

In the Beginning Was the Word (Part 3)

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[0:00] The Gospel of John.

We've been going through verses 1-5, and so far I've gone through verses 1-3. This morning's text will cover verses 4-5. But, for context's sake, let's go ahead and let's stand together and let's read verses 1-5.

May God add a blessing to the reading of His Word.

Would you please be seated?

So, this was a big deal.

[2:16] He missed the first free throw, but he made the second. So, KU is down three. Just under ten seconds left to go in the game. And so, their only hope of keeping this game going is to hit a three-point shot.

I'll never forget as KU inbounded the ball. Sharon Collins had it. He was one of our guards. And he dribbled to the right of the court, to the right of the three-point line, and he stumbled on his feet. And the ball, he lost control of it for just a moment. And I remember gasping and thinking, oh my goodness, we've come all the way to this point. And we're not even going to get a chance to shoot the ball.

But amazingly, he dove for it in midair. He caught it, and he shoveled it into the hands of Mario Chalmers, who dribbled to the top of the key and hit what we refer to as Mario's miracle in Kansas. And he tied the game, and we later went on to win the national championship. All right, hey, see, you know, even in Oklahoma, I'm sorry, I can tell how much you love me if you're willing to cheer a little bit for the Jayhawks, though some of you don't.

[3:28] But I'll leave that between you and the Lord. I love you. You know that. ESPN used to have a channel called ESPN Classic, if you remember that.

And on that channel, what they would do is they would replay great games throughout all sports, hockey, baseball, football, basketball, you name it. And so I'll never forget watching the 2008 national championship game on ESPN Classic and going to those last ten seconds of regulation. And even though I knew what was going to happen, I knew that KU was going to win the game. I knew that Sherron Collins would stumble. He would recover, get the ball to Mario Chalmers, and he would make that shot.

Even though I knew it, watching those last ten seconds, I still felt anxious. There was still a bit of fear within me, like, well, what if it doesn't happen, right?

Even though I knew that the outcome was certain. And sure enough, as I watched the rest of that game, all the events take place just as I knew that they would.

[4:34] Just as it had happened. And the shot was made, and they went on to win the game in regulation. So when I read, I share that with you because when I read verse 5, what we just read about the darkness not overcoming the light, I feel the same way as when I first watched that game on ESPN Classic.

Because sometimes, especially in the times that we're living in right now, it feels as if the darkness will not be overcome by the light.

But then I'm reminded by God's Word of Christ's coming, of His dying, of His rising from the dead. And I'm reminded that though darkness is great, light has come.

It has shined in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. Nor will it ever. And though we know that, it's still hard at times to not feel as if the darkness is winning right now.

Case in point, I learned of an article last week in Teen Vogue. And in case you're wondering, no, I don't read Teen Vogue.

[5:58] I heard about it from a second source. But Teen Vogue, if you didn't know, is a magazine targeted to 13-year-old girls, keep in mind. 13-year-old girls.

And this was the title of one of the articles that recently appeared in Teen Vogue. The title was, Why Sex Work is Real Work.

And the article goes on, and I'm not making any of this up, but it goes on to encourage girls to think about pursuing a career in prostitution.

And their justification is that they say, well, just as a woman doctor provides services and gets paid well for that, so should women provide other services if they get paid well for them also.

So, this is advice being given to 13-year-old girls. My daughter is three, and it terrifies me to think of the advice that she will get from the world 10 years from now.

[7:10] And just as a matter of fact, if ever you would see my daughter when she's a teenager with any of these kinds of materials in her hands, you have my permission to take them away in the name of Jesus and throw that garbage in the trash where it belongs.

But we wonder, don't we? I mean, I heard your shocked gasp. We wonder, how could this happen? How could people think that such a thing would ever be okay?

You know, I feel like I've quoted this passage of Scripture more so than any other over the past few years. And I think that's because of how helpful it is to help us make sense of these nonsensical times.

And you all are familiar with it. It's Romans 1, verses 18-32. Let's read that together this morning. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

For what can be known about God is plain to them because God has shown it to them. For His invincible attributes, namely His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived ever since the creation of the world in the things that have been made.

[8:24] So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him, but they became futile in their thinking and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Claiming to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.

Therefore, God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen.

For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.

And the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty of their error.

[9:29] And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossip, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Though they know God's righteous decrees that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

Not only does this depict what we're witnessing in our society right now, but tragically, we are witnessing many churches and pastors even, who either boldly give their approval with the world to such things, or they refuse to say anything about them altogether, in fear that it will affect their attendance, in fear that it might affect the giving of their people.

On top of that, we have reports that tell us that church attendance and baptisms continue to decline. We live in a society that has exchanged the truth for a lie and received a debased mind for that in return.

[10:58] Accompanied by that, we have weak churches and pastors who are more concerned with material possessions than they are with spiritual truth, and who are afraid to look foolish in the eyes of the world, and would rather appear like they are woke, or with the times, or culturally relevant.

We also have churches and pastors who are so angry with what they see carrying out, and they want to carry out the wrath of God for themselves.

They want to take His vengeance into their hands. But we know that saying and doing those types of things do not reflect Christ-likeness, and that is not our place.

Again, in addition, we have statistics that show us that church attendance and baptisms in the U.S. across the board are in continual decline, and the trend only seems to indicate that that will continue to be the case.

And so all these things make it seem as if darkness is overcoming light, and it feels to me as if the church is losing.

[12:20] But you know what? If we didn't have this book, if we didn't have the Word of God, if we didn't know that the outcome has already been determined, that the victory is certain, we might think that there is no hope for this world, maybe even for ourselves.

But these verses are filled with hope. And my hope is that you'll leave this place with a renewed hope in Jesus Christ.

That there is life in Him. That there is light in Him. That He has overcome the darkness, and the darkness will never overcome our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So the last couple of weeks, we've sought to answer three questions concerning Jesus that John provides answers for to us in his introduction of Him in these verses.

He tells us where Jesus came from. That Jesus is from forever. That He's eternal. And He's told us who Jesus is. He says that Jesus is the Word of God.

[13:43] He's the second person of the Trinity. He's the Word of God that became flesh. In verse 14. He's the God-man. Fully God. Fully man. He died on the cross to atone for our sins and was raised on the third day.

So He does this, that in our understanding of where Jesus came from, and who Jesus is, and what Jesus has done, which is what we're focusing on now, that it will have an impact on our understanding of Him and how we worship Him and how we direct others towards Him.

So here's the main idea for this morning's message. Jesus Christ is the eternal, everlasting, life-giving Word of God. A lot of people say a lot of different things about Jesus, and as a result of that, right now in our society, there's a lot of confusion about who He is.

There's a lot of confusion about where He's come from. There's a lot of confusion about what He's done. So as followers of Jesus Christ, we must know the answers to these questions so that we can clear up whatever confusion that there is.

And not only will we seek to do that, but it will change the way that we worship our Lord. It will change the way that we seek to witness for Him.

[15:07] Knowing where Jesus comes from, knowing who Jesus is, knowing what Jesus has done, will produce within us a greater desire to worship Him and a greater desire to make Him known with the lives that He's given us to live.

I'll say this also means something else, though, for unbelievers. And I say this in love. What it means is that you've been wrong. Your understanding of the reason and purpose for your existence has been wrong.

Your determination of what is right and what is wrong and your determination of what is valuable and worth pursuing has been wrong. If Jesus Christ is who John says that He is in this introduction, then the only appropriate response to Him is to bow down and to worship Him as Lord and Savior. Nothing else will do. So here John tells us more about what does Jesus do or what has Jesus done. Well, first of all, he says that the Word of God is life.

He says very simply and plainly there, in Him was life. In John 20, verses 30-31, he states his goal and purpose for his gospel.

[16:28] And there he says, Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples which are not written in this book, but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and understand that by believing you may have life in His name.

In John 14, verse 6, Jesus declared that He is the source of life. There He says, I am the way, the truth, and the life.

No one comes to the Father except through Me. In all, in the Gospel of John, the word life or the verb for to live occurs 50 times in this book.

So what does it mean that Jesus, the Word of God, is life? What is the point that the Holy Spirit is trying to get across to us? What does He want us to understand about that?

Well, first of all, that He, Jesus, is the source of physical life. We covered this last week. Through Him, all things were made.

[17 : 38] Without Him, nothing was made that has been made. And so I don't want to spend too much more time on that today, but just to state again that Jesus, the eternal, everlasting Word of God, is the agent through which all things have been created and through which all things continue to be in existence.

He sustains it all. He is the source of physical life. We see all throughout Jesus' ministry that He gives testimony that this is true of Him.

He turns water into wine. He curses the fig tree and it withers and dies. He calms the sea. He walks on the water. He multiplies the fishes and the loaves.

He heals people of all kinds of ailments and infirmities. He brings dead people back to life. How could He do this? He's the source of life.

All of creation is under His authority. It must obey what He tells it to do. He is also the source of spiritual life.

[18 : 46] And I believe that in one sense, John is speaking of Christ's role in creating, yes, but I think more so here, he's talking about His being the source of spiritual life.

And He's laying the groundwork here for the rest of His gospel. Jesus is the source of physical life, yes, but so too is He the source of spiritual life.

When God formed Adam, the first man, He didn't use gold. He didn't use silver. He didn't use uranium or platinum.

You know what He used to form the first man? Dust. Dirt. Dirt. He used a common substance that most of us hate.

Hate having dirt in our houses. We hate having dirt on our cars. We hate having dirt on our clothes. I can't stand when there's dirt on my shoes. We hate having dirt on our hands.

[19 : 51] We hate having dirt in our hair or on any part of our body for that matter. But have you ever thought or wondered why of all the substances that our Lord could have used to form Adam, why did He use dust?

Why did He use dirt? Yes, we are fearfully and wonderfully made, as the Bible says, but I think God chose to use dust to remind us that without His breath giving us life, just as He breathed life into that pile of dust that became Adam.

We, too, likewise, like Him, are dust. And the glory is His. And who are we to boast? In ourselves.

I love this quote by Donald Gray Barnhouse about this. He said, So low is the dust that God gave it to the serpent for the food of His curse. Job used the word 20 times to describe the littleness of man and His misery.

It is to dust that all bodies return in death. But we can look up to the Lord in confidence because He quotes Psalm 103, 14. He knows our frame and remembers that we are dust.

[21 : 11] And this is the way He closes this quote. Dust that acknowledges its dustiness finds favor in the sight of the Lord. I like that.

Because I feel like the church would do well and its members would do well to remember and acknowledge that we are just a bunch of dusty people.

Paul reminded the Christians in Ephesus that before God made them alive in Christ, they were totally and completely dead. Dead to everything spiritually and were in total rebellion against Him. Let's read that. He says to them, And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work and the sons of disobedience, among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind.

But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[22 : 32] By grace, you have been saved and raises us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

When I was a boy, my grandmother lived in the apartment, the upstairs apartment of a funeral home. The funeral home is in Maryland and it used to be owned by a well-known doctor, a big

Victorian house, and after his death, the funeral company purchased it and so she lived there in the apartment.

She answered the phones late at night. Now, as a boy, I didn't understand all these things. I thought Grandma's rich and she's nice because she lets people have funerals in her house, right? I don't think that I would do that.

And so me and my sisters and my dad sometimes, during the weekends when nobody was there, we would play hide-and-seek in the funeral home.

And it'd be interesting. You'd go hide in the casket room, for example. And I remember one time, the chapel that they had was usually empty and so I thought, that would be a great place to hide in the chapel.

[23 : 38] I haven't hidden there in a long time. So I sneak down to the chapel and I do one of those things where I open the door and I kind of spin around to make sure that nobody's watching me going in.

And so I slowly walk in and shut the door and I turn around and I realize that I'm not alone in the chapel. That there is a dead body in there with me.

There is going to be a funeral later on in the day that I did not know about and so needless to say, I rushed out of that room as quickly as I could in fear that the dead body was going to jump up and chase me right out through the front door.

But I was a kid. Obviously I should have known better. Though that was a creepy experience. We know that dead people are dead people.

They're unresponsive. Their hearts don't beat. They don't have any brain waves. There is no breath in their bodies. They are stone cold dead.

[24 : 45] Totally incapable of responding in any way. The Bible says that we need a new life. It says that we need to be born again.

We need to be born from above and we receive that new life, the Bible says, from God. Not based on works, but based upon faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Where does this new life come from? Well, it comes from Jesus Christ. And so we also see that He is the source of eternal life. Because we are dead in our sins, God sent Jesus to give us new life.

Because we were guilty of sin, God sent Jesus to be the propitiation for our sins by bearing our sins in His own body on the cross.

John 3.16-18, For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

[25 : 55] Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the Son of God, the only name that can save anybody.

And here when John is talking about believing, he's referring to much more than an intellectual understanding that Jesus is the Son of God. After all, the demons believed that Jesus was the Son of God.

But this is a belief that deals more with trust. And it deals more with commitment. Once you understand the severity of your sins that you've committed, and you understand that they've committed against a God who is holy and a God who is just, it means that once you repent of those sins and you understand that your only hope of salvation is in Jesus Christ, in the life that He lived for you, in the death that He did, died for you, in His resurrection from the grave that sealed it for you, then you are trusting in Him as Lord and Savior.

Do you trust Him? If you do, then you know that you have received eternal life. Received eternal life. A life with no end.

And let me tell you, it's a life that begins right now. John said in, or Jesus said in John 10.10, the thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy.

[27 : 26] I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. Man, it's unfortunate that so many Christians, though they have eternal life, they do not live life abundantly.

When you forget, for example, that light has overcome the darkness, when you take your focus off of Jesus Christ and onto yourself or someone else, you start to complain a lot.

You start to become really negative and very cynical. You become increasingly miserable and not only do you become more miserable, but you make others around you miserable as well.

This is not the way that Jesus has told us to live. This will not end with you experiencing abundant life in this life. When our focus is not on Christ, but on ourselves, we will groan and we will moan and we will be miserable in this world instead of when our focus is on Him and our eyes are in His Word and we're listening to what He has to say to us and we know that for us there is a future that is filled with hope.

No matter how bad things may seem to be or no matter how great things seem to be, we know that the best for the Christian is always yet to come. And so we live our lives abundantly knowing that Jesus has accomplished it all for us.

[28:51] The Word of God is life. The Word of God is also light. And John continues by saying, and the life was the light of men. Now in verses 6-9 where we'll be next Sunday, John speaks more about Jesus as the light.

So because we're drawing near to the end of our time together this morning, I'm not going to go too in depth here as I will later on. This metaphor of Jesus again appears over and over in the Gospel of John of Him being compared to light.

So there will be plenty of opportunity. But I will say that without light there is no vision. There's no view of things as they truly are. Without light you cannot journey confidently in the dark.

You're not able to see what lies before you. Without light things don't grow. There's no health.

Things die. Light also exposes darkness.

All these things characterize who Jesus is. He opens our eyes to see things as they truly are in this world. He helps us to see clearly as we journey through this life.

[30:02] Giving us understanding. Giving us discernment all along the way. He nourishes our hearts. He satisfies the longings of our souls. He comforts us by knowing that even though we may walk through the valley of the shadow of death He is with us every step of the way.

John 8.12 And Jesus spoke to them saying I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness but will have the light of life.

And then John reveals to us that the word of God will never be overcome. He's the life.

He's the light. He will never be overcome. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. A couple of weeks ago something like that we had our youth lock in here on Friday night and I'm still recovering from that.

I feel like and we played a game called Sardines. Have you guys ever played Sardines before? It's kind of like reverse hide and seek. One person hides and everybody else tries to find that one person and once you find them you all hide together and so sometimes you're in a tight spot and so it's like fish, you know sardines in a can right?

[31:22] Hence the name. And so we like to play with the lights turned off and now we don't go all throughout this building because we'd probably lose kids and you know we'd find their pile of dust later on in life, right?

So we don't do that but we do you know a lot of the building is on limits and so we allow the kids to use their phones as flashlights, right? Because you know I don't want anybody to die and so one of the students I don't remember who it was but they hid up in the mezzanine level where the youth meet for Sunday school class and you know that whole back wall is windows and so they were shining their flashlights in that room and a police officer happened to be driving around and he saw the flashlights and he came over to the church to check things out and Leandra handled it she let him know what was going on he completely understood but I told the teens now you know that you've been at a party when the police come to try and break it up right?

but all this to say that light exposes darkness as dark as it was that police officer saw that light shining from far away because that's what light does it cannot be overcome by darkness light exposes it darkness must retreat from light Jesus came into the world as light and he lights the world and he continues to do so to this day and understand that the darkness though it's very dark can't overcome it but it will try since the promise of God to bring a redeemer Satan has done all that he could to extinguish the light the light that has come in Jesus Christ and for a moment for a moment it appeared as if he'd been successful in Luke chapter 22 verse 53

Jesus was coming to the cross it was imminent he knew it he was willing to go this was God's plan and he said to his disciples this is the hour of the power of darkness hell was going to throw all that it could against him Jesus' crucifixion was literally and figuratively the darkest hour in all of history Mark 15:37 says that now from the sixth hour this is noon to 3pm when the sun is supposed to be at its brightest he says there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour so like this morning it's

eerie whenever we wake up in the morning and we feel like the sun should be shining there's light but it's dark it's like night time it's not supposed to be that way so it was completely dark when it should have been light and about the ninth hour

Jesus cried out with a loud voice saying Eli Eli lama sabachthani that is my God my God why have you forsaken me and then Mark 15 37 says and Jesus uttered with a loud cry and he breathed his last darkness filled the land Jesus the word of God made flesh died one of the soldiers takes his spear and he plunges it deep within his side and there is no doubt at that moment that the son of God pierced for our transgressions crushed for our iniquities was dead imagine if you had been there if you were one of his disciples who was watching this it would have appeared that darkness had overcome the light Jesus has died what hope is there now Christ appeared to be defeated but this was no defeat and as we sing on many

[35 : 56] Easter mornings on the third day up from the grave our Savior arose with a mighty triumph over his foes he arose a victor of the dark domain and he lives forever with his saints to reign he arose he arose hallelujah Christ arose things seem dark but we are not without hope things seem dark but Christ has overcome the darkness the victory is won the cost of following Christ is high but the outcome is certain do not fear do not be dismayed for the Lord our God is triumphant and he lives now and forever more and with we his saints to reign there is victory in

Jesus do you know that do you believe that Jesus is God in human flesh do you know that his death on the cross was necessary for your salvation do you know that it was sufficient for your salvation have you repented of your sins entrusted in him John 1 12 but to all who did receive him who believed in his name he gave the right to become children of God do you know that you are his child Thank you.