

John 1: 1-5 A light in the darkness 12/7/03

So many of our Christmas memories are associated with lights. Over here on the side is a set of lights that bring back a lot of memories for me. We couldn't come downstairs until my Dad had turned on these blinding lights so he could take 8mm movies. In a few weeks my kids will watch some of those at my folks house in Arizona. You know, I can still remember the smell in the air from these kinds of lights burning. And then there are the lights of the Christmas tree. Like most traditions, every family has their own way of decorating. How many of you had some interesting discussions about how a tree was to be decorated your first years of marriage. How do the lights go on for your perfect tree? And then there were the displays of lights that homes in the neighborhood would have. A lot less than today. Perhaps candles in the window. Either singles or triples. The only options were the really big bulbs either white or colored but no clear ones. I drive by Gene and Linda's house just around the corner on Lake St. before you come to the middle school and I always slow down and enjoy them. Never saw anything like that when I was a kid. As a child lights grab our attention. It causes us to stop and look and wonder.

The Bible talks a lot about lights. The meaning at times is very literal but at other times it is used figuratively as a metaphor. Will you turn with me to John 1? It is page 750. Will you read with me the first 5 verses? READ *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.*

There is so much in these first few verses to consider but let's limit it to two things. Two very simple declarations.

First: Jesus' life was light. It is a theme that is repeated again and again throughout the Gospels.

Jesus states it himself with unmistakable clarity. I am the light of the world. Verse 9 tells us "*the*

true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” But there is another truth declared in this first passage that stands in stark contrast. On the one hand you have the light of the world being Jesus. But in opposition to His life light that shines in front us we are characterized by life darkness. And this darkness is so complete and so total that the light standing clearly before us is incomprehensible. It tells us that the darkness does not understand the light. And so through out the New Testament you have these two opposing truths going head to head. Jesus expresses his light again and again in his interaction with people. He heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, restores hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, he gives dignity back to those whose life choices have left them filled with shame, he welcomes the rejected and gives a place of honor at the table to those who had lives off the scraps thrown into the dumpster in the back alley. And yet, in the midst of this brightly shining life light there is question and confusion. Who is this person? Where did this authority come from? What is the source of his power? How come even the wind and the water obey his commands. And then it begins to come out. Jesus begins to teach in his last days that that those living in life darkness can never understand his life light unless His Father in heaven enters the picture. Jesus asks the disciples; “who do men say I am?” After receiving their responses he ask them the same questions. “Who do you think I am?” And Peter responds, “You are the Christ. The Son of the living God!” And Jesus said, “you only know that because my Father in heaven has revealed it to you.”

Perhaps the greatest hurdle we have to get across is to acknowledge that we live in life darkness. In John 3:19-21 we read these words:

This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.

In just a moment we will gather around this table. Jesus said that to eat of the bread and to drink of the cup is reserved for those who have gone through a transformational process. First of all God has opened their eyes to their living in life's darkness. They have then seen that their life darkness has been their choice but that God has opened their eyes to light. And that with that eye opening has also come the gift of faith to believe in Jesus as the light of the world and more importantly their only source of life's light. And they have received it. They have moved from being members of the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. And those will in a few moments take the bread and the cup to announce what God has done from first to last, from beginning to end in their lives. It is His glorious gift of forgiveness and grace that we remember this morning.