

Sometimes after Christmas Eve and Christmas Day are over we might find ourselves asking, “Now what?” There is such a big ramp up to the celebration of Christmas, that after the celebration is over there is often a let down and we might even feel a little bit sad. Maybe you had a wonderful Christmas, but then on December 26<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> you find yourself asking, “Now what?”

What is the “Now what?” of the message of Christmas. What I mean by that is “What does the baby in the manger mean for my life going forward?” Today we see from the apostle John that the “now what” of Christmas is to Live in the Light of Christmas. The apostle John didn’t write an account of Jesus’ birth. But he did say that “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14). And John unfolded what it means to live in the light of that fact. John unfolded what it means to Live in the Light of Christmas.

John takes us back to the beginning. The book of Genesis started, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). And John starts both his Gospel and his first letter by taking us back to the beginning and telling us that Jesus was there in the beginning. The Gospel of John starts, “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” (John 1:1). Today we are looking at the first letter that John wrote and again he starts by taking us back to the beginning, “That which was from the beginning ...” (1 John 1:1).

In the beginning, when God first created the heavens and the earth, everything was perfect. But then Satan introduced a lie. And when Adam and Eve believed that lie, that introduced darkness into God’s perfect world. When you believe a lie and you act on the basis of that lie, then you are really in darkness aren’t you? When you proceed on the basis of that lie, then it leads you to all kinds of false conclusions.

John talks about several lies in our passage for today. One of the lies that Satan tells is when he tells us that “We can believe in Jesus and yet live in knowing and unrepentant sin.” That’s a lie. John says, **“If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth” (1 John 1:6)**. Another lie that Satan tells is that we haven’t sinned or that our sins aren’t that bad. John says, **“If we claim we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8)**. I read someone once make the good point that it’s easy to admit that we are sinners in general, but when there is something specific that we have done, then it’s harder for us to admit, “Yes, this specific thing that I did was sinful.” But if it something clearly against the word of God and we still claim we have not sinned, then we are living in denial and we are even calling God a liar. John says, **“If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:10)**. Are there any lies that you are holding on to? Is there anything that you have done or regularly do that is clearly against the word of God, but you either claim that it is not sinful or explain it away? Then you are acting on the basis of a lie and it will lead you into all kinds of wrong conclusions. It will lead you into darkness.

Satan has introduced so many lies into God’s world that it has become a world of darkness. And into this world of darkness came the Light. And that Light is shining from the manger. In a world that has become a complicated maze, Jesus is the Way. In a world where there are so many lies, Jesus is the truth. In a world that is surrounded by death, Jesus is the life. Now that the Word has been made flesh let’s Live in the Light of Christmas.

John knew the Light. He says, **“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard” (1 John 1:1)**. John personally heard Jesus teaching. **“...which we have seen with our eyes” (1:1)**. John personally saw Jesus’ miracles. **“...which we have looked at and our hands have touched” (1:1)**. At the Lord’s Supper, John was reclining next to Jesus. John was a personal companion to Jesus himself.

Who would you say is the most influential person in your life? Maybe the most influential person in your life has been your mom or your dad. Growing up, you were with your parents day in and day out. When you are with your parents day in and day out, they have a huge influence on your thinking. John had a lot of positive influences on his life. His father was a man named Zebedee. We also meet John’s mother one or two times in the Gospels. I’m sure his parents were a positive influence on him. We also meet his brother James in the Gospels. James sadly was martyred rather early on in the book of Acts. I’m sure James was a positive influence on John. John was also good friends with Peter. But the biggest

influence on John, by far, was Jesus of Nazareth. John was with Jesus day in and day out for three years. John said about Jesus that if everything he did were written down the world wouldn't have enough room for the books that would be written. The things that Jesus said and did had an enormous influence on John.

If Jesus is the Light incarnate, if Jesus is Truth incarnate, if Jesus is the light in the world of darkness, then part of Living in the Light of Christmas of Christmas is to let Jesus of Nazareth be the biggest influence on your life. And in order for Jesus of Nazareth to be the biggest influence on your life, then you have to have a lot of contact with him. John was with Jesus day in and day out. The access that we have to Jesus is his word. So one part of Living in the Light of Christmas is that I'm going spend time getting to know Jesus in his word. I'm going to read his word in my home and I'm going to come to church regularly. When you listen to Jesus speak in his Word, Jesus shines light on your heart. It has been pointed out that when we read stories in the Gospels Jesus regularly challenges some aspect of our thinking. He points out some aspect of our thinking that is darkness. He points out materialism or greed or some other aspect of our thinking that is darkness. And it will often surprise you. The people that Jesus most often spoke against were the people who thought they were righteous. By both Jesus' words and his actions John learned from Jesus how to walk in the light. John says: **"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all" (1 John 1:5).**

But if Jesus were only a Teacher and an Example, then that would not save us from the darkness. That's why Jesus is more than an example and a Teacher, Jesus is first and foremost the Savior. It says, **"the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin" (1:7).** The Light exposes a lot of darkness in us. But when we repent of our sins, the blood of Jesus cleanses the sin that the Light uncovers. John addresses his hearers as, **"My dear children" (2:1).** John was a pastor. He wrote as a caring pastor to his people. **"I write this to you so that you will not sin" (2:1).** As a pastor John wanted to guide his people in the way of righteousness. But John knew that the people under his care still had a sinful nature and so he said, **"But if anybody does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father – Jesus Christ, the Righteous One" (2:1).** Another thing that John learned from Jesus was to have compassion for those who fell into sin and repented. He learned from Jesus how to give forgiveness to the repentant sinner. And so John said, Jesus **"is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (John 2:2).** At the beginning of the Gospel of John, a different John, John the Baptist, points at Jesus and says, **"Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (1 John 1:29).** John the Apostle says something similar here when he says, **"He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world" (1 John 2:2).** Living in the Light of Christmas means, most of all, living in the light of forgiveness. Jesus came as our Savior, to die for us and give us full and free forgiveness for all of our sins. Living in the Light of Christmas is to enjoy that and believe that.

And finally living in the Light of Christmas means having fellowship with others who believe that too. John says, **"We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you may have fellowship with us" (1 John 1:3).** One of the toughest things about COVID is that it has forced many people to be isolated. Maybe as a community of the Light we need to give a phone call or an email or a text to our fellow Christians who might be feeling lonely and isolated. John says, **"I write this to make our joy complete" (1 John 1:4).** Our joy is complete when we are sharing our light with one another. One of the other big themes of the apostle John is "love." We live in the Light of Christmas when we show love to one another.

After December 25<sup>th</sup>, it becomes easy for Christmas joy to fall away. But the Light of the incarnation lasts all year round. Let's live in the Light of Christmas by living in the Light of forgiveness, by walking in the Light as he is in light and by sharing that light with one another. Amen.