

Christ
The True Light
John 1:9-12

Introduction

Christmas Lights: I make no secret that I love Christmas. I love the songs, the decorations, the anticipation. I love the look on my kids faces when they open presents, I love the tradition of reading the Christmas story, I love **the candlelight service** at church.

- I do *not* love when one of the lights on a strand of Christmas lights goes out ("Honey, do you honestly think I would check thousands of tiny little lights if I wasn't sure the extension cord was plugged in?"). What good is a light if it doesn't work?
- But there's something comforting in the *bleak, cold* winter nights to the warmth of a sparkling lights.

Did you know that lights at Christmas were meant to symbolize Jesus as the light of the world?

- **Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness of our world.**

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. ¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

1. The Light (vv. 9-10a)

⁹ The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰ He was in the world, and the world was made through him, (Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἦν, καὶ ὁ κόσμος δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο)

Light: In the first chapter of his gospel account, John is describing the miraculous incarnation (enfleshment) of God. That the invisible creator God put on flesh to save his creation. Every description of God is going to fall short. So John is left to use metaphors and images to try and communicate the nature and reality of this event.

- One of his favorite descriptions is light.
 - "In him was life, and the life was the light of men" (Jn 1:4).
 - "Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life'" (Jn 8:12).
 - "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness" (Jn 12:46).
 - "This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all" (1 Jn 1:5).

True Light: The true light

- Jesus is not just a light but the *true* light. He's not a fake light. He's not *pretending* to be a light. But more than that he's the perfect, permanent, ultimate light. He's the light that will never burn out. He's the light will never fade.
 - You don't believe we live in a fallen world, then how do you explain mosquitoes and smoke detector batteries (hunt for the beeping battery).
 - Lightbulb goes out in ceiling (then another, then another, then another).
 - At Arlington National Cemetery there is an eternal flame burning in memory of assassinated president John F. Kennedy. As a reminder of human limitation (and hubris) the flame has actually been extinguished three times, by a water bottle mishap in 1963, an exceptionally heavy storm in 1967, and during refurbishment work in 2012 and 2013.
 - God never needs refurbishment. His light never goes out.

Creator: and the world was made through him. The one who made the light, is our true light. The one who created all that is, came into his creation.

- Jesus created the world, which means he's in charge of it. The creator has the authority over his creation. He doesn't pray to God to stop the wind and waves, he tells the wind and waves, as their creator, to be still.
 - The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (Jn 1:5). Why does the light of Jesus always overcome the darkness?
- If he has the power to make, he has the power to remake. For those stuck in darkness, slaves to sin, overcome by the shadow of death, we don't need a distraction from our problem we need a Savior sufficiently strong to create light in the dark, to give life to the dead (e.g., furniture maker (Uncle Harold) can remake what is broken). The one who created us promises to recreate us if we'd trust in him.
 - "And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh" (Ezek 36:26).
 - "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" (2 Cor 5:17).
- Look at this light. How much darkness do you need to add to overcome this light. That's not how light works. No amount of darkness can overcome light because darkness isn't a thing, it's simply the absence of a thing. In fact, the darker the world is, the brighter light appears. The same is true of Jesus. No amount of darkness can dim or dull him, in fact, the darker life is, the brighter he appears. The worst things are, the more precious he is to us. The more we suffer, the more we cling to his promises.

What Do We Do in the Darkness: When a train goes through a tunnel and it gets dark, you don't throw away the ticket and jump off. You sit still and trust the engineer" (Corrie ten Boom).

- "But what do we do when the darkness seems so overwhelming? What do we do with the grief, heartache, and brokenness we endure? We look to the light. There is never any amount of darkness that can overcome the light of Jesus. He is our hope. He is our Savior. He has come and will come again. And He has promised that anyone who believes in Him will no longer live in darkness" (McClellan).

Gives Light to Everyone: which gives light to everyone Only in Christ can any of us have light. All of us are stuck in the dark without him.

- “Christmas contains many spiritual truths, but it will be hard to grasp the others unless we grasp this one first: the world is a dark place, and we will never find our way or see reality unless Jesus is our Light.”
- We cannot be whoever and whatever we want, life is a gift to be received not a wish to be fulfilled. We are servants of the creator, we are not our own gods.
 - The light can be scary because it means we can't hide our sin in the dark, but there's also freedom and comfort to living in the light. Would you rather squint in the light or stub your toe in the dark? Your eyes will get used to it.

2. The Blind (vv. 10b-11)

yet the world did not know him. ¹¹ He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. (καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτὸν οὐκ ἔγνω. εἰς τὰ ἴδια ἦλθεν, καὶ οἱ ἴδιοι αὐτὸν οὐ παρέλαβον)

Should've Known: The sad reality of sin is that it makes us stupid. It blinds us to the God who created us. Rather than recognize him, we ignore him and, instead, look for life and joy in the things he created. We worship the creation rather than the creator.

- Jesus came to his own creation, and even more directly, to the people of God (the Israelites) and they didn't receive him.
- The promised Messiah that had been prophesied, the God who they worshipped, was walking among them and they were too blind to see it.
 - He didn't meet their expectations. He didn't come in a convenient many at a convenient time.
 - He brings light to our darkness. He doesn't just come to the comfortable and easy places, he goes to the dark and distant places. He enters into darkness and brings light to all who would believe in him. When Jesus sees pain, hurt, oppression, difficulty, he goes toward it. He doesn't look at the brokenness of the world and turn away, he runs toward it.
 - Often, we want God to bring light to our light, not our darkness. We want him to bless our desires rather than give us his. We want him to cosign our opinions rather than transform them.
 - We want him to meet our expectations rather than upend them.
- Sin has separated us from God. Rather than acknowledge and fellowship with him, in our sin we hide from and ignore him (didn't realize Whitney liked me, too stupid; almost missed out the best thing).

Why Do We Miss the Light?: Why do we miss him?

- **(1) Follow the wrong light (untrue).** Some of us have been tricked or distracted into follow false lights. Whether it is the counterfeit light of **false religions** or the allure of worldly idols. Too often we are distracted by lesser lights, the kind that will burn out and leave us in the dark (dazzling light of a new relationship, job, etc.).

- **(2) Only know darkness (ignorance).** One reason we are called to share the gospel, to shine the light of Christ is because many people are trapped in darkness. They are *slaves* to sin, they don't know what they don't know (don't know what you don't know; Arby's = RB, Roast Beef; know better, better; "now you know and knowing is half the battle").
- **(3) Love darkness (rebellion).** Unfortunately, some choose rebellion rather than freedom. And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil (Jn 3:19).

3. The Invitation (v. 12).

¹² But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, (ὅσοι δὲ ἔλαβον αὐτόν, ἔδωκεν αὐτοῖς ἐξουσίαν τέκνα θεοῦ γενέσθαι, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ)

Receive: receive him The beauty of a gift is that you didn't have to do anything to get it. But a gift is no good if you reject it. Jesus paid a great price to bring you the free gift of salvation but you have to receive it.

- He is the gift. And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent (Jn 17:3). You have to receive him! He is the way, and the truth, and the life (Jn 14:6). You have to receive him on **his terms**.

Believe: believed in his name πιστεύω used 98x in John (cf 11 Matt, 14 Mk, 9 Lk). Noun πίστις isn't used at all in John. Belief is not less than knowledge (can't love what you don't know), it's more than (trust and surrender).

- Surrendering to his terms. Praying "in his name" is not a magic formula to get what you want, but a declaration that we are asking and living in accordance with the way and will of Jesus.
- To believe "in his name" is to surrender to his way, authority, and power.

Adopted by Him: When you repent and believe, when you receive Jesus on his terms, you are adopted into God's family.

- **Misconception**, not everyone is God's child. We are all made by God and for God. Everyone is valuable and loved because they are made in the image of God. But only those who receive Jesus and believe in his name are God's children.
- God's children belong to God. They bear his name. They represent his family. You can't have the blessings of God without the rule of God in your life. You can't have the power of the king if he's not on the throne of your life.
- As his children we can trust him to **(1) provide** (he gives us what we need, not what we want), **(2) protect** (doesn't mean we won't suffer, but we always belong to him and his purposes are good), and **(3) his presence** (he will never leave us; the choice at the incarnation is not suffer or don't suffer; life is hard, we all suffer. We can either suffer with him with hope or suffer without him and without hope).

Conclusion: Imagine you're lost in the woods overnight. Everything is dim. You are stumbling trying to find your way out. The world is blurry shadows, frightful sounds, and uncertain steps. The lostness of that moment is accompanied by fear, anxiety, and uncertainty. All until the sun comes up. When the sun breaks the horizon and light floods the forest floor, all of the scary noises, uncertain pathways, and dangerous shadows are revealed to be what they are. Such is the incarnation, such is Christmas.

- "And so, the Christmas story is really a light story. Not the lights that decorate our city or the lights on the tree. It's about *the* light coming into a world that had been cast into darkness; under the burden of rebellion and sin. In the darkness of evil, injustice, violence, greed, self-righteousness, and more. The world was desperate for light. Everyone was part of the problem and everyone suffered from the problem, but no one could solve the problem. God's solution was the only way. He sent the Jesus, the one who is light to be the light that would light the world. He came into the darkness so that we could know light and life forever. Here is the Christmas story—only light can defeat the darkness, and light has come!"
- That means we can live in the light. Darkness doesn't have to rule our lives and our hearts. We can look to Jesus with hope and anticipation. Let Jesus illuminate your path and awaken your heart. "What doesn't make sense with insight now will make sense with hindsight later" (Pinckney).
- Even though it might seem dark now, I can wait with anticipation and cling to the promise that the darkness will not overcome the light.

Jesus is the light of the world and, for those who believe in him, he calls us to **reflect** that light into a lost and dying world. "The church should not say, 'Look what the world is coming to!' They should say, 'Look what has come into the world'" (Carl Henry *adapted*). "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Matt 5:14-16).

As I light this candle, a picture of the light of Jesus, and we sing, this light will spread from person to person reminding us of our joy in sharing Jesus to everyone we meet from Philadelphia to the ends of the earth. As Jesus shines in our hearts, we let our lights shine.

With Jesus as our true light, as lights into the world, Redemption Heights Church, you are sent.