

The God who came

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[0 : 00] Good morning everyone. Merry Christmas to you. Morning boys and girls. Morning boys and girls. There we go. That's better.

Who, you got Christmas presents this morning already? Put up your hands. Oh, lots of you. Okay, good. Lots of grown-ups as well. Good for you. Now boys and girls, I want to ask you a question and I want you to listen carefully.

My question is, what's different today about the pulpit that I'm preaching from? Jesus getting born is, yes, that's what the day is about. But the question, Olivia, was what's different about the pulpit? That's this thing that I'm resting my notes on. What's different about it from normal? James? There's lights on it. You see the lights? Everybody can see the lights, yes? Good. Now I thought, well, because it's Christmas, I thought I'd be a little bit festive and put some Christmas.

What's Christmas without Christmas lights? Every Christmas tree should have some Christmas lights. Every pulpit, I think, should have a few Christmas lights. And so I thought it would be appropriate. But you know what? I didn't just put these here for decoration.

[1 : 03] I put them here so that you guys can remember, and you grown-ups, can remember what the sermon is about today. So if someone asks you at lunch, what did the preacher speak about? I don't know if that actually happens. I hope it does.

But if someone asks you at lunch, what did the preacher speak about? You can remember, wait a minute, wait a minute, it was something about light. Because I want to talk this morning all about light. Now why do I want to talk about light? Well, because Jesus, when he came into the world, which is what we celebrate at Christmas, the Bible describes that as light coming into the world, light coming into the darkness.

That's one of the ways that we can understand what happened at Christmas. And so we've really got to understand what the Bible means when it talks about Jesus coming as light. What does it mean?

Boys and girls, do you think it means that he glowed when he walked around so his friends could find him in the dark? Imagine how cool that would be. Imagine you had a glow-in-the-dark friend. Wouldn't that be cool?

Is that what it meant? No? Well, let's look first of all at what the Bible says so you know what I'm talking about. Here's what Isaiah said. We read it earlier. It says, The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.

[2 : 09] You see that? And those living in the land of deep darkness, a light has dawned. And then, you know what happened? And 800 years later, John, the apostle John came and he recorded the life of Jesus.

And he says this. He says, The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He became flesh and made his dwelling with us.

And so we find out that when Jesus was born, that's the light that this prophet was speaking about all those years before. And so if you want to understand Christmas and you want to understand what we're celebrating today, you must understand why Jesus is called the light.

And that's what I want to look at this morning. Just spend a few minutes thinking about why is Jesus called the light. So, boys and girls, if it's not that Jesus glowed when he walked around, what do you think the Bible means when it calls Jesus the light?

Anyone? Anyone? Any ideas why Jesus is called the light? No? You're all very... What? Matthew? Yeah, okay, okay.

[3 : 09] Don't know what you said, but I'm sure it's very wise. Anybody else? Why is Jesus called the light? Hmm? Anyone? Well, I'm glad that none of you know, because then that gives me

something to speak about.

Obviously, you want to find out. So, I'm going to tell you what the Bible means when it says Jesus is the light. So, what does light do for us?

Now, again, I'm going to risk it and I'm going to ask boys and girls to tell me. Boys and girls, can you tell me what light does? It makes us see properly. Thank you, Amy.

So, if you're at home and it's nighttime and all the lights are switched off or you run out of electricity like we often do at home. What happens if there's no light?

We must put on the light, but why? What happens if there's no light? What do you do? You can't see and what do you do when you try to walk around? You bash into stuff.

[4 : 06] And it's very sore when you hit your toe on something that you can't see, is it? So, the first thing that when you put the lights on, suddenly you can see. You know what's around you.

Everything makes sense.

Whereas before, when the lights weren't on, it was all very dark. And so, light, what it does is that it guides us. It guides us around. It shows us what's what. It helps us to see our way around. And, you know, that's the first thing that the Bible means when it talks about Jesus being light.

When Jesus came into the world, before he came, people really didn't know what life was about. They didn't know what God was like. They didn't know where they were going. They didn't know what we're doing here on earth.

But, you know, all we could do was guess. It was like being in a dark room and you don't know what's around you. The Bible says it was like we were groping around in the darkness. Like wondering what's around us but not really knowing.

Before Jesus came, that's what the Bible says people were like. We didn't really know what we were doing here. And what God was like at all. And everybody was just guessing. But when Jesus came, it all started to make sense.

[5 : 09] When people started to listen to Jesus. Because he could tell us about God like no one else could. Because he came from God. He is God. And so, that's the best person to tell us about God.

And so, when he came and he started teaching us, it all started to make sense. We could stop groping around. We could stop guessing about who God is. And we could finally understand what it's all about.

And that's why Jesus says these words in John 8. He says, I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. But will have the light of life.

Now, those are such encouraging words. So, we don't have to wonder about what we're doing here in life. We don't have to grope around in the darkness. Because if we listen to what Jesus says. And we hear what he has to tell us.

We can find out what we're doing here. And where we're going. So, it's like when he says, I'm the light of the world. And whoever follows me will never walk in darkness. It's like if you go hiking at night.

[6 : 05] Who's gone hiking at night? It's very exciting. Okay. If you go hiking at night, what do you need to take with you? A torch. Now, if there's a group of you and only one person has the torch.

You want to stick by that person, don't you? Because if you don't stick by that person with the torch, you'll get lost. And you'll be up in the mountain. And it will be dark. And you won't know where you are. And so, you don't want to get lost. You want to stick with the person who has the torch.

Well, Jesus is saying, not only does he have the torch. But he is the torch. Jesus is saying here, I am the light. And so, unless you stick by Jesus and listen to him. You'll get lost in life.

You won't know where you're going. No matter how clever you are. No matter how much you think you know. If you don't listen to Jesus, he says you will walk in darkness. And so, it's so important that we not only understand why Jesus came.

But we listen to what he says. And so, the first thing I want to challenge all of you this Christmas with. Is to listen to what Jesus actually has to say. Have you done that? I don't mean just coming to church from time to time.

[7 : 04] But opening the Bible and reading the words of Jesus. And listening to what he has to say. It's easy to get caught up. In all the festivities of Christmas. And celebrating Jesus' birthday.

But then to forget to actually invite Jesus to his own birthday. Imagine that. Boys and girls, imagine you had a party. And you set it up. And it was a great party. And you got all these entertainers.

And you made a cake. But then you didn't actually invite the person whose birthday it is. Would that be silly? Yes. It would be very silly. Well, you know, often people do that with Christmas. They celebrate Jesus' birthday.

But they don't listen to what Jesus has to say. They ignore him. They don't invite him to his own birthday. And so, I want you to make sure the first thing you do this Christmas. Is invite Jesus to his birthday party.

And you do that by not only praying and thanking him at Christmas. For what he's done for us. But you listen to him. You let him speak. And that means opening the Bible. And reading it.

[8 : 02] And to help you to do that. If you don't really have a Bible at home that you can read. Right on the front table here. I've got a whole lot of Gospels of Mark. They're one of the books of the Bible. One of those accounts of Jesus' life and teaching.

And anybody is welcome to take one of those on your way out. So you can have the words of Jesus with you. And so that you can read what he has to say. So, because if you've never done that before.

I can guarantee you. If you spend time reading what Jesus has to say. If you spend time. These holidays. You know, we've probably. Most people here have probably got some time off on the holidays.

But if you just take some of that time. To read a little bit of the Bible. Read a little bit of what Jesus says. From one of the Gospels. I can assure you. You'll soon realize why he calls himself the light of the world.

I can't stand here and convince you that he is who he says he is. I can't stand here and show you necessarily evidence for the fact that he is the light of the world.

[8 : 59] You've got to discover that for yourself. And the only way you can discover that for yourself. Is by opening the Bible and reading it. And it's been translated into really readable English translations.

Get yourself a copy. Or grab one of these Gospels. And spend some time listening to Jesus. And finding out why he can be your light in this world as well.

The light who guides us out of darkness. But you know that's not all light does. It doesn't only guide us. There's another thing that light does.

It also gives life. If you think about it. Now boys and girls. I'm going to play a game this morning. I'm going to say a word. And you've got to say the same word after me. Does it sound simple?

Sound easy to do? Are you ready to do that? Boys and girls. If you're actually listening. Put up your hand. Okay. Now I'm going to say a word. And the moment I say the word. I want you to shout it out as well.

[9 : 52] Okay. You ready? The word is. Photosynthesis. Oh that was pretty good. Well done. Does anybody know what photosynthesis means?

Yeah. Yeah. Over there. Yeah. It grows. Exactly. Thank you very much. It's when the sun shines. And the light of the sun actually gives the plant what it needs to grow.

And the plant then is food for animals and food for us. And also food for the animals that we eat. Like the turkey at Christmas and things like that. So actually if you think about it. Without light there wouldn't be any plants.

And there wouldn't be any food. And we would all die. So without light there wouldn't be any life. And so light actually gives life as well. It doesn't just guide us. But it gives life to this earth.

And that's what Jesus wants us to know about himself. When he's described as the light. He didn't just come to earth to teach us stuff. Lots of people think Jesus just came to be a good teacher.

[10 : 52] And to give us some tips for life. But that's not why Jesus came. He didn't just come to teach us stuff. He came to give us life. That we couldn't get by ourselves.

And so I'm going to tell you something else Jesus says. In John 10.10. Listen carefully. He says I have come that people may have life. And have it to the full. I have come that people may have life.

He says. But what does he mean? I mean people had life before Jesus came. They were walking around and breathing. And their hearts were beating. People can live without Jesus can't they?

So what does he mean? I have come that people may have life. Well you see. That's not the life that Jesus is talking about yet. He's not talking about this short life on earth.

He's talking about real life in eternity one day. That's the life that Jesus is talking about. Because the truth is. This life. Sorry to spoil your Christmas.

[11 : 49] But this life isn't very long. Okay. It's not going to last forever. And even the little bits of happiness that we experience. Maybe at a Christmas meal when we're with our family.

Even those little bits of happiness we get in this life. Don't last very long. Do they? They don't last forever. Because we all will eventually grow old and die.

That's our lot. And it's so sad. I mean if you've known someone that you've loved. And they've grown old. And they've died. Or they've died unexpectedly. It's very sad that life doesn't last. And the happiness in this life doesn't last. But you know what? I want to tell you this morning. That's not what God wants for us. That's not what God wants for us. God didn't make us to die.

He made us to live. Alright. And the Bible says the reason we die is because we're separated from God. Because of something called sin. Because we want to live our own way instead of God's way.

[12 : 47] Because we ignore God in the world that He's made. And we want to do our own thing. And that's why we die. The Bible says. Sin takes us away from God. But because God gives us life.

When we get taken away from God. We get taken away from life. It's like if you go scuba diving. I'll ask again. Put up your hands. If you've gone scuba diving.

If you've gone deep sea diving with a few. Okay. Some people have. So the scuba divers. Boys and girls. Have you seen scuba divers? Like the one in that picture? They go deep down. And they take an oxygen tank.

So that they can breathe. But imagine you're deep sea diving. And then you actually decide. I don't like the way that this oxygen tank feels on my shoulders. I don't know why I have to wear this thing. So I'm just going to throw it off. And I'm just going to carry on diving. Without the oxygen tank. What do you think would happen then? Boys and girls. You wouldn't be able to breathe. Right? But maybe you would for a few minutes.

[13 : 43] So maybe you'll take it off and say. You see I'm fine. I don't need an oxygen tank. But what's going to happen? You're going to die. Yeah. Very true. Because you can only hold your breath for so long.

Okay? I can probably hold my breath for about two minutes maybe. But some people can hold it longer. But anybody. Everybody can only hold their breath for so long. If they don't have an oxygen tank.

And they're deep underwater. They'll eventually drown. Well you see. The same thing happens when people think they can live without God. It might seem fine for a while. For I don't know.

70, 80 years or so. If you're lucky. But eventually. We run out of life. Just like a deep sea diver will run out of oxygen. Because we're separated from God who gives us life. Well you know why Jesus came?

You know what we're celebrating today? Listen again to what John says. I'm going to read it. The true light. That gives light to everyone. Was coming into the world. To all who received him.

[14 : 40] To those who believed in his name. He gave the right to become children of God. Children of God. Imagine that. So Jesus didn't just come to guide us. And teach us about God.

He came to take us to God. That's what we want to remember this Christmas. Because Jesus was able to take us to God. When he died on the cross for our sins.

You see our sins separate us from God. So the only way that we can come back to God in real life. Is if our sins are dealt with. And that's why Jesus came in the world. He was born so that he could die one day.

And he could take the punishment for the sins that we deserve punishment for. So that we can come back to God and life. So that if we come to Jesus. We can come not just into a relationship with God.

But into God's family. That's what God wants. That's why he made us. Not just to live the short life and die. God made us to be in his family. To experience who he is as a father.

[15 : 39] In the closest relationship. And we can have eternal life with God. That is why Jesus came. That's why he was called the light. And that's why we celebrate. That's why we celebrate today.

Jesus coming into our world. To show you and me the way back to God. That is the best news the world has ever heard. That's why we have a holiday called Christmas. That's why we come to church.

And remember why Jesus came. And I would finish there. But before I finish. I want you to just be still and quiet for a couple more minutes.

And boys and girls as well please. Okay. Because the one thing I want to read is quite sad. It's in John 1. It says this. The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. That's the happy part. But listen to what happened next. He was in the world. And though the world was made through him. The world did not recognize him. He came to that which was his own. [16:36] But his own did not receive him. That's very sad. You know what it's saying? It's saying that when Jesus came as light from God. To bring us back to God.

Lots of people didn't realize who he was. They didn't recognize him. Even though God had been telling them for hundreds and thousands of years. About this light that was coming into the world. When he finally arrived they didn't recognize him. And they carried on looking elsewhere. For the light. You know when I come home from work. Sometimes my family is waiting for me. And greets me in the passage. It's really nice. I feel all very special and stuff. And they come. They give me a big hug. Because they've been missing me. That doesn't always happen. Sometimes they're playing with Lego. And they don't even notice that I arrived. But sometimes when they see me come. They come and give me a big hug. And they welcome me. But imagine this. Imagine I came home one day. [17:32] And they were all waiting there in the passage for me to come home. But then when I opened the door. They just stayed there looking behind me. Waiting for dad to come home. Imagine they didn't recognize me. Right? It would be very sad if my own children didn't recognize me when I came home.

But that's exactly what happened when Jesus came. That's what John wants to tell us. His own people, Israel, didn't recognize him as the light that God had been promising for thousands of years. And what's even more sad is it's been 2,000 years since then. And lots of people still don't recognize him as God's light. Come to give us eternal life. Lots of people still don't believe in him. You know, he said to the Jewish leaders of his day. He said this. You study the scriptures diligently because you think in them you have eternal life. They are the very scriptures that testify about me. Yet you refuse to come to me to have life. It's very sad. But the same thing happens today. People are searching in all kind of places for life and joy and fulfillment. And they never quite find it. All the while they're ignoring Jesus who actually came to give us life. [18:35] And give us life to the full. And give us hope for eternity. Sure hope. But people just pass him by and ignore him. And it's very sad. But I don't want you to be one of those people this Christmas.

I don't want you to be one of those people who passed Jesus by. He came to show you the way to God. He came to be your light in a dark world. And he did everything to prove to us that he is who he says he is. Amazing miracles. It's recorded in history. We've got four different gospels in our Bibles that we can check up what Jesus did and what he said. He came and he did everything for us. We don't have to do anything more. Jesus died for our sins. We don't have to tick any boxes or do any particular things. All we've got to do is believe in him. He came to give us a way back to God. Don't ignore that. He came to give you eternal life. Don't you want that? Well don't ignore Jesus. Don't celebrate his birthday party and forget to invite him. [19:36] All you need to do is believe him, listen to him and follow him. And if you haven't done that yet, then why not do it this Christmas? I mean Christmas is a great time to just sit and stop and think about the big things of life.

What am I doing here? Where am I going? Well Jesus came to show you. Jesus came to be the light. Why not make that decision now? There's no time to waste. Why not decide to come back to church in the new year to find out more? Pastor Errol Wesson is coming for the next two weeks and he'll be able to tell you more about Jesus and what it means to follow him. Why don't you come back? Don't make Christmas your one church attendance of the year. And why don't you come now and just tell God that you want to follow him. You want to listen to Jesus. You want to change and that you believe him. If you do, then I invite you to pray a prayer. What I'm going to do, I want everyone to be very quiet. As quiet as you can. I don't know how quiet that actually is. But try to be as quiet as you can.

[20 : 35] Because we're going to pray to God now. And if you want to, if you now this Christmas want to just come to Jesus. Maybe you've been far away from God, but you want to come back to him. Then I invite you to pray this prayer in your heart after me.

I'm going to say it line by line and you can follow me in your heart. So let's bow our heads. And let's pray. Dear God. Thank you for sending your son Jesus.

To be the light of life. Forgive me for ignoring you in the world that you've made. I know that my sins have separated me from you.

But I know that Jesus came to die for those sins. So that I can have life again. So I put my trust in Jesus now. Forgive me for my sins.

And help me to follow Jesus, the light of life. Amen. Well if you prayed that prayer. Then the place to start is just to take one of these gospels.

[21 : 39] And read what Jesus has to say. Get to know Jesus. Get to know what he's come to tell us. And then come back to church. So you can find out more. And I hope that you're going to really enjoy and celebrate the truth of Christmas today.

That Jesus was light coming into our world. And have a Merry Christmas further. Thanks. Then the day.ω openly