

SERMON SERIES: *The True Light Has Come*

SERMON TITLE: *Jesus: The Light That Overcomes Darkness*

SCRIPTURE: John 1:1-13

#1 What does John mean by “darkness”?

- Darkness is a life cut off from Jesus that is experiencing the opposite of what Zoa life in Jesus brings.
- Darkness is a life marked by:
 - Scarcity, bitterness, unforgiveness, hatred, sadness and depression, aimlessness, straining to prove yourself, insecurity, and despair.
 - NT Wright:

Sin is the rebellion of humankind against the vocation to reflect God's image into the world, the refusal to worship God the Creator, and the replacement of that worship and that vocation with the worship of elements of the created order, and the loss of image-bearing humanness which inevitably results. Death is not an arbitrary punishment for sin; it is its necessary consequence, since the turning away from the living God which constitutes idolatry is the spiritual equivalent of a diver cutting off his own breathing tube.¹

- Tim Keller:

According to the Bible, we have lost the original, full, right relationship with God we had at the beginning. That is the reason we will eventually know physical death, and it is why we experience spiritual death now--loss of meaning and hope, addictive, inordinate desires, deep discontent that can't be satisfied, shame and struggles with identity, and an inability to change.²

- At its deepest level, sin is our decision to reject God and give our love, devotion, and worship to created things in an attempt to find zoa life.

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- Everyone one of us has decided to pridefully rely on our own judgment and have looked to created things to provide us with the zoa life that we crave. None of us are exempt.
- We are all responsible for the ills that plague the world.
- No matter how hard we try, we can't seem to clean up the mess we've made.
 - Technology has fixed it.
 - Science has fixed it.
 - Politics hasn't fixed it.
 - Our education system hasn't fixed it.
- Light and darkness are opposite but they are not equals.

#2 How does Jesus overcome the darkness?

- Jesus overcame the darkness through his **LIFE**.
 - Although Jesus was tempted by darkness in every way that we are, never once did he cease to do the right thing, at the right time, with the right motivation, in the right way.
 - Zoe life was in him and he lived it out loud...perfectly.
- Jesus overcame the darkness through his **RESURRECTION**.
 - Human evil and evil in the spiritual realm threw its best shot at Jesus and yet he rose from the dead healed and whole.
- Jesus will overcome the darkness through his **RETURN**.
 - When Jesus returns, he will remove the darkness and those people who persist in it from his world forever.

#3 How can we overcome the darkness?

- John tells us that if we are going to overcome the darkness in us and the darkness around us, we must go through a change so dramatic that it can only be described as a **NEW BIRTH!**

- Only Jesus can give us the right to be born into God's family and experience zoa life for he is the only one that can reconcile us to God.
 - Our rejection of God and his ways and our mistreatment of others made in his image have earned us the death penalty. We deserve to spend eternity completely apart from God and his good world. God is a good judge who will not let wrongdoing go unpunished. We have done anything to merit acceptance into God's family and the blessings that come with it.
- The miracle of the Christmas message is that God, in the person of Jesus, became human to be our **substitute**.
 - On the cross, Jesus bled and died to cancel the guilt of our crimes against God and our fellow human beings.
 - Jesus lived the perfect life God commanded us to live but couldn't, and as a result, he earned for us eternal zoa life in God's family.
- Jesus's accomplishments become ours through believing and receiving.
 - We must **believe** that Jesus lived and died as our substitute to earn for us forgiveness and the reward of eternal zoa life in God's family.
 - We must **receive** Jesus by asking him to make his life and death count for us and by yielding our allegiance to him.
- No matter how dark your past is, God stands ready to forgive, accept, and redeem you in the light of Jesus your substitute.
- God is one but he is also three. This is not a contradiction because the way in which God is one (being, nature, essence) differs in how he is three (persons).
- If you have believed in and received Jesus, remember there is no darkness you can face that the light of Christ cannot overcome.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways have you experienced the darkness that John is referring to?
2. What do you make of NT Wright's statement that "death is not an arbitrary punishment for sin; it is its necessary consequence, since the turning away from the living God which

constitutes idolatry is the spiritual equivalent of a diver cutting off his own breathing tube”?

3. Pastor Shane states that “sin, at its deepest level, is our decision to reject God and give our love, devotion, and worship to created things in an attempt to find Zoa life. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? How are you guilty of doing this?
4. What is our culture saying regarding how the evils in our world can be expelled?
5. When you consider Christ’s perfect life, what stands out to you the most?
6. How was Christ’s resurrection the ultimate defeat of evil?
7. Do you look forward to Christ’s return? Why or why not?
8. Why is it important that Jesus was both our substitute in his death but also in his life?
9. Have you believed in and received Jesus, and as a result, been born into God’s family? If not, what barriers are keeping you from doing so? If yes, what evidence is there in your life that you truly are a child of God?
10. What darkness are you currently experiencing that you need the light of Christ to obliterate?
11. What is God saying to you? What will you do about it? Who will hold you accountable?