

The Portrait of Christ at Christmas

John 1:1 – 18

Scripture Reading

John 1:6 - 14

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.

Introduction: “Human experience is the paradoxical commingling of the love of darkness and the need for light.” – Jay Y. Kim – writer in Christianity Today’s 2022 Advent Devotional

- This isn’t true just for those who don’t know Christ but true in our heart, mind and soul as well. Paul said in Romans 7:15

Romans 7:15

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

- Light can both expose sin and illuminate the truth and that is frightening and freeing at the same time.

Quote: “The first principle is that you must not fool yourself -- and you are the easiest person to fool.” – Richard Feynman, American Physicist.

- If that is true than we need this frightening and freeing light to expose our pride and reveal our shame which has stricken human beings from the beginning at the core of their soul.
 - Adam and Eve when they sinned it was out of pride, they wanted to be like God, and the result was shame and separation from God.
- Jesus came at Christmas to free us from the darkness of pride and shame. He exposes our sin and tells us the truth. The truth is that through Christ’s sacrifice we can be forgiven, we are accepted and loved and the sin and shame are gone!!
- Christ came to make us citizens in heaven and to indwell us with the Holy Spirit which will illumine the Word of God and light the path to walk in His will.

Purpose: Every Christ follower must accept the fact that if they embrace Christ and a godly perspective, they will face rejection and be willing to accept that.

Transition: Let's look at this portrait of Christ that we see here in John 1.

Jesus is the Light of the World – John 1:1 – 8

- The Creator of the world

John 1:1-2

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 anything made that was made

- In the beginning was the Word – Jesus existed in eternity past. He had no beginning.
- Greek word – ‘arche’ here means at the beginning of the universe. Genesis 1:1. In the beginning God
- The Logos is before time/ thus eternal
- Therefore, Jesus is God because God is eternal

John 8:58

Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.”

- Notice the verb here in John 1:1 ‘was’ – meaning continually in existence and continually in action
- The writer John here did not use the Greek word for **became** because **became** meant – origin or a beginning of existence
- Second from verse one, we see that the Word was with God
 - Jesus and God the Father had a very special relationship along with the Holy Spirit within the Trinity
 - Perfect love, perfect harmony, perfect attitude of serving one another
- Third and very important in verse one is that that Word was God
 - Dr. Borland my Greek teacher for intermediate Greek told us that the picture here in this phrase is that Jesus and God are like sitting on a log and looking at each other. They are mirror images of each other
 - Jesus and God are engaging in intellectual discourse
 - They are face to face

- The Creator of light

John 1:4 – 5

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.

- Jesus is the source of life but we are focusing here on the fact that He is also the creator of light. Jesus said this the Feast of Dedication:

John 8:12

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."

Context of this verse and how powerful its truth and meaning are.

- Jesus' analogy of light goes along with His analogy of living water
- The daily water-pouring ceremony had its nightly example in the lamp lighting ceremony. In the very Court of the Women where Jesus' was making this statement four huge candelabras were lit and when lit pushed the light up into the night sky like a giant searchlight. So brilliant was their light that one ancient source declared; "There was not a courtyard in Jerusalem that did not reflect (their) light." F.F. Bruce in The Gospel of John
 - Light is symbolic of God and His truth and holiness
 - Darkness is symbolic of death, ignorance, sin, separation from God, falsehood
 - Light is like the coming salvation as the people living in darkness has seen a great light as it says in Isaiah 9:2 talking about the first coming of Jesus
 - The light as it says in verse 5 dispels darkness

5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

- Remember that darkness is merely the absence of light.
- Darkness is unable to overpower light
 - Light will invade the dominion of darkness
 - Satan and His subjects will resist the light but cannot stop its power
 - The Word will be victorious in spite of opposition

1 John 2:8

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.

- Satan and His demons know the truth and know of their inevitable judgment

- Satan is attempting to change history and their eternal destiny by using darkness to try to overthrow the Light
- In the OT, Satan tried to destroy the Messianic line
- In the NT Satan tried to destroy Christ by having Herod kill the infants two years of age and younger at Bethlehem and the temptation of Christ
- Satan seemingly won the victory at Calvary when Jesus died but it was His actual ultimate defeat as Jesus rose again on Sunday.

Illustration: David Brooks, of the Weekly Standard, reports "of the connoption being thrown by the American Atheist, the group founded by the late Madalyn Murray O'Hair (may God have mercy upon her soul). It seems that when the World Trade Center collapsed, the force of the fall, or some supernatural force, fused two steel beams into a 20-foot-high cross, which has been kept on the edge of the site. The atheists want the cross removed, of course, but in their passion to do that, they are actually revealing their faith in the power of the cross. If it didn't have power, why get so upset?"

There is power in the cross. It's undeniable. May we consider the potential of the cross--it's potential to reconcile all things to Christ who "made peace through the blood of His cross." (Colossians 1:20).

- The courier of the message

John 1:6 – 8

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

Illustration: Well, it's got to be the Christmas season! You know, you keep seeing the UPS trucks going up and down like a fleet, and those drivers are busy! They must collapse into bed at night after those long, long hours they work. But their job could be worse. I mean, what if they had to shop for all those packages, and buy them, and package them and deliver them? Well, fortunately it's not up to the UPS guy to create the package; he's just got to deliver it.

John the Baptist, Jesus' cousin, was to be the forerunner of Christ

- He was to prepare the way
- Through John the Baptist's preaching, he can make straight the narrow
- He was a signpost pointing to the true Messiah
- He was like that UPS driver who delivered the package, John delivered the message that Jesus was the Lamb of God sent to take away the sins of the

world. The thrill is in what you receive when you open the package, not paying homage to the one who delivered it.

- John had the privilege of baptizing Jesus at the beginning point of His ministry.
- He was a humble man who encouraged his disciples to follow Jesus

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease

- We are like John the Baptist in some way. When you and I realize that we only deliver God's packages, we develop two vital mindsets. First, we develop humility; we know that all the credit goes to the giver, not to the deliverer. We don't hug and kiss the UPS man when he comes and say, "Oh, thank you for this wonderful gift!" He didn't give it, he just delivered it. So, you know now you have every reason for humility.
- Secondly, it gives us confidence. I can row into this storm right now because God's power will be the difference, not mine. So, relax. Even if you're in the middle of God asking you to do something that seems like mission impossible right now, God is getting the solution ready. All you have to do is be available to deliver someone else's package.
- We need to be like John the Baptist and be available for however God' wants to use us to deliver the Gospel message of Christ - pointing to the redeemer, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace

Application: Our responsibility is to be torchbearers of the light of Jesus and point people to Him

Transition: Second today, we see Christ portrayed as the light of truth. Sadly, that truth for many in that day and today was and is still being rejected by many.

Jesus as the Light of Truth is rejected – John 1:9 – 13

- The One who created was rejected by many

John 1:9 -11

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.

Quote: "Truth is truth, whether it's spoken by the lips of Jesus or Balaam's donkey." – George MacDonald

- It is a matter of what we do with the truth. Every man has a soul with a conscience and an innate desire to connect with someone outside of themselves who is bigger.

- Jesus revealed to us God's eternal teachings which include the condition of man and the solution to it through redemption provided by Christ
- I can't imagine Jesus' walking on earth and here is was the agent of creation and involved in the design of the planet and man and yet, He was able to not respond in frustration and anger, displaying God's wrath on those who rejected the truth He brought to them.

Illustration: No people in history have had as many opportunities to hear the truth about God, to learn how salvation can be found by turning to Jesus Christ, then those who live in this country in the second decade of the 21st century. Do you realize there are 450,000 churches in the United States. In fact, 24% of protestant congregations in the world are in this country. There are over 3,600 religious radio stations, the vast majority run by evangelical Christians, who daily broadcast the message of Jesus Christ to people across the land. Christian TV, Christian publishing, Christian music recording, all communicate the Bible's message. God has given us so many chances. But, there are so many folks who continue to reject the truth.

- The One who created was received by some

John 1:12 – 13

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.

- The fantastic news is that some accepted the light of the truth, the light that exposed their sin, their pride, their shame and accepted the gift of eternal life Jesus was offering and still offers to anyone at this Christmas season!!
- We are adopted into God's forever family and we get the privilege to be children, not just of any king but the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!! What a gift, what a privilege. We are born again by the will of God!! Not because we did anything to deserve it but God chose us!

Application: Will you seek and follow the truth no matter where it leads you?

Transition: Lastly, as we consider the portrait of Christ given to us in John 1;

Jesus is the Light that is sent from God to overcome the darkness – John 1:14 – 18

- Jesus was revealed as God at Bethlehem

John 1:14 –15

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. 15 (John bore witness about him, and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.’”)

- We have talked many times about verse 14, but just a reminder that God left His throne and left His Heavenly Father on assignment to redeem man
- On that Christmas night, whenever it was, Jesus became the God / man when He wrapped Himself in human flesh and was willing to be born and lie in an animal’s feeding trough. As revealed by His subsequent life, lying in that manger was the glory of God on full display.
- I can’t imagine what Mary and Joseph thought after being spoken to both of them, by angels and seeing what was told to them come to pass.
- To say they felt ill equipped to be parents is the understatement of all time.

Illustration: Think about when you as a couple had your first baby. There was no instruction manual given to you in the birthing room as to what to do next! It was a joyous celebration but an awesome reality of how serious it was to begin the process of parenting a child. In the case of Joseph and Mary, add to that the title your son was given --- The Son of God.

- I applaud John the Baptist. He clearly knew his role and humbly accepted it and willingly embraced it He knew his lane and he stayed in it to be faithful to what God had called him to do. Not always easy to take the lesser role and accept that responsibility without ego stepping in the way.

- Jesus was revealed as the fullness of God at Bethlehem

John 1:16

16 For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.

- From the revelation of Christ, we all receive a superabundance of His grace
 - Not out of reserves
 - Out of the overflow of God’s grace that will never run out
 - Waves of daily grace

Quote: “The Christian life is the constant reception of one’s evidence of God’s grace replacing another.” – Bible Knowledge Commentary

Lamentations 3:21 – 23

But this I call to mind, and therefore I have hope: 22 The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; 23 they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.

- Verse 17 says

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

- The law was a demand of OT people to live in perfection and holiness with a way to cover their sin through the blood sacrifice.
- The law was giving to reveal sin and lead us to Christ according to Galatians 3
- Jesus came to fulfill the law unlike any human being and give us grace instead. We have law written in our hearts by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and that Spirit gives us the power to live out God's desires.

18 No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known

- Jesus came to explain to us who the Father was and what He does
- Simply put, Jesus was not revealing the Father but the essence and nature of who God was.

Application: Will you be a light in the culture of darkness which is all around you by use of your words and actions?

Transition / Illustration: Illustration: Just for a moment, I want you to close your eyes and imagine that you are blind. Now, let's complete a few basic tasks, like separating medications, using the right button on a microwave oven or knowing which side of the street to catch the bus. Think of all the questions you might have because you can't see.

There's a non-profit app out that allows sighted people to "lend their eyes" to those with visual impairments through video chat. Simply put, it's remarkable. The "Be My Eyes" app was developed by a visually impaired man in Denmark. It connects blind people to sighted volunteers through video chat. The volunteer can answer questions because they can see the blind person's surroundings using their phone's camera.

The other day, "Be My Eyes" app user connected with a young man who wanted to know the expiration date of the milk in his refrigerator. The visually impaired man positioned his phone's camera to the top shelf. Looking at the image of the milk carton on my phone, the app user said, 'I wouldn't drink that if I were you.'

Application: Jesus calls us to be the light of the world to people who are lost in spiritual darkness. By the way we share Christ and serve Christ in front of others

help those who are spiritually blind see the truth and help them out of the darkness. We are left here as Christians to interpret and explain who God is.

Key Thought: The beauty of Christ and His Gospel is the light and power of them cannot be overcome by the darkness.

Questions to Ponder this Week

1. Will you stand up for Christ by sharing who He is in all of His glory in a world of darkness?
2. Will we receive what the world rejects as salvation and life and walk in confidence that we are the sons and daughters of God?
3. Will you be one who will let the light of Christ shine brightly out of your heart to those in need of Him as you celebrate Christmas?