

Sermon Outline

“LIFE IN HIS NAME”: THE PURSUIT OF WHOLENESS AND THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

THE WORD OUR LIFE AND LIGHT (JOHN 1:4-5)

I. Introduction

II. Jesus contains Our Life and Light

- A. Verse 4 declares: “In him was life...”
- B. The word “life” appears for the first time in the Gospel of John.
- C. Back in John 20:31, we saw that John’s purpose in writing this Gospel is “so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
- D. So now, in 1:4, we are seeing for the first time in John’s Gospel the theme of *life*.

III. Life = Light

- A. Notice what else John says about life: “and the life was the light of men.”
- B. John equates the eternal *life* that Jesus brings with the *light* of God.
—Implication: Whenever the Lord Jesus speaks about light, we can assume that he is also talking about eternal life.
- C. Equating life with light grants us a deeper understanding of what eternal life actually entails.
 - 1. What does light connote? What are ideas associated with light?
 - a. Truth (cf. Jn 1:14; 14:6)
 - b. Knowledge
 - c. Comfort
 - d. Freedom (from fear)
—John 8:32: “and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”
 - 2. Eternal life is nothing less than...
 - a. The *true knowledge* of God
 - b. The *comfort* that comes from being reconciled to God.
 - c. *Freedom* from our sins, our fears, and all the other dark, irrational things that hold us down, cutting us off from God.
- D. All of this, my friends, is what it means to be saved. All the blessings of light is what it means to have life in Jesus. And this, from God’s perspective, is what it means to be whole.

IV. A Murdering Darkness (John 1:5)

- A. But as the light of God’s life shines into the darkness, the darkness does not take well to this intrusion.
- B. How would the darkness try to resist the Light?
1. If the light is the eternal life that God gives us in Jesus Christ, darkness is basically everything that is the opposite of that eternal life. It is the state of eternal death. It is also everything that hinders people from coming to Christ and receiving him.
- C. Using John 8 as a guide, the contents of the darkness may be described this way:
- The devil
 - His lies
 - His murderous acts
- D. The darkness is rooted in the *devil*.
1. In John 8, the Lord Jesus confronts the Jews for wanting to kill him.
 2. In 8:39-40, he says to them: “If you were Abraham’s children, you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God.”
 3. Notice the word “truth,” which is associated with light.
—In this dialogue, Jesus is showing us how the darkness is resisting the light of the Word of God.
 4. Having confronted the Jews with their desire to kill him, Jesus proceeds to identify the father of the unbelieving Jews: “This is not what Abraham did. You are doing the works your father did.”
 5. The Jews get defensive: “We were not born of sexual immorality. We have one Father—even God” (v 41).
 6. Jesus: “If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot bear to hear my word.”
 7. The indictment of verse 44: “You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”
 8. Jesus shows us the heart of the evil that stands opposed to the light of God. For Jesus, the heart of evil is clearly an intelligent power. And that is none other than the devil himself.
 9. According to Jesus, the devil is opposed to two important aspects of eternal life and light.
 - a. He is a *murderer*, which means that he is opposed to life.
 - b. He is a *liar*, which means that he stands opposed to the truth. And both life and truth are, of course, aspects of the eternal light that comes from the Word.
- E. The darkness includes the devil’s *lies*.
1. The grand, major lies that the devil uses are primarily false philosophies and false ways of thinking that keep us away from God and his means of salvation.
—Any philosophy of life that places man’s highest happiness outside of God and Jesus Christ is part of the lie that the devil tells to keep the world under his control.

2. We say this on the grounds of what Jesus says in John 14:6: “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.”
3. If Jesus is the Truth that leads us to God, if Jesus is the only Way by which we sinners can be reconciled to God and every good thing that he desires for us, then it follows, quite logically, that anything that leads us away from Jesus is a lie from the devil, no matter how nicely it is clothed. Once we see this, it becomes clear to us how the devil is deceiving the world today.
4. Great Lie 1: *Traditional religion*.
 - a. In this camp, you will find many of our parents and grandparents. They are still locked under their superstitions.
 - b. On the outside, these religions spout enough good values (integrity, filial piety, and respect for authority, etc.) to make them look credible.
 - c. But there is a fundamental lack of mercy and grace in these religions. They are religions that...
 - i. Help those who want to help themselves.
 - ii. Operate with the assumption that human beings really are able to save themselves with sufficient effort.
 - d. In spite of all the good values that they promote—and many of these values do agree with God’s Law—these old religions do not bring people to the end of themselves, and so do not bring them to the one Savior whom God has sent to save them. And because of that, they are *not* God’s religions.
5. Great Lie 2: “*Freethinker-ism*” or *secular liberalism*
 - a. People in this want to do away with all traditional religion. They want to establish their own religious system, which is based in humanity—human rights, human intelligence, intrinsic human value, etc.
 - b. But the new secular religion still operates on the assumption that man can save himself (with sufficient education and attention to human rights).
6. Those are some of the major lies that the devil is using to deceive the world today.
—While the lies look very different on the outside, at their core, both kinds of religions encourage people to find their ultimate happiness outside of God and Jesus Christ.
7. Believers are not yet so perfected that we ourselves do not struggle at some level with the lies of the devil. In fact, we do still struggle a lot.
 - a. The greatest temptation that we have may well be to shift the center of our ultimate happiness away from God back onto ourselves.
 - b. We may depend on our successes and efforts to do what only Christ can do, which is to make us acceptable and loved by the God, who is Ultimate Reality.
 - c. How do we know if we are giving in to this temptation?
—When we allow the disapproval of people to affect us so negatively that we are unable...
 - to pray
 - to truly rejoice in God’s love for us
 - to take refuge in Christ
 - to give ourselves freely and lovingly to others.

- F. The darkness includes *murder*.
1. One of the inevitable responses to believing the devil's lies is sinful anger.
 2. Why anger? Because any person other than God is bound to disappoint.
 3. When we feel deeply frustrated, we take our anger out on those around us.
—Family members, our children, our students, our employees—all these people suffer from our anger.
- G. Summary: The darkness that opposes the Light is not just the absence of Light. It is an intentional and malicious darkness with a mind of its own—a mind that is rooted in the devil himself, who spreads the darkness by his lies and murderous acts.

V. The Overpowering Light (John 1:5)

- A. The point of this verse is not to glorify the darkness, but to show its impotence.
—“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”
- B. The Light and Life of God blazes away like a holy fire in the darkness through the Lord Jesus Christ.
- C. The Lord Jesus shares this Living Light with his people.
- D. The darkness is still not able to overcome this unconquerable Light, because the Light is God himself.
- E. When the Light does become a man, he will call us by these words: “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (Jn 8:12).
- F. As the Light, Jesus...
1. shows us the truth about the world and God's love for us.
 2. frees us from the fears that enslave and prevent us from living freely for God.
 3. puts an end to murder by removing our hatred.

Will we go with the light? Will we receive the Light of life that Jesus gives?

Our hope does not rest in ourselves, but in the indestructible Light and Life of God, who is Jesus Christ our Lord. For those who believe, this life-giving Light is now melting away the darkness that clouds our hearts. It will one day absorb us fully into the realm of blazing life. What God has sent the Light to do, the Light will accomplish. Live by him. Have faith in him.

*Lord Jesus Christ,
Light of God,
you are the true Life of all mankind.
Breathe your holy life into our hearts.
Shine your loving light into our souls.
Melt away the darkness that remains.
Consume us by yourself.
Save us from our sins.
Make us light as you are light.
Amen.*

Questions for Reflection

1. According to 1:4, how is the light related to the eternal life?
2. Using John 8:44 as a guide, what are some key features of the darkness?
3. How does the devil enslave the world by deception? What are some big lies (false meta-narratives) that the devil uses to keep people away from God? How do these lies lead to murder?
4. Where do you need to see the Light of God grow in your life? Where are the pockets of sin that need to see the Light of God? Ask God to shine his life-giving light into your life, to show you your sins and to melt them away.
5. Where do you see the devil's deceptive and murderous power at work in the lives of those with whom you are closest? How does the Light speak to those struggles particularly? (e.g. Frustration? The Light satisfies our real needs. Greed? The Light brings every other blessing in him.)
6. Are you a follower of the Light? Have you entrusted your life to the Lord Jesus?