

FINDING A NEW EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN LIGHT OF CHRISTMAS

SERMON OUTLINE

1. The reign of darkness

John 1:5 – The light shines in the darkness... the darkness has not overcome it.

Ephesians 6:12 – ... we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

1 John 5:19 (NIV84) – We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

Where have you experienced “darkness” in life?

- | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> disappointment | <input type="checkbox"/> depression | <input type="checkbox"/> injustice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> doubt | <input type="checkbox"/> loneliness | <input type="checkbox"/> addiction |
| <input type="checkbox"/> chronic pain/illness | <input type="checkbox"/> anxiety/fear | <input type="checkbox"/> death |
| <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> _____ | |

“Always after a defeat and a respite,” says Gandalf, “the shadow takes another shape and grows again.” “I wish it need not have happened in my time,” says Frodo. “So do I,” says Gandalf, “and so do all who live to see such times.” – J.R.R. Tolkien, The Fellowship of the Ring

Matt. 10:18 – (Jesus) ...No one is good except God alone.”

(See “The Sermon on the Mount,” Matt. 5-8. This is God’s gift to help us see our own darkness.)

2. The True Light that has come

- The fact and purpose of His coming
- The manner of His coming

John 1:1-4; 14-15 – 1 In the beginning was the Word (Gk., Logos), 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 any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men ... 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.

John 1:10 – 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.

John 2:11 (NLT) – This miraculous sign (turning water to wine) at Cana in Galilee was the first time Jesus revealed his glory. And his disciples believed in him. (See also, John 21:25, 20:30-31.)

John 1:5 – The light shines in the darkness... the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1:12-13 – 12 ... 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.

Purposeful reflecting...

- Ask the Lord to speak, then spend five minutes in silence. If you catch your mind wandering, that’s okay; gently re-direct your attention to the presence of God. He promises never to leave or forsake us. It may help to repeat a verse of Scripture or Bible truth. Time in silence is about learning the skill of paying attention to God.

Experience

- Can you remember a time when you met someone who’s been through a loss or difficulty you’ve faced and found help in their ability to understand you?
- Review the checklist of your own dark experiences, including any you may have added. How might it make a difference for you to know that God, in a real human body, personally understands your dark times from His own experience?

Transform

- What is your practice of prayer during dark times? (It helps to think of specifics.) Do you pray more or less? Do you stop at asking for relief, or do you seek a deeper connection with and comfort from Jesus? Are there ways you need to change your prayer habits in dark times?
- Read Psalm 88 out loud. What does it say to us that God inspired that Psalm and wanted it included in Holy Scripture? Do you feel safe pouring out your griefs to God like that? If not, what needs to change?
- The Spirit of Jesus indwells Christians; and He works through us. What implications do these truths have for your connection with Christian friends? Do you need to pursue more connection with them? Identify anything that may be holding you back, and talk to God about it.

Share

- Whom do you know who might benefit from knowing you’ve been through some darkness they’re facing right now? Look for an opportunity to let them know you have some understanding of their situation. (Hint: You don’t need to fix anything for them. The best thing to do may be your willingness to listen. A listening ear is a great gift.)
- Scripture says to “bear each other’s burdens” (Gal. 6:2). Who’s burden can you help to bear right now? Or who can help to bear yours? Reach out to that person to give or receive help.