

# Christ Reformation Church

Tillamook, Oregon

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## Light in the Darkness

*December 25, 2016*

**Sermon Text: John 1**

**Scripture Reading: John 1**

We deal with darkness daily in this present world. You all know it. We confront it in our ministry here as a church, pointing to wicked things and people hiding in darkness, trying to put themselves off as “angels of light.”

This morning however is Christmas morning and we are going to talk about Light. How it, or rather He, came into this dark world and still shines now until that Day when heaven’s dazzling, blinding Glory appears in fullness.

When we think of the Christmas story, our thoughts generally go to the accounts of Christ’s birth given in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. Scenes like this:

Mat 1:18-23 Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. (19) And her husband Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. (20) But as he considered these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. (21) She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." (22) All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: (23) "Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel" (which means, God with us).

And this-

Luk 2:1-7 In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. (2) This was the first registration when

Quirinius was governor of Syria. (3) And all went to be registered, each to his own town. (4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, (5) to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. (6) And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. (7) And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

But we also must remember that in some ways the most profound record of that first Christmas is given to us in John's Gospel –

Joh 1:1-14 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and **the life was the light of men.** (5) **The light shines in the darkness,** and the darkness has not overcome it. (6) There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. (7) He came as a witness, **to bear witness about the light,** that all might believe through him. (8) He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the

**light. (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, (13) who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (14) And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and **we have seen his glory,** glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

We look, as we read these accounts, at that baby in the manger and if we think carefully, we will be asking ourselves questions such as:

- Just who is this Child?
- How did these things come to be?
- And the more we learn, we even are forced to ask, “Where did He come from?”

Because, you see, unlike all other human infants, **THIS** Child existed *before*. You did not and neither did I. The notion of reincarnation is a false one. But this Child who was in fact **IN**-carnated, did not begin to “be” when

He was conceived in Mary's womb.  
He already "was."

*"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God."*

Notice that little verb "was" which of course is the past tense of the English verb, "to be." He *was*, He *is*, and He forevermore *shall be*. The Eternal One, you see –

The Son of God, the second person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fullness of time was come, take upon him man's nature, with all the essential properties, and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which person is very God, and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man.  
(Westminster Confession)

We believe in one God,  
the Father almighty,  
maker of heaven and earth,  
of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ,  
the only Son of God,  
begotten from the Father before  
all ages,

God from God,  
Light from Light,  
true God from true God,

begotten, not made;  
of the same essence as the Father.  
Through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation

he came down from heaven;  
he became incarnate by the  
Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,  
and was made human.

He was crucified for us under  
Pontius Pilate;

he suffered and was buried.

The third day he rose again,  
according to the Scriptures.

He ascended to heaven  
and is seated at the right hand  
of the Father.

He will come again with glory  
to judge the living and the dead.  
His kingdom will never end.

And the Nicene Creed-

This is who that Child was, and IS, and WILL BE for all eternity.

If you had been in that stable, looking down at that baby there, *you would have been looking at the Creator of the Universe! The One who gave and is giving you life and breath and all things.* No wonder the coming of Christ is a mystery.

Col 1:13-17 **He has delivered us from the domain of darkness** and beloved Son, (14) in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (15) He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (16) For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. (17) And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Now, let's come back to our central theme this morning – this fact that Christ is **Light**. Notice how many times Christ is called “the Light” here in John 1, and of course many other places in Scripture as well. Somehow, you see, this business of Light coming into the world is *good news* for us –

Mat 4:15-16 "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of

the Gentiles— (16) 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."

We are delivered by the Light from, as Paul called it, *the domain of darkness*. Darkness in Scripture is an image of –

- Death
- Blindness to truth
- Lies and deception
- Sin and misery
- Existence in a realm where God is absent
- A realm where the devil, the prince of darkness, holds men and women prisoner

As glorious as this present world may appear to be at times, it is in fact darkness, a place where death reigns, a place where people embrace lies and evil, a kingdom in rebellion against the Light. Notice:

**John 1:5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

That is to say, the kingdom of darkness is always striving to extinguish the Light, to do away with Christ, to be rid of Him. But it never succeeds. Let me ask you:

*At this Christmas season in 2016, do we see examples around us of the world (darkness) trying with all its might to extinguish the Light?*

And of course, we readily and easily answer “absolutely.” The Christmas season and all that it stands for in truth is hated by the kingdom of darkness. And so,

- Schools are pressured to do away with anything traditionally “Christmas”. One school recently cancelled its presentation play of Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” because of Tiny Tim’s line, “God bless us everyone.”
- Happy holidays replaces Merry Christmas.

And all other sorts of foolish, wicked means of suppressing *Christ, the Light of the World*, you see. Darkness always working to overcome the Light, but never succeeding. *God in His wisdom overcomes the darkness with the “foolish weakness” of a little baby.*”

In the physical, created world *darkness means death*. Oh, there are some weird looking creatures that live way down in dark, lightless caves, but the pattern we see in the creation around us is – *where there is no light, there is no life*. The most fundamental process in the plant world is photosynthesis. Light

energy is used by green plants to synthesize nutrients and a form of energy that all living things use. Just go out this spring into your yard and lay a board down on your lawn and check back on it in even just a couple of days. What do you see? The grass has already begun to die.

***God is Light, and thus Life. Where God is not, where man is cut off from God, there is darkness and death. That is what happened at the Fall.***

You see this in John’s words here, this connection of Light and Life –

Joh 1:4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Any man or woman or child who is still separated from Christ *is dead this very moment*. He or she is like a withered, dead plant in a black room.

Joh 1:11-12 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,

Now here is the incredible thing –

Joh 3:19-21 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. (20) For everyone who does wicked

things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. (21) 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."

Amazing, isn't it? When we were dead in our sins and the Light of Christ came, our natural response was to cringe and hide, to prefer the darkness to this Light because the Light was soooo searching and revealing. It exposed what we were, and it was only then by the powerful divine call of God in Christ that we came to the Light, for His glory.

### **The Light of Creation at the Beginning**

We cannot help but see the intentional connection John makes here in this first chapter with the very first chapter of Scripture:

Gen 1:1-3 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. (2) The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. (3) And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

John purposefully opens His Gospel with-

Joh 1:1-4 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. (4) In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

These words are God's own commentary, a further explanation if you will, on Genesis one and the creation account. *In the beginning...* This Light is the Word that was. When the creation began with the decree, "Let there be Light," it was the Word, the Light, that burst into the darkness. The result? Life. Life for all living things, and life for man in particular.

What happened at that first creation necessarily needed to happen again after darkness swept over the world at the Fall. Another decree was needed – "Let there be Light." And John is telling us that this is exactly what happened when Christ was born. A new beginning. A new entrance of the Light and Life bursting into the world.

Gen 1:2 The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

That was the pre-creation condition of...nothingness. Formless, empty,

darkness. And John's words here in John 1 remind us of this. At the Fall, the creation reverted to that formless, empty, darkness spiritually and in some ways even physically. Death, after all, came onto the scene. The curse.

Throughout Scripture you see the same pattern in God's judgments. Take the flood for instance. Why *flood*? Because God's judgment fit the crime. Man's crime was rebellion against God, insistence of living apart from God, and so God granted that desire.

*You want life without me? Then here it is, the waters return and cover the face of the earth. The primeval chaos comes back and all flesh perished.*

That surely is the very thing that hell is. Existence apart from God. So that it is characterized in terms of darkness:

Mat 22:11-13 "But when the king came in to look at the guests, he saw there a man who had no wedding garment. (12) And he said to him, 'Friend, how did you get in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. (13) Then the king said to the attendants, 'Bind him hand and foot and cast him into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

The wicked receive, you see, exactly what they demand. "No God for us!" Alright, but there you will also find no light, no life, only eternal misery. God really does grant the sinner "free will," by giving him exactly what he freely chooses.

### Christ is the Light of the World

John continues throughout His Gospel and in His epistles as well to emphasize to us Christ as the Light of the World-

Joh 8:12 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."

Joh 9:5-6 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." (6) Having said these things, he spit on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man's eyes with the mud

Joh 12:46 I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness.

1Jn 1:5-7 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. (6) If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice

the truth. (7) But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

1Jn 2:8-10 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. (9) Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. (10) Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

And we have seen the same theme in other Scriptures many times, even this example from our study in 1 Peter -

1Pe 2:9 But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Here is the amazing thing about people who are living in darkness. *They think that they can see though they are blind. They claim to be alive, when they are dead. They insist that they possess truth when they are slaves to a lie.* That is the condition of anyone this morning who is without Christ.

What then must we conclude, knowing all these things, regarding what happened when the Light first came to us? How is it possible that we saw this Light and ran to it? We who loved the darkness because we could fool ourselves about who we really were as long as we were in it, how was it that WE went to the Light?

And of course the only possible answer is that Christ the Good Shepherd spoke His creative, life-giving Word to and in us – “let there be light” – and there was Light, and Life. This is that irresistible divine call we have been learning about which springs from the electing purpose of God to call a people for Himself out of the dark realm of death.

Here is one final very powerful fact – listen to John once again:

1Jn 2:8 At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

The Light that came into the world at Jesus’ incarnation not only is still shining, it is progressively overcoming the darkness. The darkness is passing away. This present fallen world and all who love it are perishing right now, at this moment. This world’s time is



coming to an end. And therefore, John reminds us:

1Jn 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life—is not from the Father but is from the world. (17) And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

Remember this. No matter how black the darkness may seem, the Light is growing brighter and brighter. One Day every remnant of that darkness will be gone forever, and all who loved it.