

The Promised Christ

John 1:4-13

Rev. Brian Bill

December 13-14, 2025

Let's lean in and open our hearts as we ponder the hidden wonder of what happens when a new life is conceived in a mother's womb. Recently, I came across an article which made me stop scrolling in my news feed.

The beauty, the precision, the sheer majesty of it all was so overwhelming that I confess I could scarcely believe what I was reading. The wonder of what takes place in the womb led me to worship. My soul stirred, but my mind wanted confirmation. So, I reached out to two physicians who gather among us each weekend. These doctors are trained in the science of life itself, and they verified its veracity.

Here's an excerpt.

Scientists have captured a truly extraordinary moment right at the beginning of life: [at] the very instant [of fertilization], a microscopic burst of light flashes. This tiny spark...is caused by a sudden surge of zinc and calcium released within the egg, creating a visible, brief "firework" under advanced imaging. Researchers interpret this natural glow as the egg's immediate signal that fertilization has successfully occurred, and a new, unique genetic blueprint has been established...the brief spark has captivated the scientific community because it perfectly symbolizes the moment two distinct sets of DNA unite to initiate a new human life.

After years of research, Professor Theresa Woodruff from Northwestern University described it in her own words: *"To see the zinc radiate out in a burst from each human egg was breathtaking."*

At conception, each of us received the light of physical life. When we're born again, we receive the light of spiritual life. When Jesus gives you eternal life, the light comes on for you. I'm reminded of Psalm 27:1: ***"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"*** Both the light of conception and the light of conversion come from Him.

As we continue in our series called, “Behold the Wonder,” wonder can be defined as “*a sense of awe and astonishment, caused by something beautiful, remarkable, unexpected, or unfamiliar.*” I think of Luke 2:18: “***And all who heard it wondered at what the shepherds told them.***” Christmas is more than just warm feelings; it’s a time for us to recapture the wonder of “***The Word became flesh and dwelt among us***” (John 1:14). As we marvel at the mystery of the Word made flesh, we’ll rediscover the awe and hope that make Christmas truly wonderful.

I want to give some props to Dave Otto for making the “Wonder” display on the platform. Here’s a brief video showing how Dave put this together.

[play video]

Special thanks also to Chad, Becky, Grayson, Payton, and Asher Doran for their creative work on arranging the decorations.

Pastor Kyle did a great job preaching last weekend as he taught us about the preexistence of Christ and introduced Jesus as the light shining in the darkness. Physically, light is a form of energy that makes vision possible. It reveals what is already there and brings warmth, clarity, and life. Darkness, on the other hand, is the absence of light; it’s not a substance on its own. Darkness hides reality and is associated with cold, confusion and uncertainty.

Biblically speaking, light symbolizes God, truth, holiness, salvation, revelation, and life. F.B. Meyer writes, “*Light is pure, gentle, all pervasive, and revealing.*” In contrast, darkness in the Bible symbolizes sin, evil, deception, judgment, spiritual blindness, and death.

Darkness isn’t a rival force to light; it’s simply the absence of it. When light shows up, even it’s just a little light, darkness has no choice but to vanish. Speaking of little lights, we’ll be ending our three Christmas Eve services with candle lighting again this year. We’ll have services at 1, 3, and 5 with nursery available for the first two. Invite cards are available in the seatbacks in front of you.

Let’s pick up where Pastor Kyle left off last weekend by reading John 1:4-9: “***In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about***

the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”

Here’s our main idea: *The light of Christ breaks in, breaks through, and beckons all people to believe and receive Him as Savior and Lord.*

Let’s wonder and worship as we walk through this section of God’s Word which proclaims Jesus as the true light.

1. Light exhibits life. Notice verse 4: ***“In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.”*** John used the word ***“life”*** 36 times in his gospel and used the definite article ***“the”*** to show Jesus is *the only* true life. That’s the idea behind John 11:25: ***“I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live.”*** In addition to flooding his gospel with the word ***“life,”*** John used the word ***“light”*** 24 times. Life and light go together, don’t they?

In Matthew 17:2, at His transfiguration, Peter, James, and John caught a glimpse of the true light as Jesus’ face ***“shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light.”*** In Revelation 1:16, John describes Jesus’ face ***“like the sun shining in full strength.”*** The glorified Jesus radiates the unshielded brilliance of divine light. Verse 17 tells us the light of Jesus is so bright that John ***“falls as though dead.”*** Revelation 21:22-23 tells us no created light will be necessary in Heaven because the Lamb Himself is the light: ***“And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb.”*** And Revelation 22:16 refers to Jesus as the ***“bright morning star.”***

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2. Light exposes darkness. Listen to verse 5: ***“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”*** The word ***“shines”*** is in the present tense, meaning, ***“it continually shines on and never ceases.”*** Even when things are dark and disheartening, the light of the Lord continues to shine today. The nature of light is to shine and dispel darkness because darkness is unable to overpower light.

Spiritual darkness spilled into our world in Genesis 3 and can only be removed by the Lord who is life and light. The word, ***“overcome”*** means ***“to lay hold of, to seize or grasp.”*** It was used in the sport of wrestling to describe getting pinned. John is saying that it is impossible for darkness to pin light to the mat.

Darkness by its very nature refuses to come into the light because darkness and light are mutually exclusive. If you have one, you cannot have the other. Those in darkness often avoid coming to the light, because their deeds are evil (John 3:19–20). They hate the light and will not come to it, lest their deeds should be exposed. The light messes with the life they are living, and convicts their conscience, revealing that they love their sin more than the Savior who is Light.

Cockroaches are the classic real-life illustration of this because when the light is flipped on, they scatter in every direction, frantically trying to get back into the dark. Friend, don't scurry away when the Light of the Lord comes on for you. Don't be a cockroach this Christmas. Instead, step into the Light of Life and allow Him to give you eternal life by lighting up your life with His.

I like what Ray Pritchard writes in his new Advent Devotional called, *Behold the Lamb*: “Christmas is God’s guarantee that darkness won’t last forever.” There are still free copies of this devotional on the table in the south lobby.

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3. Light engages others. It’s interesting how the Apostle John seems to break the flow of the passage by introducing the role of John the Baptist in verses 6-8: “***There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through Him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.***”

Here’s why I think John started talking about John the Baptist. God’s way of letting the light of Christ shine is through human witnesses. According to Matthew 5:16, Jesus has called us to be witnesses of the light as we interact with those who are still living in darkness: “***In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.***”

Way to go, Edgewood, for letting your light shine in November and December as you responded to the needs in our community!

- 950 total food items were given to the Youth Hope food pantry.
- 100 items were given to World Relief.

- During Curbside Christmas, Active Day Senior Center was given 140 rolls of toilet paper and multiple bags of other items, Argrow and Pregnancy Resources received 50 gift bags, and cash donations were given to Youth Hope and Safe Families. Props to Pastor Dan for making a lot of deliveries!
- Over 100 pillows and blankets have been given for students at Rock Island Academy.
- One Eighty received over 100 winter coats, gloves, 20 gift cards, along with gift bags for women.
- The Rock Island Center for Math and Science received hundreds of canned food items, hats, and gloves. Props to Liesl Parks for making this happen.
- Our Celebrate Recovery ministry purchased 22 Christmas presents for children of inmates through Project Angel Tree.
- And Edgewood gave 638 Operation Christmas Child boxes! Special thanks to Jodie (and Mike) Russell for running point on this.

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4. Light extends to everyone. We see this in verse 9: ***“The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.”*** The word ***“true”*** means, ***“genuine”*** and indicates Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament hopes and expectations, just as He is the ***“true bread from heaven”*** and the ***“true vine.”*** The rabbis used the word “light” as a name for the Messiah, so when John used the phrase, ***“true light,”*** he was connecting Jesus to the promised Messiah as foretold in Isaiah 9:2: ***“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”***

The idea behind ***“walking in darkness”*** is someone stumbling as they come and go. While people are walking in the dark, all of a sudden a ***“great light”*** appears and shines into the deep darkness! We can’t find the light on our own, so the light comes to us. Our world is in ***“deep darkness,”*** but Jesus is the ***“great light.”***

Matthew 4:16 applies Isaiah 9 directly to Jesus Christ: ***“The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.”*** Interestingly, in Isaiah 9:2, the people ***“walked”*** in darkness and here we see they are ***“dwelling”*** in darkness. The same thing can happen to each of us. You can start by walking in darkness and end up dwelling in darkness.

Check this out. At the birth of Jesus, a supernatural star ascended to light the way for the Magi, and at His death, supernatural darkness descended in the middle of the day. His birth announcement was a display of brightness at midnight, and His death notification was deep darkness at mid-day.

I appreciate the insight of one pastor, *“Christ is no simple spark in the darkness. He drives out the darkness. Jesus is not a candle in a cave; He is the sun burning away the gloom and shadows of evil.”*

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5. Light expects a response. While the light is available for everyone, every person must respond individually. We see this in verses 10-13.

- **Jesus is rebuffed by most.** Verse 10 may be one of the saddest verses in the Bible: *“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world did not know Him.”* Most people simply ignored the incarnation of Immanuel.
- **Jesus is rejected by His own.** If verse 10 is sad, verse 11 is outright sorrowful: *“He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him.”* The word *“came”* captures the essence of Christmas. Unfortunately, Jesus came to His own people, but they rejected Him and even killed Him. Jesus came to the people who should have known Him best, but they wanted nothing to do with Him. The idiom *“came to his own”* means *“to come home.”* Jesus came “home” to His own people who lived in the land promised to them, and they wouldn’t give Him room.
- **Jesus is received by some.** While the world did not recognize Him and His own people rejected Him, there have always been some who will receive Him. Listen to verse 12: *“But to all who did receive Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God.”* The word *“but”* introduces a contrast between those who receive Him and those who don’t recognize or reject Him. The word *“all”* reminds us that Jesus came for everyone, not just for the Jews.

Don’t miss how we’re called to *“believe in His name.”* Acts 10:43 says, *“Everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins through His name.”* The phrase, *“He gave the right...”* means God *“gave of His own*

good will by bestowing on us that which we don't deserve." The idea is those who receive and believe are given the right and the might to ***"become children of God."***

- **You can be regenerated by God.** Verse 13 makes it clear salvation doesn't run automatically from one generation to another: ***"Who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."*** In the words of Charles Spurgeon, *"You will never go to heaven in a crowd."*
 - We are not saved by our heritage.
 - We are not saved by our holiness.
 - We are not saved by our hard work.

When Jesus came the first time, there was not only no room in the inn; there was no room in minds, in wills, or in the hearts of people. The Savior came to this world, and He was turned away. The world did not receive Him because they did not recognize Him. And they did not recognize Him because they were not willing to relinquish control of their lives. How about you? What's keeping you from fully receiving Christ right now?

There's no middle ground. You either receive Him or reject Him. One leads to life, the other leads to death. One leads to light, one to darkness. One leads to conversion, the other to condemnation. In fact, if you don't receive Him, you have rejected Him already. This is made clear in John 3:18: ***"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 only Son of God."***

In other words, if you choose to not be born again, you are condemned right now. Contrary to what a popular evangelical actor and podcaster said recently, you'll be condemned in Hell forever. If you choose not to believe, you're already condemned. Most of us think someone must do really bad things to end up in Hell. Here's the gospel truth: *If you do nothing and never believe in Christ by refusing to receive Him as your Lord and Savior, you'll end up in the everlasting fires of Hell because that's where we're all headed unless we're born again from above.*

When you **believe** in the Light and **receive** the Life, you **become** God's beloved. We could call this the salvation equation:

Believe + Receive = Become.

Beth and I had a blast spending time with two of our daughters and their families in Austin, Texas over Thanksgiving. One dark night, I walked one family back to their Airbnb, which was only about three blocks away. When we arrived, my daughter gave me directions how to get back to our other daughter's house, reminding me that the streets were named after flowers. Instead of listening, I decided to be sassy. I told her that her words were like static to me, expressing confidence that I could find my way back, since the house was only a few blocks away. I could tell she was worried about me, but she also messed with me by making up new street names by telling me to take a left on Dandelion Way and a right on Rose Avenue.

After walking for about 10 minutes, I forgot what she told me and realized I was lost in a neighborhood filled with streets that were not straight. Plus, it was very dark. Because I was turned around as I walked in circles, the GPS on my phone was of no help to me. It showed me where I was but not how to get to where I needed to be. My heart started racing as I imagined my family sending out a search party to find me. I texted Beth and told her I was nearby but wasn't sure when I'd be back.

I was too proud to admit I was lost, thinking I could somehow find my way on my own. But the darkness had disoriented me. I finally went in the right direction, found a street with a flower name, saw the route clearly on my phone, and made it back.

Are you walking in circles in the dark? Are you ignoring God's directions by tuning them out? Are you too proud to ask for help? It's time to turn around and follow the Lord who is life and light. Hear the plea of Jesus found in John 12:46: ***"I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in me may not remain in darkness."***

1. Light exhibits life.
2. Light exposes darkness.
3. Light engages others.
4. Light extends to everyone.
5. Light expects a response.

Wherever Jesus shines, darkness is driven out, hope is restored, and God's salvation is made visible. If you're ready to be transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light, you could pray this prayer with me.

“Jesus, I’m tired of dwelling in the dark. I confess that my sinfulness has me just stumbling through life. I’m lost and want to turn around. I repent of how I’ve been living. Thank You for coming into our world and for dying on the cross as my substitute and for being raised on the third day. I believe You are Lord, You are Life, and You are Light, and I now receive You into my life. Please save me from my sins and give me what I need to live under Your leadership for the rest of my life. In Jesus’ name. Amen.”

New Member: Beth Dolph (9:00 am)