

John 1:4-9 | “The Light Came into the World”
Preached on December 19, 2021 by Pastor Matt Brown

Please turn in your Bibles to John 1, and we will be in verses 4 through 9.

We are doing a short Christmas series in John 1, looking at John’s introduction of Jesus. *[pause]*

Last week, we learned all about how Jesus Christ is “the Word,” and now this week we are going to learn about how Jesus is “the Light.”

And through this text, we will once again marvel at the majesty of the Son of God, who came and was born on this earth. *[pauseeee]*

There’s something about lights that we love, isn’t there?

During the Christmas season, we are more attuned to lights, as we get to see all the beautiful Christmas lights.

My boys love looking at all the Christmas lights that people have on the outside of their houses. *[pauseeee]*

Well, when it comes to Christmas lights, there are a bunch of different types.

You have the traditional yellowish-white ones, and then you also have the colorful ones, those are kinda neat.

There’s also a third type of light, the blinking lights, and those always catch your attention.

There’s even some houses that have those blinking lights linked up with music, so that they blink to the sound of the music. *[pause]*

At my in-law’s previous home, they lived near this one house that went all out with the outside Christmas decorations and lights.

Just imagine a whole front yard taken up with decorations and lights.

Their lights would basically light up the whole neighborhood area, and many people came by to stare at it all. *[pauseee]*

There’s just something about light that we are attracted to when it’s dark.

When you are driving, your eyes go right to that house that’s lit up with Christmas lights.

Our eyes instantly dart to the light. *[pause]*

Well this morning, we will look at Someone who is the Light, and as believers, we can’t help but look at Him and keep looking at Him.

LET'S READ WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS. *[pause]*

This passage talks a lot about light, but it also shows us something about the darkness.

In verse 5, we are told that, “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”

So it tells us something about the condition of the world, doesn't it?

Along with the rest of Scripture, it's telling us that...

I. Darkness is over the face of the world.

Before we can see the need for the Light, we must see the dire situation of the Darkness.

That is, before we can get to the brightness of Jesus as the Light, we must first see the darkness of the dark. *[pauseee]*

Now what does darkness mean here in this context?

Darkness is used here not so much as physical darkness, like what we typically think of, but it's used metaphorically.

Darkness relates to sin, ignorance, hopelessness, and death. *[pause]*

The rest of Scripture helps us to understand this...

In Matthew 4:16, Jesus begins his ministry and it says, “the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” *[pause]*

Here we see that these people are living in darkness, under the shadow of death, but when Jesus comes to them, a light dawns on them.

So this must mean more than physical darkness. *[pause]*

Scripture elsewhere talks about how we were actually in the domain of darkness before Christ.

Colossians says, “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.”¹

Peter also says that God called us “out of darkness into his marvelous light.”² *[pause]*

Even a couple chapters later in John, John seems to make light and darkness more clear for us when he says...

¹ Colossians 1:13.

² 1 Peter 2:9.

“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.

For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed.

But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.”³ *[pause]*

Here we see that darkness is related to evil, wickedness, and hatred of Christ.

While light is related to Christ, good works, and a love for Christ. *[pauseeee]*

Just think of what it’s like to be in physical darkness.

Let’s say that you were in the woods at night, and the moon wasn’t shining brightly at all.

What would it be like?

You wouldn’t be able to see in front of you, so you would be blind to the reality and truth of what’s around you.

Because you can’t see, you are prone to trip over things, stumble, and fall.

And you are even prone to danger and death, as all it takes is one wrong step or one wrong turn and you could fall off a cliff. *[pause]*

That’s what darkness entails: blindness and death.

And sadly, life without Christ is truly to be in *darkness*.

It’s to be ignorant of the truth.

It’s to be alienated from God and to have no hope in this world.

It is unquestionably the realm of death. *[pause]*

This is each person’s condition before turning to Christ.

It’s a sad and sorry state.

We were people just wandering about in darkness, living for ourselves, separated from God, and having no hope.

We were in the realm of death.

Do you realize this? *[pauseeee]*

³ John 3:19-21.

That was the darkness of the dark that we were in before Jesus intervened.

You see, Christmas reminds us that Christ the Light came to us, amen!

But Christmas also reminds us that that Light had to come for a reason, and that reason was that because of our sin, we were in darkness. *[pause]*

So Christmas is actually a reminder of the wretched state of darkness, and before we can truly appreciate the Light coming, we must grasp the devastating nature of the darkness. *[pauseeeee]*

We each experienced darkness before we received Christ in faith, but we also see the darkness in the world around us even now.

We look and see a world that hates the Light, and relishes in evil, as it celebrates wickedness.

But we also look and see a world that is suffering from the consequences of sin, and who have no hope in this world.

They are living lives focused solely on earthly things, and come up short in having true joy.

They are following their fleeting feelings, and seeing that it doesn't bring true contentment.

And when it comes to their eternity, they have no certainty of what will happen when they die.

This should make our hearts have great compassion for them, for we were once in their spot, and it should remind us even more of their need for Jesus. *[pauseeee]*

You see, the truths behind Christmas can lead to evangelism.

When we remember that Christ the Light came, it leads us to remember the deep darkness that He came to shine into.

And only He, the true Light, is able to shine into their darkened hearts.⁴ *[pauseeeee]*

Thinking about the darkness isn't too fun, but it's necessary, as it helps us to see even more the importance of the Light, who is Jesus.

For darkness is over the face of the world...

II. But Christ, the Light, shines in the darkness!

What good news! What great news! What eternity-changing news!

Christ, the Light, makes the difference.

Why?

⁴ An allusion to 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Because as verse 4 says, “In him was life, and the life was the light of men.” [pause]

How many of us could that be said of?

We may be alive, we may receive life from God, but we are not *sources* of life.

Yet Jesus Himself has life, meaning, He is the source and giver of life, and this one who has life in Himself came to us to give us life! [pauseeee]

You see, true life is never disconnected from Christ.

Jesus says in John 8:12, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

The life found in Him is what saves us from darkness and death, that’s why this life is the light of men. [pauseeee]

This is the news that the world needs to desperately hear: *in Christ is life*.

He is the life-giver that they need.

He is the One who gives certain hope in a world surrounded by death.

He is the resurrection and the Life; and He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life.⁵ [pause]

In the darkness of death, a message of life has appeared in Jesus.

And that’s why He is truly called “the Light”.

For the life-giver gives us light, which is truth and salvation.

His light shines the way to Himself out of sin, ignorance, and death. [pauseeeee]

You see, light refers to life, joy, and salvation.

The psalmist says, “The Lord is my light and my salvation.”⁶ [pauseee]

Go back to that illustration about being in the woods.

Now imagine if it’s daytime and very sunny out.

You can see what’s around you, so you can see the truth.

You can see in front of you, so that you don’t trip or fall.

And you can see the dangers ahead, so that you don’t tumble off of a cliff.

⁵ John 11:25 & John 14:6.

⁶ Psalm 27:1.

So being in the light entails truth and life, compared to being the dark entailing ignorance and death. *[pauseeee]*

Well Jesus is the Light.

He is the truth and life that we need.

He doesn't merely *bring* truth and life, but He *is* the truth and life.

God's very life and light have come to us in Jesus, who gives us life and light in Himself. *[pauseeee]*

Think about it this way.

What is the source of life and light in the universe?

Is it the oxygen that we breathe? Is it the sun and moon?

No, it's God.

The earth and sun are not the source of life and light, but God is. *[pause]*

We think that light comes from lamps, flashlights, and other such things, but it really comes from God, for even the sun in the sky is a part of Creation.

God is the one who said, "Let there be light", and there was light,"⁷ and that was even before He put the sun in the sky.

So Christ doesn't bring "some" life or "some" light, but life and light itself comes from Him. *[pause]*

In the spring, when you see the new life of flowers appear, that's because of Him.

When you see a baby born, or a new fawn born, that's because of Him.

All the life that you see in Creation comes from Him.

This is why we can trust the life that he gives us, for He is the source of it! *[pauseeee]*

And I love what John is doing here (through the inspiration of the Spirit) in how he crafts the opening of this book.

He started with saying, "In the beginning..." which made us think of the Creation account.

And in Genesis, right away it tells us something...

It tells us that "darkness was over the face of the deep."

⁷ Genesis 1:3.

So there's darkness everywhere, but what happens next?

God says, "Let there be light," and there is light.⁸ *[pause]*

And now here in John, he's bringing out the same themes: Creation, darkness, and light. *[pause]*

What he's showing us is that...

In the Creation, God brought forth light in the darkness, and it dispelled the darkness, so also, now the Word shines in the darkness of the world, and the darkness is dispersed. *[pause]*

John is helping us to see that as physical life and light only came from God in Creation, so also, *spiritual* life and light only come from God. *[pauseeee]*

Think of it!

Think of the love and care shown in that.

Jesus entered this world, shining the light on this dark world, so that we could have life.

He didn't leave us in darkness.

He didn't leave us stumbling around to our death, but He came and became flesh.

He came to a world full of darkness, and evil, and sin, and suffering - in order for us to see and live through Him.

For only He could do it through His death and resurrection. *[pause]*

Only He is the true light and life giver, no one else is even in the same category. *[pauseeeee]*

Jesus saw us, hopeless sinners, grabbling at the air in the darkness and on our way to death, and out of love, he acted.

He acted in love because He wanted us to see, He wanted us to live.

He's like the flashlight who shines the way for people to walk on the path of life and live, instead of falling to their death. *[pauseeeee]*

You know, living in this world constantly reminds you of its darkness.

We see death, we see suffering, we see evil.

And it pushes you to think, "How is the darkness of this world overcome?"

"Where do I find life? How do people change away from doing such evil? How do *I* change from doing such evil?"

⁸ See Genesis 1:1-3.

And our world tries to give answers, but they can't.

They become frustrated at the injustice, death, and pain that they see.

And they look to progress, change, education, and laws to change people's hearts, but it does no good - and they become confused as to why it's not working.

They look to medicine and science, but still come up short in preventing death.

They think that they are 'enlightened' when really they are darkened.

And all of history is evidence of not only the darkness of the world, but the inability of our world in solving its own darkness.

And this reminds us that that's because only the true Light that shines in this dark world is able.
[pause]

"How is the darkness of this world overcome?" Not by anything but Christ, the true Light.

He is the only provider of life, and He is the only changer of hearts. [pauseeeee]

Even in verses 6-8, the writer lifts up Christ as he brings up John the Baptist.

He tells us that John the Baptist is only a witness to the light, but he's not the light.

There's only one true Light, and He is supreme.

No one can compare with him, but He must be lifted up as the only light in a dark world.
[pauseeee]

Is that what you do in your mind and in your life?

Do you lift up Christ as the only hope for the world? [pause]

As you encounter those who don't know Christ, do you share Him with others, knowing that *in Him is life*?

As you look at the dark world around you, do you confidently believe that Christ is the answer, for he is the Light of the World? [pause]

What about this question: do you actually live like Jesus is your only hope?

When you enter those times that look like the shadow of death, do you remember that in Him you have eternal life?

In those times, we should be repeating what Peter said, but in the singular, "Lord, to whom shall [I] go? You have the words of eternal life"⁹ [pauseeeee]

⁹ John 6:68. [I changed 'we' to 'I'].

When you face trials in life, do you cling to Him as your light, guiding the way?

Let's say like the Psalmist, "The Lord my God lightens my darkness."¹⁰ [pauseeeee]

The sad truth is that we so often live like Jesus *isn't* the Light, and in Him is life.

We live like He *isn't* what this dark world ultimately needs.

We shrink back from proclaiming Him to others.

We timidly act like people can take or leave Jesus and be okay.

When we face hardship, we look elsewhere for answers, forgetting about the One who not only saves us, but continues to guide, direct, and grow us.

May we all return to the truth that Jesus Christ is the Light of the World! [pauseeeee]

We have so many opportunities to share this truth, but we don't even recognize them.

When you are talking to your child, and they see Christmas lights, you could say, "Aren't those lights amazing? They really light up the darkness."

Did you know that the Bible tells us that Jesus is actually the Light of the World"?

And then use that to talk further to them about Jesus.

This could be done when you are talking to a neighbor, co-worker, or someone you meet at the grocery store.

May we make the best use of our time and take every opportunity to tell others about Jesus, the true Light. [pauseeeeeee]

Our world is in darkness, but praise be to God, for as our passage tells us, "the light shines in the darkness"!

We aren't left in darkness; we aren't left without hope in this world.

But the light shines!

It's there! If only people would look and see! [pause]

Those in darkness don't need to remain in darkness, for the light is shining!

The news of Jesus isn't some secret knowledge for a select few, for it shines and gives light to everyone without distinction.

All people are able to hear the message and respond.

¹⁰ Psalm 18:28.

But what it comes down to is whether people accept it, or close their eyes and reject it.

It gives light to everyone, it's offered to everyone, but not everyone receives it. [pause]

Have you trusted in Christ, as the One source and giver of eternal life? *[pauseeee]*

John tells us that "the light shines in the darkness," but he doesn't end there, does he?

That's good news in itself, but there's even more good news...

For he adds, "and the darkness has not overcome it." [pause]

Why does he say that?

Because he's reminding us that the light and the darkness are not on equal ground.

They aren't two equally powerful forces.

Rather, the Light always beats the darkness.

As in Creation, when God said, "Let there be light," there simply was light, and the darkness dispersed...

...So light always dispels darkness. [pause]

Commentator R. Kent Hughes mentioned that, "In World War II during the blackouts in London, on a clear night a lighted match could be seen for twenty miles from the air."

The darkness didn't overcome that little light.

Or you can try this at home: turn on a lamp in a dark room and see what happens - the darkness is gone, it doesn't overcome the light. *[pauseeeee]*

The fact that it says, "the darkness has not overcome it" shows us that the darkness tries to get the best of it, but won't.

Jesus, the true light, shines in the dark world and the darkness has not won and will never win against him. *[pause]*

As you read about Jesus in the Gospels, you see the light and the darkness go up against each other as Christ faces evil people and as people reject him.

But Jesus always comes out on top. *[pause]*

This is a good thing for us because it means that in your battle with sin, the darkness doesn't have to win!

And as you look around and see a dark, sin-filled world, remember that the darkness will not be triumphant! *[pauseeee]*

Believer here today, you are on the side of victory, not defeat!

There's a battle, but the ending is already set in stone.

The darkness has not and will not overcome the Light, for the Light is always triumphant.
[pause]

What a great truth to rest upon!

This isn't a battle that is evenly matched.

This isn't a battle that we need to worry about.

This is a truth that tells us that Christ, the Light, has always and will always dispel darkness wherever he determines to shine.

He never fails to do what he desires to do...

For Christ, the life-giving light, entered the world and accomplished what He needed to accomplish without being thwarted.

Christ, the life-giving light, shines his light and changes the heart of even the person who we think has the most darkened heart.

And Christ, the life-giving light, will someday conquer all of God's enemies, so that we don't have to fret over the final outcome. [pause]

Let's always rejoice and remember that "the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." [pauseeeee]

As we consider this passage, we see that it teaches us that...

The birth of Christ brought the Light to our dark world! [pause]

The light shines in the darkness by coming to this dark world.

And this means that the truths we celebrate at Christmas are for the sinner.

Christmas is actually good news for the sinner! [pause]

Author Sam Allberry said this on Twitter...

"Come all ye faithless, joyless and defeated! Christmas is for the weary, for the messed-up, and for the broken. If your life isn't Instagrammable, Christmas is for you."¹¹ [pause]

Isn't that so true?

¹¹ <https://twitter.com/SamAllberry/status/1468223404528762880>.

The truths behind Christmas remind us that we weren't all perfect, like a perfectly decorated room at Christmas.

No, we were a mess - we were in darkness because of our sin and without hope in this world.

Yet amidst all of that brokenness and darkness, the Light came and shines so that we could have life.

What great news!

Christmas reminds us of our dark world, but it also reminds us that Christ is the Light, who gives us life, and who delivered us out of the domain of darkness.¹²

As 2 Corinthians 4:6 reminds us, "God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

[pause]

This is what we rejoice in this Christmas!

We rejoice in Jesus, the Light of the World, who has shone in our hearts so that we could see the truth and have eternal life!

What grace! *[pause]*

So as we see the darkness of the world, we remember how the Light of the World gave us light and life.

And as we see the darkness of our world, we are motivated to tell others about the Light of the World.

Will you rejoice, celebrate, and proclaim Jesus as the true Light this Christmas?

¹² See Colossians 1:13.