

NOTES FROM TIM GAMSTON'S SERMON- 3rd December 2023 am

TITLE: "The light always wins" TEXT: John 1 verses 1-18

Series: Christmas 2023 Part 2 Scripture references from the ESV Christmas

John 1:1-18 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

⁶There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. ⁷He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. ⁸He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

⁹The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. ¹⁰He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. ¹¹He came to his own,^[b] and his own people did not receive him. ¹²But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, ¹³who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

¹⁴And 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.'") ¹⁶For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

On a clear night, as we look up at the sky, our eyes are not drawn to the darkness but to the light of the stars that pierce the darkness. When you switch the light on in a dark room, the darkness disappears.

The darkness cannot overcome the light

In the battle between darkness and light, the light always wins

When John speaks of the light (v5 above), he is speaking of the one he has introduced to us as the Word (v1). The light that shines in the darkness is the life of the Word (v4 above) – the Lord Jesus Christ. The first four verses show us that in Christ Jesus is the very life of God – a life that is self-existent and not dependent on anything else. It is a life that is able to sustain life and therefore life that gives life to all.

That life has shone with brilliant brightness upon humanity from the very beginning of creation right up to our present day, which means that no one has any excuse for denying the existence of God. Jesus Christ was **not** made but is the one through whom everything has been made (**v3**). As the one who has life in himself, he created the stars that pierce the night sky. In a glorious piece of understatement, the Bible tells us that he spoke them into existence. (**Genesis 1: 14-15**)

When we look up at the stars, those very stars reveal to us something of the life that Christ has in himself. Psalm 19:1 tells us: **The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.**

The stars point to the existence of a creator, and humanity does the same. Within every human heart, there is a sense that we were created for something greater. Exploration of the oceans and of space is driven by the sense that there is more to be discovered. Where does that sense of more come from? Genesis tells us that when God created Adam, he formed a corpse from the dust of the earth and breathed his own life into that corpse. With that life came the capacity for finite beings (us) to know the infinite God. That sense deep within us that we are not alone in the universe and there is more to be discovered comes from God, and is meant to be directed to knowing God, of whom there is always more to be known.

It is the life of Christ shining in our hearts.

Right now, the eternal God is all around us:

- **(God) is actually not far from each one of us, for “In him we live and move and have our being’; (Acts 17:27-8)**
- **There is no such thing as a godless person; God is too near every one of us**
(Heinrich Emil Brunner)

The life of Christ shines all around us and deep within us (**v4**), as Christ reveals himself universally to all people through conscience and creation.

What does John mean when he talks of the darkness, into which the light shines? It is the darkness of:

- Sin against Christ
- Human ignorance of Christ
- Hostility towards Christ
- Eternal death away from Christ

Our sin has blinded us to the reality of Christ. Where can we look to find hope in our darkness?

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. (v5)

Just as the stars pierce the darkness, so the good news of the gospel is that the light of Christ's life overcomes the darkness of our sin, ignorance, hostility and eventual eternal death.

1. **Christ overcomes the darkness of our sin.** The light always wins the battle with darkness, but there was a moment in time when it looked as if the darkness was winning the battle. For three hours in the middle of one day, darkness shut out the light of the sun. **It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour, ⁴⁵ while the sun's light failed.** (Luke 23:44-45)

At this time, the Lord Jesus Christ was fighting on the cross to defeat the penalty and power of sin for us and suffering the judgement of Hell that we deserve because of our sins. The horror of that was so great that even the sun failed to give light at the brightest time of the day. The sun only begun to shine again when Jesus cried out: **'It is finished'**.

- With those words, Jesus declared that the price for our sin had been paid in full and the way was clear for God to forgive us when we come in repentance and faith to Christ.
- There is nothing left to pay for those who are trusting in Christ for the salvation of their souls.

Not only had the penalty of sin been paid, but the power of sin over our lives had been defeated. **We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin** (Romans 6:6). When temptation comes, we can fight it and get victory over sin, saying no to temptation.

When we think of Christ on the cross, fighting to secure our pardon from sin, then sin loses its attractiveness.

For three hours, it looked as if darkness was overcoming the light, but **Christ emerged from the darkness, having won the victory over sin for those who trust in him.**

2. Christ overcomes the darkness of our ignorance. Often, people will say that it would be so much easier to believe in God if only they could see him.

Christ came to earth so that we could see God.

In him we have the fullest revelation of God. John tells us that the Word is God (v1) and that he became flesh (v14). The wonder of the incarnation is that Jesus Christ is God and man in one being, revealing the glory of God's grace and truth.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known (vv17-18).

- Spend time meditating on these words – there is such depth to them

Think of how he showed grace in all that he did, whether it was welcoming sinners to eat with him, healing the sick, feeding the hungry or protecting the vulnerable. Yet at the same time, he exposed sin in the lives of people and did not allow them to continue living in their sin. As an example, he saved the woman taken in adultery from being stoned, but told her to go and sin no more.

When Jesus welcomed people, he cleaned up their lives.

Jesus not only showed grace to sinners but also stood for the truth of God's word.

Jesus Christ is God in human flesh showing us what God is like.

He shows us a God who is committed to his truth, justice and holiness, yet who is, at the same time, a God full of grace and compassion to sinners who turn to him. Is this what you expected God to be like?

- Do you demonstrate this God in how you live and speak, so that those around you see his grace and compassion as well as his justice and holiness?

Read the accounts of Jesus' life in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and ask him to reveal himself to you as the

God full of truth and grace

3. **Christ overcomes the darkness of our hostility.** Jesus offended a great many people because of his claim to be equal with God, the hard things he said to them about being in God's kingdom, and because he didn't keep all their rules (vv9-11). They rejected him because: **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.** (John 3:19-20)

The frightening thing about coming into the light of God's glory is that it shows up all the sin in our life. We might think we are not bad people compared to others, but when we see the moral purity of God in the person of Christ, we see just how sinful we are.

The people of Jesus' day got rid of the light by putting Christ to death to avoid their sin being exposed. People still try to get rid of the light today. We may be able to hide from the light for a while but a day is coming when we will not be able to hide. One day we shall all have to stand before the blazing glory of God's purity, and on that day our sin will be exposed for what it is. On that day, we will not be able to ignore Christ.

- We might try to hide from or ignore Christ now but why would we want to?

When Christ came and revealed the glory of God, it was not only the glory of moral purity, but also the glory of grace.

- Grace that welcomed sinners and cleaned them up
- Grace that overcame hostility from those who were afraid to have their sin exposed
- Grace that accepted those who came to him as children of God

The way to deal with our sin is to come to the light and allow the light of Christ's glory to burn it up. Those who found cleansing were those who came into the light of Christ's presence, confessing their sin and their inability to clean themselves up.

Those who trusted in Christ alone to cleanse them found the cleansing they needed.

4. Christ overcomes the darkness of our death. The darkest day ahead is the day of our death, a day which causes us to fear. Many people don't like to think about it at all, but we cannot avoid it.

Death comes to us all but Jesus has overcome death for us

Standing at the grave of Lazarus, Jesus said: **I am the resurrection and the life.**

Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live (John 11:25). He proved this by being raised to life himself, and in doing so, he secured resurrection life for every believer. When we go into the grave, we shall discover that he has made a way out for us. When Jesus returns, he will command our bodies to come out of the grave, and they will obey him because of who he is.

The darkness of death will not overcome us because it could not overcome him.

Christ is able to overcome every aspect of darkness because of who he is. The opening words of John's gospel show us:

- **Christ is life (v4)** he has life in himself and therefore is able to give us both physical life and spiritual life
- **Christ is creator (v3)** Everything that we fear in life is under Christ's authority because it has been made by him. Christ is for us and will turn all things to our eternal good.
- **Christ is God (v1)** He is the ultimate reality in the whole universe. Nothing can overcome him. When we receive Christ, we become his children and he overcomes all darkness for us.

We do not need to fear bringing Christ into our darkness. All he does is for our eternal good.

When he comes into our darkness, he is not powerless against it.

He can overcome all the darkness we face and bring the light of his peace and presence to us.

- Use the words of this song to help you understand what it cost for Christ to overcome the darkness for you.

The Power of The Cross

Oh to see the dawn of the darkest day
Christ on the road to Calvary
Tried by sinful men, torn and beaten, then
Nailed to a cross of wood

Oh to see the pain written on Your face
Bearing the awesome weight of sin
Every bitter thought, every evil deed
Crowning Your bloodstained brow

Now the daylight flees, now the ground beneath
Quakes as its Maker bows His head
Curtain torn in two, dead are raised to life
Finished the victory cry

Oh to see my name written in the wounds
For, through Your suffering, I am free
Death is crushed to death, life is mine to live
Won through Your selfless love

This, the power of the cross
Son of God, slain for us
What a love, what a cost
We stand forgiven at the cross

Keith Getty, Stuart Townend