

## ***2026 -- Mission Possible***

### **John 1:1-5, 10-16**

Rev. Rick Hull ~ February 1, 2026 ~ Faith Presbyterian Church

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<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made.

<sup>4</sup> In him was life, and the life was the light of men. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ...

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. <sup>11</sup> He came to his own home, and his own people received him not.

<sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of mankind, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. We have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.

<sup>15</sup> (John bore witness to him, and cried, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, for he was before me.'")

<sup>16</sup> And from his fulness have we all received, grace upon grace. (John 1:1-5, 10-16, RSV)

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Let me begin this morning with a reflection on Pastor Jeff's message to us last Sunday.

I was both moved and motivated by the case he made. I mentioned to him later that it was a bit like a debate.

He laid out a compelling "Affirmative" argument. But, we know that there are a variety of "Negatives" out there contending against us. And,

this morning it is my privilege to follow up with the "Affirmative Rebuttal" -- to remind us all of the case he made for the "light of the world" that shines through darkness.

To do that, I want to talk about "mission." Not just the great mission movements that our churches undertake -- but also the mission we each engage in every day as we walk with, and serve our Lord.

And, of course, it all happens in a cultural context. In January, we left 2025 behind. And no one will deny that it was a confusing, chaotic, and sadly broken year.

Now we are beginning the next one. And we do so with two immense realities. Here's the first reality: 2026 has dawned, and nothing has really changed. The warring world is still tearing itself apart. In a hundred ways, the weak and helpless are being victimized. The culture is as selfish, power hungry, and turbulent as ever. And, on many days, I'm not functioning so well myself!

The second reality is this: appearances to the contrary, our Lord is still on the Throne -- still the Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace. And, you and I are still His mission to the broken world.

How we live in this culture, what we think, what we say, how we relate to the others in our lives -- everything you and I do -- represents our Lord on earth. His mission goes on. And the last word is not yet spoken.

So, let me begin with something Dr. Bob Munger said many years ago. Bob was one of the great senior statesmen of our denomination, and a mentor to many of us. Munger commented that, *"you know you are getting old when you bend over to tie your shoe and ask what else can I do while I'm still down here?"*

It's a great mission question, and the older I get, the more I value it!

What can I do in the days and years ahead -- while I am still "*down here*" where our broken culture seems overwhelmed, and my ageing contributions can often seem so small? If I am to represent my Lord, **what makes the mission possible?**

In this morning's text, John writes a powerful first chapter on the meaning of the Christmas Incarnation. Let's reflect on it as faithful missionaries, and simply ask that question: "*What makes the mission possible?*"

Here's an odd answer: it's not our mission! The mission that you and I are part of here in the darkness belongs to the Lord of abounding grace, and unquenchable light.

The thing that makes the mission of 2026 possible is the wonderful promise that *it is not our mission!* Now, that doesn't mean that you and I don't engage in it! From the streets of Sacramento, to the mission fields of Europe and Africa, to all manner of civic involvement, of course we engage in the mission. But the good news is that we don't have to own it!

And that is truly encouraging! Because, on our own we are just no match for the darkness! And if we try to be, we'll attempt to solve spiritual problems with the world's political and strategic answers. And in the dark, we'll fight with each other, and fumble, and stumble, and fall exhausted!

And, so, the Christ we celebrated at Christmas comes to us to take command of the missionaries -- and to equip us with the Mind of Christ, the guidance of His moral compass, and the inexhaustible resources of divine grace and transforming love.

From the very first words of the Gospel story, He is in charge of the mission. In verses 1-3, John calls Jesus Christ "***The Word.***" The term is "Logos." And we already know that it doesn't mean mere words. At its core, Logos is the meaning behind the words -- the truth that undergirds and commands the words.

Christ is the "**Word**" that gives all our other words their meaning. He is the one word you can count on, because He is the foundation of all the meanings. And because Christ is the Logos, what He says comes to us with both His authority and His assurance, so that everything that we think or feel or do in life must now be measured and tested against His word -- His Logos.

That's a great mission thesis. Now, the mission problem.

I said there are two great realities in 2026. But, there is actually a third. It is subtle. It is stealthy. And it inhabits the darkness of our day to whisper in the dark corners of our hearts.

When we engage in His Mission, and align ourselves with His Word, we become a challenge to the darkness. And, darkness is not a passive force! When we dare to ask, "*What makes the mission possible?*" a Satanic voice in the dark will begin an insidious campaign of whispers, quietly hissing "***It's NOT possible!***" And then it will offer up a menu of distracting lies.

Now, I bring all this up because Faith Presbyterian Church is a highly committed and vigorously active mission community. Both individually, and in fellowship, we put love and faith in action. And that makes each of us prime targets for the lies of the darkness! Let's look at just a few. See if you recognize some of them.

[1] The Darkness will say: "***You are helpless! This is too big for you. You are too small. You might as well give up!***" There are a thousand examples.

People are shooting each other out there, and we *all* feel like the victims of gun violence. And the darkness whispers, "*Go ahead and offer weak 'thoughts and prayers' for the bereaved -- but you'll never change that culture ...*"

People are angry and divided and turning against each other. And we feel powerless to redirect the energy. And the darkness says, "*Your tiny voice of reason is helpless.*"

The language of power, abuse and attack is becoming the norm of social interaction, and we

shake our heads and wish people were kinder. And the darkness chuckles: *"This is the new reality! Get used to it. Your voice is too small. Compassion is weak – and woke – and it changes nothing!"*

People are on our streets with no resources, no opportunities, and no hope! And the darkness sneers: *"Go ahead. Make them a sandwich. Send a can to the food bank. It won't make any real difference..."*

The darkness finds a thousand ways a day to say: *"You are helpless! Or too old – or too inexperienced – or too worn out. This is too overwhelming for you. You're just too small. So just focus on protecting yourself and finding personal enjoyment. Tuck in and take care of yourself."*

But John has heard the Logos speak: *"Of course you are too small! But this isn't your mission. It's Mine. And I am huge!"*

Look again at verses 4 and 5. *"... in Him was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it!"* You aren't overcome yet because the Lord you follow is not overcome!

But wait. What makes this somehow *more* than just good poetry? Here's the answer. It's the nature of light and darkness.

There are two things we need to know about the destructive darkness. (1) It can only exist where there is no Light — and (2) It lives in the human heart. In fact, the dark cannot exist on its own. It needs a human host to live. And, just like a lantern banishes the darkness in a cave, you throw light into the heart and it will kill the darkness.

That's why we invite people to receive Christ as Savior and Lord — to receive and *become the light* that transforms lives! When the heart is lighted, the darkness is dispelled.

Years ago, I had lunch with a man who discovered this light. I'll never forget it! Tom Skinner had been the warlord of a vicious New York street gang. He was in charge of planning their gang wars — until the light of Christ broke in, and an angry young man became a light that shattered

darkness. One person with the light of Christ makes a difference!

Of course, bearing that light to the world can really test our limits. It will call for a serious review of our missionary calling.

The life choices that form our character, and the social decisions we make must represent Christ. The way we speak, and the attitudes that drive us must reflect the mind of Christ and His mission. The help we offer to those in need must extend His mission to the world.

The good news here is that we can resist those whispers in the dark! The bad news is that those whispers are not easily silenced.

[2] Because there is another lie. It goes like this: ***"You are not only helpless. You are also inadequate! At your best, you are a loser in a losing proposition. Give up. Nobody succeeds here."***

And, isn't it true that sometimes the most effective lies are the ones built on fragments of truth? I have found that the dark places are filled with a catalogue of my mistakes and inadequacies. You and I are incurably human, naturally weak, and apt to stumble.

But, again, the Logos has a good answer. *"Inadequate. Of course you're inadequate. But I'm not finished with you yet. You are still in process -- still 'becoming'."*

Now, to fully appreciate that, you have to go back to verse 12. *"The Light came to His own, and they couldn't see it ... but to those who did -- who received Him -- He gave Life. He gave them the right to **become Children of God!**"*

I love that text for two powerful reasons.

First, it says that those who do not now belong to Him can belong to Him! We are not automatically "children" of God. Can we grasp that? We are beloved "creations" of God. But, because of what Christ has done for us, we may become inheritors — children who are named in the will. Barbara and I have our estate issues laid out and legally binding.

Our kids will inherit just like we did. They are our beloved children. What we have is theirs.

As the committed Children of our Lord, you and I will inherit everything that is in the estate of Almighty God! If it is patience you need, or hope, or guidance, or the divine provision of His perfect will, what He has is here for you! Waiting for you!

The second reason I love that text is that it boldly answers the darkness lie. Again, the Logos speaks. *“Of course you are inadequate. Of course you fall short. But you are in process, and I am not finished with you yet!”*

He gave you the right (*the authority*) to *become*. In the original language construct, the “*becoming*” process is not of my own doing. It is happening *to* me. When I belong to Him I am in a *process* of “*becoming*” what He is orchestrating in me! He’s still making me the Child that I was born to be!

Back in the late ‘70’s, there was a little button that some folks liked to wear. It was just a collection of letters on a simple white background. It said P-B-P-G-I-N-F-W-M-Y! And it stood for “*Please be patient. God is not finished with me yet!*” A few years ago, I shared that idea with a congregation in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and I mentioned that I had lost mine. The next Sunday a woman approached me and handed me that very button! She said, “*I got one of those buttons in 1976. And I’d like you to have mine.*”

What a wonderful assurance! There’s a place for this inadequate missionary in His mission! The darkness whispers “inadequacy” – but I get to answer back, “*That’s OK, I’m committed to “becoming” -- and He isn’t finished with me yet!*”

[3] Now, just one more lie from the darkness. ***“You might as well give up because you are alone! You are on your own here, and that is a pretty weak, empty, vulnerable existence!”***

And, my Lord just smiles and says, “*Well, that’s a bald-faced lie! This isn’t your mission. I’m here. And I’m here in fullness! I was here in 2025, and I’m here in 2026 too!*”

I love the way John puts it. “... *the Word became flesh ... and He lived/dwelt among us ... and we’ve*

*seen His glory -- the glory of the only Son of God!* (verse 14) And while we may be small and inadequate, take a look at verse 16 -- *we’ve received grace from His inexhaustible fullness!*

What makes it possible for us to represent Him in the mission of each day? We are not alone! He is with us in every need -- here in fullness! And His resources are inexhaustible.

You know, many folks believe in an Almighty God, but they see Him slightly disconnected, sitting on some celestial cloud. Our text says that the Lord God became flesh, and He lived here with us. It’s an Old Testament word. Literally, He ***“tabernacled with us.”*** Pitched His tent next to ours.

This is the great meaning-behind-the-meaning! The Owner of the mission, the Creator God who holds all things gently in His hands, has made His home with us!

Yes, it is unusually dark down here today. But, whatever the future holds, He will be here in it!

When we struggle with unexpected changes in health, in life circumstances, in our hopes and dreams, He will walk us through them. When we are angry, or afraid, or facing impossibilities, He will be here with calming peace and the guiding Mind of Christ.

When the culture – or the community – descends into chaos and sin, He will be here offering the wisdom and strength to endure. When my own weakness and sin convict me, He will be here with correcting authority and forgiving love.

In short, the old hymn got it right: “*I serve a Risen Savior. He’s in the world today...*”

This new year is still young, and we have no idea what lies ahead. But, whatever may come, John reminds us that we are not alone -- that because our Lord is here, we can face the demands of these times and bring our best to our Lord’s mission!

In the words of verse 16: that truly is *grace* piled on top of *grace*!

The darkness may whisper that we are helpless ... or inadequate ... or all alone in the mission. But we know the truth! The Word became flesh. He came to us, and He comes to us in the fullness of grace and transforming love. And, together we represent that blessing to a needy world.

And so, my last response to those Satanic whispers is very simply, *“Yes. I heard you -- ‘helpless, inadequate, alone.’ Whisper your lies if you must. But my Lord is here with Light that shatters darkness! And whatever I may face, I’m walking forward with Him. My Friends and I have joined His Mission in 2026.*

*“And now – and in the end -- you, my smug adversary, are the loser! Deal with it!”*

### **Benediction:**

One last thought. We are not alone facing the darkness. And one way we know it is that we belong to a community of fellow disciples.

As you go from here, join the mission. Link arms in this community of love and grace. Encourage and support one another. And be for each other the sources of reflected light that overcomes darkness.

And may the grace of our lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the abiding presence and power of the Holy Spirit light your way into the year ahead. Amen.

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## **“The Next Step”**

### ***A Resource for Life Groups and/or Personal Application***

1. Read through the sermon passages again (John 1:1-5 and 10-16). These lines are usually thought of as the theological meaning of the coming of Christ at Christmas. What else stands out to you here? What is the scripture saying to you personally?

2. In John 8:44, Jesus described the work of Satan in the human heart saying, “... He was a murderer from the beginning, and has nothing to do with the truth, because there is no truth in him ... for he is a liar and the father of lies.” Can you think of times

that you have heard the whispers of those dark lies in your day-to-day experiences?

3. The mission of living for and representing Christ in daily life is both challenging and challenged by the “father of lies.” One of those lies is: “You are helpless...” How have you encountered this feeling, and why is it a lie?

4. So much in life easily whispers that we are “inadequate.” It is true in many ways. How do we encounter it? How does this reality become a destructive lie? How do you answer the whisper?

5. In the text, John calls believers “children.” Children are ones who “inherit.” What does this mean in the realities of daily life? How do we inherit the gifts of belonging to Christ?

6. There are whispered lies that seek to convince us that we are alone and vulnerable. Share some of the ways that this thought is whispered to us. Are there practical ways that believers answer it?

7. The news of the day – and the conditions around us – seem to prove the lies of helplessness, inadequacy, and vulnerability. Can you suggest some practical ways to hold onto a faith that strengthens our hope and resolve?

8. For personal private reflection: Our gospel is a gospel of hope and assurance. But it can seem filled with promises that are unrealistic. In verse 12, John is encouraging us to “receive” Christ, and in return receive all that He has for His “children.” Have I received Him, and do I know that all He has is my spiritual inheritance?

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## **Table to Table**

### **Something for kids and adults to consider together**

The Bible tells us that because Jesus loves us, He will not leave us alone. How do we know that He is here, and trust Him to be our Lord, when we cannot see Him?