

## “Light in the Darkness”

John 1:1-14

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Throughout this Advent season and through Christmas Day, we are looking at the call of Christmas as an angel or angels of the Lord have brought God’s call to the various characters in the Christmas story. Today we will sidetrack for just a bit as we look at the reason or motivation by God to come to our world in the person of Jesus some 2,000 years ago.

There have always been people and rulers who opposed God, but God promised to have the final word. His final word was THE Word - Jesus – the fullness of God born in physical form and sent into our dark world – just as the prophet Isaiah had foreseen. Jesus brought light into the dark and dying world and today, remains the only true light of hope and salvation.

The first verses of our gospel reading today, according to the apostle John, are among the most elegant and profound that may be found in the Word of God. They take us before the beginning of creation and move us into the time and space of human history. They reveal, like no other portion of Scripture, that the Jesus who came into human history (1:14) was the Creator God of Gen. 1:1. These verses identify the eternal relationship of the Father and the Son and reveal that we may have light and life through our reception of Him—the One who is ultimate revelation of the Father.

**1:1 In the beginning:** Genesis 1:1 starts with the moment of creation and moves through time to the creation of humanity. John 1:1 states that before the creation of a material universe there was **the Word** (Gk. *logos*). The Word was preexistent. The term *Word* means “that which is spoken, a statement, a speech.” In the Jewish translation of the OT into Aramaic, this term was used for God. *The Word* here is the expression or the manifestation of God. John is obviously referring to Jesus Christ. Thus, this Gospel begins with the thought that Jesus, the Word, the unique manifestation of God, was already continuously in existence when the material universe was created. The fact that **the Word was with God** suggests a face-to-face relationship. Thus the word *with* indicates a personal relationship, but also implies equal status. The Word, Jesus Christ Himself, is an active Person in communication with the Father. Moreover, **the Word was God**. The Greek construction emphasizes that the Word was of the very quality of God while still retaining His personal distinction from the Father. He is distinct from God and yet is God.

**1:4** “In him was life...” Humans are dependent on God for life. Our existence, spiritually and physically, depends on God’s sustaining power. In contrast, the Son has life in Himself from all eternity. The life, Jesus Christ, is also **“the light of men”**. This image conveys the concept of revelation. As the light, Jesus Christ reveals both sin and God to humans. Later in this Gospel, Christ declares Himself to be both the life and the light. Death and darkness flee when the life and light enter. The dead are raised and the blind receive their sight, both physically and spiritually.

**1:5** “The light shines in the darkness...” Christ entered this dark world to give it spiritual light. And humans or even Satan and his forces cannot overtake or overpower it. In short, Jesus is life and light; those who accept Him are “sons of light.” As the creation of light was the beginning of the original creation, so when believers receive the light, they become part of the new creation.

### **The Darkness Couldn’t Put It Out**

History records for us an interesting footnote. It was during the dark winter of 1864. At Petersburg, Virginia, the Confederate army of Robert E. Lee faced the Union divisions of General Ulysses S. Grant. The war was now three and a half years old and the glorious charge had long since given way to the muck and mud of trench warfare. Late one evening one of Lee’s

generals, Major General George Pickett, received word that his wife had given birth to a beautiful baby boy.

Up and down the line the Southerners began building huge bonfires in celebration of the event. These fires did not go unnoticed in the Northern camps and soon a nervous Grant sent out a reconnaissance patrol to see what was going on. The scouts returned with the message that Pickett had had a son and these were celebratory fires. It so happened that Grant and Pickett had been contemporaries at West Point and knew one another well, so to honor the occasion Grant, too, ordered that bonfires should be built.

What a peculiar night it was. For miles on both sides of the lines fires burned. No shots fired. No yelling back and forth. No war fought. Only light, celebrating the birth of a child. But it didn't last forever. Soon the fires burned down and once again the darkness took over. The darkness of the night and the darkness of war.

The good news of Christmas is that in the midst of a great darkness there came a light, and the darkness was not able to overcome the light. It was not just a temporary flicker. It was an eternal flame. We need to remember that. There are times, in the events of the world and in the events of our own personal lives that we feel that the light of the world will be snuffed out. But the Christmas story affirms that whatever happens, the light still shines.

**1:9** "The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world." This verse could be rephrased: "That was the true Light coming into the world, which enlightens every man." Jesus became man in order to reveal the truth to all people. Jesus Christ gives light to everyone who believes in who is and why He came: He is God in flesh who came to deliver His people from their sins. Through His perfect life on earth, His sacrifice for sinful humanity on the cross, and His victory over the grave brings to all who believe, light and life and salvation.

Jesus Christ came to be the light to everyone, though not all would receive His light; this does not mean that all people would believe. John was sent to bear witness to that light. And we, today, are also sent out into the world to bear witness to the light and salvation which Jesus brings. We should use every opportunity to reflect His light.

**The Amazing 8-Watts** - In 1972, NASA launched the exploratory space probe Pioneer 10. According to Leon Jaroff in Time magazine, the satellite's primary mission was to reach Jupiter, photograph the planet and its moons, and beam data to earth about Jupiter's magnetic field, radiation belts, and atmosphere. Scientists regarded this as a bold plan, for at that time no earth satellite had ever gone beyond Mars, and they feared the asteroid belt would destroy the satellite before it could reach its target.

But Pioneer 10 accomplished its mission and much, much more. Swinging past the giant planet in November 1973, Jupiter's immense gravity hurled Pioneer 10 at a higher rate of speed toward the edge of the solar system. At one billion miles from the sun, Pioneer 10 passed Saturn. At some two billion miles, it hurtled past Uranus; Neptune at nearly three billion miles; Pluto at almost four billion miles. By 1997, twenty-five years after its launch, Pioneer 10 was more than six billion miles from the sun. And despite that immense distance, Pioneer 10 continued to beam back radio signals to scientists on Earth. "Perhaps most remarkable," writes Jaroff, "those signals emanate from an 8-watt transmitter, which radiates about as much power as a bedroom night light, and takes more than nine hours to reach Earth." The Little Satellite That Could was not qualified to do what it did. Engineers designed Pioneer 10 with a useful life of just three years. But it kept going and going. By simple longevity, its tiny 8-watt transmitter radio accomplished more than anyone thought possible.

So it is when we offer ourselves to serve the Lord and be a witness to the light of Christ in a darkened world. God can work even through someone with 8-watt abilities. We are called to let our light shine in this dark world- even if we think is too small of a light to make a difference!