**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the small group study *Identity: Living Out Who I Am in Christ*, these sermon outlines will use different Scripture passages related to the small group study theme, so the pastor can reinforce the study from the pulpit.

**Introduction:** Martin Luther is quoted as saying all of humanity is like a drunk man who falls off his horse on one side, and then gets back on and falls off the other side. This is certainly true as it relates to cultural engagement. It is one thing to enter into the life of sinners so as to minister to them, it’s quite another to compromise our convictions in such a way that we lose our ability to influence. Likewise, it is one thing to avoid the sins of our culture, it’s quite another to take an “us versus them” posture which views the world “out there” as more dangerous than our own hearts. In his incarnation Jesus models for us the way to engage in missions.

1. **Light in the darkness**
   The gospel of John tells us that Jesus, as the light of the world, entered into the darkness of humanity. Philippians 2 tells us that Jesus took the form of a servant. The light entered into darkness. The one who was absolutely holy entered into the world of sinful humanity in order to redeem sinful humanity.

   As you look through the Scriptures you see three truths about light and darkness emerge. First, light is intended to shine. In Isaiah 49:6 and Matthew 5:14 we see that believers are called to be light and to shine. Secondly, light is exposing and some will hate it. In John 3:19 we see that sin grows in the darkness and that people love sin. Some will come into the light, but many will flee. Have you ever been sleeping in a very dark room only to be awakened by someone flipping on a light? Your response is often less than holy. Those in the dark are often annoyed by the light, but nevertheless we see that light does overcome the darkness. That is the third truth about light—Jesus wins. Light has a way of overcoming the darkness.

   Therefore we must go into the darkness with the light of the gospel while avoid being yoked to the darkness. We are called to both shine light into the darkness, so avoiding mission and engaging culture is not an option. But we are also called to actually be the light, so we must be unflinching in our holiness.

2. **Love in the darkness**
   Love was one of the prime motivations of the incarnation. It was because of the Father’s love that Jesus entered into sinful humanity. Everything he did in Philippians 2 was motivated by this love—both for us and for the Father’s glory.

   The Scriptures teach us that we did not deserve such love; Romans 5:8 proclaims this much. But love also is transformative. It doesn’t leave people in their sins. We see that Jesus came to earth and was obedient even to the point of death on a cross. The cross
had a purpose; namely, to redeem people from sin. If we are to follow Jesus then we will love those in darkness with such a love that it leads them to find their delight in God instead of delight in the darkness. Jesus not only loved the sick (Matthew 9:12-13) but He also cured the dead (Ephesians 1:4).

3. Life in the darkness
Jesus took on human flesh but He did not take on human sin. He lived amongst the darkness of humanity but He never succumbed to the darkness. In the same way the Scriptures teach that we are called to live in the world (John 17:18) but we are also called to be different from the world in holiness (Philippians 2:14-15). Our only hope is to cling to Jesus in the midst of the dark world. Otherwise we will cower in fear at the darkness or succumb to the lure of the sirens. We have to live in the world but not fall in love the world. Jesus perfectly modeled this.

Conclusion:
How do you resist the allure of the culture and the safety of retreat? The stories of Jason and Odysseus illustrate the answer.

To resist the allure of the sirens Odysseus stuck wax in his ear. But Jason had a different strategy. He would hire Orpheus, the best musician in the land. As they passed the Sirens, Jason ordered Orpheus to play the most beautiful and alluring songs. Jason and his men did not even pay attention to the sirens. They were captivated by the beauty of Orpheus’ tune. They won the victory of the Sirens because they had heard something far greater.

The way that we resist the allure of culture is by hearing the sweeter tune of life with Jesus Christ. Sin loses its luster in light of His splendor. But we also know that we’ll never dance unless we get off the shore and join Christ in his mission of creating more worshippers. We can enter into the darkest of places and engage in missions because Christ is always sweeter.

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