light.** Jesus is the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Now you can find some truth in many things that philosophers and even other religions have said, but it is only partially true and often has only a bit of truth in it. Every other light, every other source of truth, is in the end imperfect or misleading. But you can always trust Jesus for complete honesty and complete authenticity. He can guide you through the darkest night and he is everything that he claims to be!

3. Jesus wants you to be a light. One of the first things we learn about John the Baptist was that he came to be “*a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him.*” Whereas all the other Gospels focus on the baptism ministry of John the Baptist there is little mention of it in this gospel. The focus is on John being a witness to Jesus Christ. He is the first in a whole series of witnesses throughout the book. They include the witness of John the Baptist, the witness of Christ’s works and miracles to himself, the witness of God the Father, the witness of God the Holy Spirit, the witness of the Scriptures, the witness of the disciples, and the witness of ordinary men and women such as the Samaritan woman and Lazarus. Note then, that you and I are ordinary men and women and are included in this last category of witnesses. But what kind of witness, what kind of light, are we to be?

1) **You must humbly realize that you are not the Light.** Notice that it says concerning John, “*He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.*” If you are to be a successful witness and testimony for Jesus Christ you must begin by realizing that you cannot be the center or focus of attention. You are not trying to draw people to you but to Christ. You’re not trying to get them to applaud you as a pastor, a Bible teacher, a successful business man or woman, a prolific writer...etc.

2) **You must draw people to “the Light” by the “light” of a holy authentic Christian life.** When people see a response of love from you when they expect retaliation, see humility in you when they expect self-promotion, see peace in you when they are expecting you to become unraveled, see hope in you when everything around you seems hopeless, they are drawn to Christ who is the reason for your love, humility, peace, and hope. Paul Little in *How to Give You Way Your Faith* says rightly, that “Living the faith is a most essential basis for any effective witness. If we do not live what we profess, the profession will be discredited.”

3) **You must share the light.** That is, you must share the gospel message. Being a witness involves both living out your faith and sharing it. Witnessing always involves speaking to others about Jesus Christ. The Greek term for “witness” in the Scriptures is a legal term that points to a verbal testimony in a court of law. You cannot be a complete witness without verbally sharing your faith.

4) **You must witness with the purpose of bringing others to the Light.** John the Baptist pointed people to Jesus Christ in order *“that all might believe through him.”* That is, his witness was given with the desire to be a conduit through which the grace of God and the illumination of the Holy Spirit would flow bringing many into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. When we witness we are looking and praying for a response. Indeed we have great expectancy that there will be a response.

Conclusion

We live in a world that is pursuing life and light in all the wrong places. And we have the power and the commission to make a difference - a real difference! We are lights pointing to the true Light Many today pursue the “light of progress” believing that science and the latest technology are the keys to life and happiness. Others pursue “the light of prosperity” thinking that a bigger house, more “toys”, a large paycheck, a Viking cruise, the latest iPhone or iPad can lead the way toward happiness. But we have the good news that the one who is abundant life and abundant light has already stepped into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. Every day in one way or another he knocks on their door offering life to the fullest and the light of true knowledge, moral purity, and ultimately the light of the very presence of God. Why not take their hand and help them in opening the door.