

## “Incarnation - Jesus, You Are the Light of the World”

Scripture: John 1:1-5; Matthew 5:14-16

Graphics: manger, cross, candle

Big Truth: Just as we desire physical contact and closeness to others, God desired for us to know Him physically and relationally close. God sent Jesus to earth in the form of a child so that we could know Him. He taught and suffered and died so we would know Him. He rose again, bodily, so that we would know Him. All that, also, so we would know ourselves. Jesus is King. Jesus is Savior. Jesus is Emmanuel. Jesus is the Light of the World. Jesus is the Word.

Focus Phrase: Jesus, You Are the Light of the World, shine through me.

### 1. Introduction

- A. Now that Christmas is just 5 days away, we find ourselves at the very culmination of Advent...the season that leads us to Christmas.
- B. We've been focusing in on the Incarnation of God - the embodiment of God in human flesh in Jesus Christ.
- C. So far, we've confessed that through the Incarnation, Jesus is our **King**, Jesus is our **Savior**, and Jesus is our **Emmanuel**, God with us.
- D. But there's one more confession to make, which is, Jesus, You Are the **Light of the World**.
- E. Tomorrow is December 21, which marks the winter solstice for this year. In a year that doesn't seem to be able to get any darker, tomorrow will be the day that will have the most darkness and the least amount of light in 2020.
- F. Now, that may seem, at first, like it's something to be sad about. Yet, **AFTER** tomorrow, there will be more and more daylight and less and less darkness for the next 6 months! So, in some ways, we've made it! It's all getting brighter from here.
- G. But, have you also heard this news(?): tomorrow, the two largest planets in our solar system are coming closer together (from our perspective on earth) than they have been since the Middle Ages, and it's happening just in time for Christmas - hence some have given this phenomenon the nickname of the "Christmas Star." So, on the winter solstice, in a year that has been, by all accounts, a rather cruddy, challenging year, we'll hopefully see light piercing the darkness of the night sky...a small glimmer of something really cool.
- H. Yet, as cool as that might be, compared to Jesus, that glimmer of two planets in the sky will seem so dim! Jesus was an all-out blinding light in the darkness of the world when He was born on that first Christmas.
  - i. Now, we really have no good idea what day Jesus was actually born - most likely in the spring time. In fact, the reason that Christmas was set on December 25 is not because we have a birth certificate for Jesus that said he

was born on that day. However, the early Christians wanted to place the celebration of Christmas on December 25th for 2 reasons.

- ii. First, on the Julian calendar, invented by Julius Caesar and used for many centuries spanning the birth of Jesus, the winter solstice was on December 25th. It was also a high celebration day for most pagan cultures. Christ came to prove pagan cultures to be myth, and so the earliest Christians picked Dec. 25 to be the day to celebrate Jesus' birth, even though it was the day with the most amount of darkness.
  - iii. The second reason was even better, I think. Because the celebration of the birth of Jesus was placed on the winter solstice, it was also the day, like I mentioned, that light - hours of daylight - would begin to increase. If you think about the coming of Jesus, who, in John 8:12 said about himself, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life..." it makes sense that starting on Christmas Day, the Incarnation of God, light keeps increasing in our lives...and in our hearts.
- I. So, here we are at the doorway to a dark world about to be filled with divine light.
  - J. In fact, though, because Jesus is alive and living in US, His light is shining THROUGH us even now.
  - K. This morning, we're going to spend some time talking about light versus darkness. Then, we'll get some practical equipping for this week on how to see, receive, and BE the light of Christ in the world.
  - L. Our confession today is, Jesus You Are the Light of the World. That light is symbolized by a candle, shining in the darkness for all to see. And even when the world is dark, or our view of the world is dark, Jesus' light yearns to shine in it and through us.
  - M. Let's pray and then we'll open God's word and read about this light.
  - N. **PRAY!**
  - O. Let's grab a copy of the bible and open to the gospel of John, chapter 1. Now, unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke, John's account of the life of Jesus doesn't start with the birth narrative. In fact, John doesn't mention anything about angels or shepherds or stables or a pregnant virgin. John doesn't even mention a baby boy at all. By the time we pick up John's gospel in John 1:1, John is already talking about Jesus, the eternal light of the world...and then we meet Jesus as an adult ready to start his earthly ministry. John 1:1...

## 2. Scripture

### A. **READ John 1:1-5**

- B. John started all the way back, "In the beginning..." When we hear those words, it immediately takes us back to Genesis 1, when we read the words, "In

the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.”

- C. Light was the first thing that God spoke into being. Before there was light, there was only darkness (darkness covered the face of the deep). After there was light, there was no darkness, at least physically.
- D. John takes that one step farther and claims that Jesus is the light that shines in the darkness of our spiritual lives, and the darkness cannot, has not, and will not overcome it.
- E. Now, does that mean that John thinks that there is no such thing as darkness in the lives of those reading or hearing his gospel? Does He think that Jesus came, is the Light, and there’s no darkness at all ever again? Nope.
- F. What he’s saying is that Jesus is the Light shining IN the darkness of our world and of our lives.
- G. So, what is this darkness?
  - i. Darkness throughout scripture is described as evil, adversity, ignorance, despair, gloom, sin, and even death.
  - ii. Darkness falls into one of two categories:
    - a. First, darkness is **moral darkness**. This is the presence of evil and sin in the world and in our lives. Moral darkness creates the tendency we have to sin, ever since sin entered the world through the first man and woman way back in Genesis 3. Moral darkness is what leads people to live apart from God’s will, to reject God’s Son, and to live only to themselves. Moral darkness is present in our lives simply because evil exists. Moral darkness is void of God and God’s goodness.
    - b. The other kind of darkness is **existential darkness** or situational darkness. Existential darkness is present because we are sinful people in need of a Savior. While moral darkness is the well-worn pathway into sin, existential darkness is where we find ourselves when we actually do, say, and think things we know are wrong - that reject God’s good plan for us. This type of darkness creates a sense of guilt, shame, and hopelessness in our lives because we choose to sin...or because the sins of others causes consequences in our lives.
    - c. In Job 16:16, Job is crying out to God in despair for the darkness that surrounds him saying, “My face is red with weeping, and deep darkness is on my eyelids...” Psalm 107:10 says, “Some sat in darkness and in gloom, prisoners in misery and in irons...” This is the experience we have when darkness is our experience.

- iii. Yet, **this is not God's plan for us**. God is not part of the moral darkness of this world, and moral darkness has not power over God. It simply is because evil exists.
  - iv. Yet, here's the GOOD NEWS! Through the Incarnation, God busted, forcefully, INTO existential darkness in the form of Jesus, to be the Light of the World. And in Him was life, and the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it - neither the experience of darkness nor moral darkness itself. It ALL is defeated in Jesus, the Light of the World.
- H. Light, on the other hand, in the bible, is described as God, goodness, joy, knowledge, gospel, hope, and life.
- I. Adam Hamilton wrote, "Christmas, the Incarnation of God, is God's response to both forms of darkness, the moral and the existential."
- J. Jesus is the One who is the Light of the World and pierced any and all forms of darkness...from the beginning of time and for all eternity.
- i. The **prophecies** about Jesus all pointed to Jesus being the light that shines in the darkness. In Isaiah 9:2, we read this promise, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness - on them light has shined."
  - ii. The **birth** of Jesus took place in the darkness of a stable, yet after Jesus was born, a bright Star shone in the sky to mark the birthplace of Jesus.
  - iii. The **teachings** of Jesus are knowledge that shine the light of truth on every lie and on every deceit.
  - iv. Jesus' **death** cleared the darkness and stain of sin for all people. He is Savior, the One who came to save people from their sin.
  - v. The **resurrection** of Jesus defeated the darkness of death, and raised him to new life...and will shine the light on OUR tombs as well to raise US to new life when He returns.
  - vi. Speaking of Jesus' **return**, Revelation 22 gives this vision from John of Patmos, "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. Nothing accursed will be found there any more. But the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And there will be no more night; they need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever." Jesus will be THE ONLY LIGHT WE WILL EVER NEED and darkness will be no more.

K. LET THERE BE LIGHT! And let DARKNESS be DEFEATED!

### 3. Application

A. Let's shift gears a little to look at OUR response to this awesome news.

Because Jesus is the Light of the World...and Jesus is the Light of our lives... and Jesus will be the physical Light that will shine on us for eternity future, then what are we called to do, right here, right now, during Advent 2020?

B. Well, first thing you're called to do is the **See the Light of the World**.

- i. Advent gives us each such an incredible gift of the opportunity to see Jesus in the manger as Emmanuel. You can come to worship or worship online, you can spend time in a special devotional or in prayer.
- ii. You can even see the Christmas Star planets and let it turn your attention to Jesus!
- iii. Spend time this week reading the gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark, and Luke of the birth of Jesus. If you have young disciples at home, take time this week to read the bible accounts of Jesus' birth and talk about those.
- iv. See Jesus on the cross as Savior, in the empty tomb, in the Holy Spirit, seated on the throne as King.
- v. See how the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus shined a divine, powerful, truth-filled light in the world. And then spend time seeing the light of Jesus in YOUR life. Be thankful for His light of salvation in your life.

C. Then, spend time **Receiving the Light of the World**

- i. 1 Peter 2:9 reminds us, "But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."
- ii. I would never presume that everyone who can hear my voice has received the salvation, by faith, that Jesus is offering to you.
- iii. This Christmas, the best gift of all is to receive the gift of everlasting life by asking Jesus to be your Savior and Lord. Repent of your sin. Turn your life toward Jesus. Live your life for Him. And receive the Light that Jesus wants to plant into you!
- iv. If you are saved by grace by faith, then you can receive that light every day as you get ready for His return. Each morning, when you wake, allow the Light of Christ to fill you to overflowing.
- v. Because the final calling in your life is to...

D. **Walk in the Light of the World**

- i. Jesus was not content with being the Light of the World. When he taught his disciples, he told them that **THEY TOO** would be the light. Matthew 4:14-16, “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”
  - ii. 1 John 1:7 says, “but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.”
  - iii. Having fellowship with Jesus is being the Light of the World with Him...or better yet, letting Him be the Light of the World through you! To change the world from darkness to light!
  - iv. Adam Hamilton wrote, “We are God’s plan for changing the world. Let that soak in. We are God’s strategic plan for addressing poverty. We are God’s plan for addressing injustice, for healing the wounds of injury and suffering. We are God’s plan for including every person in this beloved community. We are not just passive recipients of God’s love and grace. As we become children of the light, we cannot keep that light within ourselves. It is meant to spill out from us naturally and touch the lives of others. And every time it does, the light extends just a little farther, the darkness recedes bit by bit, the kingdom of God expands, and the world is changed.”
- E. When we **see the Light, receive the Light, and walk in the Light**, then the world **WILL** change...light will pierce the darkness...and joy will be unleashed.

#### 4. Conclusion

- A. Henri Nouwen wrote, “Joy does not come from positive predictions about the state of the world. It does not depend on the ups and downs of the circumstances of our lives. Joy is based on the spiritual knowledge that, while the world in which we live is shrouded in darkness, God has overcome the world. Jesus says it loudly and clearly, ‘In the world you will have troubles, but rejoice, I have overcome the world.’ The surprise is not that, unexpectedly, things turn out better than expected. No, the real surprise is that God’s light is more real than all the darkness, that God’s truth is more powerful than all human lies, that God’s love is stronger than death.” (Here and Now)
- B. Darkness is the absence of light by scientific definition. It is **NOT** a thing. It is only the absence of something. Light is real. Jesus is the real Light of the real World.

- C. Our confession this morning SHOUTS into the darkness, putting Satan on notice that NOTHING - no darkness, no sin, no evil, no lies - will be able to survive when the Light of Jesus shines...on us and through us.
- D. So, with one voice together, this morning, I invite us to lift up the powerful confession, “Jesus, You Are the Light of the World!” As his people, this confession doesn’t come from here (head), but from here (heart).
- E. So, let’s stand, and three times, confess together: “Jesus, You Are the Light of the World” (3 times). Confess this with me... “Jesus, You Are the Light of the World!”
- F. Let’s also pray together (words on screen)... “Jesus, I trust in you. Be my light. Fill me with your light. Grant me your hope. Help me to walk in your light, to share your light, to live your light, to give your light. Use me, I pray, to push back the darkness. In your holy name. Amen.”