

In the Beginning Was the Word John 1:1-5

Our sermon text this evening is John chapter 1. We'll be reading verses 1 to 5. Please join me in prayer. Father in heaven, we pray that you indeed would speak to us from your written word concerning your Living Word. We pray that you would give us ears to hear, eyes to see, and hearts to understand and to obey. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

John chapter 1, verses 1 to 5: ¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. ⁴In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." Amen.

I wonder what store you put in words. We hear an awful lot of words in our life. We hear them day by day, we hear them from all sorts of people, all sorts of places—words with all sorts of purposes. A lot of thought is put into the words that we hear. Many, many hours of thought go into an advertisement that might only run for 30 seconds—30 seconds worth of words.

A speech that a politician delivers may be the result of the work of a team of speechwriters, sometimes four, five, and six people submitting and editing ideas, drafting it all together, working their way through it to give you a certain package of words, a certain collection of words, intended to communicate a certain idea. And when we are getting to know people, when we want to know somebody, we want to know them from words. We're a thinking creature. God created us in His image. We think, and we think in words. Even to those pictures that run through our mind, we attach words.

And so when God speaks, God speaks in words. It's one of the connections we, as created image-bearers, have with the God who created us. He thinks, He speaks, He communicates in words, and we—humanity, people, image-bearers—have been made to receive, think, and speak, and communicate in words.

Think about my words that you're hearing now. What weight do you set upon them? Who's speaking? I'm but a man. If I say, "Let it be," will it be? Not necessarily. If I say, "Let it not be," will it be finished? Not necessarily. If I say, "It is so," is it so? Not necessarily. Now I'm not trying to say to you that I'm a liar, I'm just trying to say to you that I am but a man. I'm human. I'm as fallible as you. It's the same if you speak to me. Everything you say to me, when it comes to words, I'm considering your words; I'm considering what you mean; I'm considering the person who speaks them; I'm trying to find the common ground between us to interpret them.

Well, my friends, I want you to now think of something, and think of it in this way—What about the words that are spoken by the one true living God? What about the word of God? Think about this. God is perfect. We've got to start there, with our God, what our God is like, who our God is. He's perfect. He's holy. He is true to Himself and true to His own character. Always remember that. God is true to His own character. He's not in any way deceptive. He's not in any way false.

Not only that. God is omnipotent. He can do as He pleases. Nothing can hold Him back. Nothing can restrain Him. Nothing can interfere with His will, His plans, His works. He's not only omnipotent, He's all-knowing—omniscient. He knows all. Not only does He know all, He actually controls all. God doesn't know all because He's standing back there somewhere in the past, looking forward with perfect vision. We often think of it that way, but we're mistaken. God knows all because God is the one who upholds all things, and all things are happening exactly according to His will.

So when that God speaks, when that God shares His word, His word shares in the very character of the God who's speaking it. He cannot lie, so His word must be true. He cannot be denied, so His word cannot be denied. He cannot get it wrong, so His word cannot be mistaken. He is eternal and infinite. He is not held in any bound of time. Therefore, His word is eternal and infinite.

The truth is that the relationship that we have with God is utterly dependent on, and utterly displayed by, our relationship with His word. There's a funny thing that happens when God says, "I am," when God's word says, "I am." Now theologian, philosopher Jonathan Edwards speculated a little based on Scripture, based on scriptural understanding and study, and he came to the conclusion that the word as revealed in Scripture is actually God's self-knowledge; God's self-awareness; God's own image of Himself; and that that word is so real that that word shares in the very essence, nature, and attributes of God Himself.

These are the ideas that have been packed into these five verses. God's word is something so real, something so perfect, something so eternal, something so wonderful, something so undeniable, that God's word can be said indeed to be God Himself. God's word can be said indeed to be God Himself.

Turn for a moment to the book of Hebrews chapter 1. Speaking of Jesus, let's hear what the author of Hebrews says, starting at verse 1 of chapter 1: "¹ Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power."

So the word of God speaks the word of God. The word of God acts as God. The word of God, though being distinct from God, is in very essence and nature God, performing the works of God—doing, being, living as God.

A fisherman from Galilee, a man who had not spent 20 years earning himself a PhD in philosophy; a man who had not spent years upon years studying logic—Aristotelian logic; a man who was not a trained theologian through the very best of the rabbinic schools; a fisherman from Galilee named John compressed all this into what we call five verses, with perfect, utter clarity, using the simplest of simple language. He spoke with words so simple and clear that a child could speak them. He spoke the most profound, incredibly mind-expanding and challenging concepts, in such simple, clear words.

Now we're going to read them, and I'm going to try and explain them to you, but there's something that I want you to understand as I do this. What I want you to understand is the lesson of background, or context—the context from which a person is speaking.

I want you to turn to Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 4. This is the call to worship that any Jewish man, boy, child, woman—anyone who was ever involved in Jewish worship in Old Testament times—heard at the start of every single worship service. Let's hear it. “⁴ ‘Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.’” And it goes on to say “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” That's the background that you've got to hold on to as we read the first five verses of the book of John.

Now, I can tell you that my great grandfather immigrated to Australia when Victoria was Queen, and I can tell you that that's a true statement. But what have I just told you? How have you interpreted it? How have you understood it? You know for a fact, you accept, you appreciate from your background and from what you know of me, and from where we live, and the context in which we live—you know, basically, what I have just said. The reference to “when Victoria was Queen” has given away all you need to know.

Immediately, as members of this nation called Australia, which was once a British colony, which is still a constitutional monarchy—you immediately know that I'm speaking of Queen Victoria, Queen of England, Great Britain, the Commonwealth, its empires and all its territories, dah-de-dah-de-dah-de dah. You know that immediately. You know the background from which I'm speaking.

And you look at me, and I've got a surname—Clements. It sounds fairly English, doesn't it? I mean, there's a word called “clement” in the dictionary. It means “mild and peaceful.” (Stop laughing.) It sounds fairly English, doesn't it? And I'm a white guy. It doesn't take a great stretch of imagination to imagine that in this which was once formally a British colony, I am the descendant of an Englishman, who immigrated to Australia when Victoria was Queen. It's all the information you need, and you can interpret what I've said.

Interpret John chapter 1 in the light of who was speaking—a Jewish boy, a boy who believed that there is one God and only one God, one God alone—not “gods,” no plurals, in our English writing, not “gods” with small “g”s. As far as he's concerned, there's one God, capital “G”od. God, full stop. That's his background. That's been hammered into him his whole life as a Jewish boy, young man, man, apostle: There is one and one only God. Okay, let's hold that in the background and let's see what he's saying.

“¹ In the beginning was the Word,” and you should immediately stop. “In the beginning was the Word,” and you should immediately not only stop, but you should immediately be thinking of the book of Genesis, chapter 1, verse 1: “In the beginning, God.” And John has written, “In the beginning, was the Word.”

Do you see the wordplay, the grammatical association John has made with Genesis chapter 1, verse 1, and what we call John chapter 1, verse 1? “In the beginning, God”; “In the beginning was the Word.” And so just by that simple wordplay, he has put the Word beside and equal to God. But when it says, “In the beginning,” we can go a little bit deeper than that.

The beginning of my life was January 19, 1967, but that’s not what’s being implied here. Think about the context of “In the beginning, God,” which then goes on to say “created the heavens and the earth.” Genesis chapter 1 is saying that God was there before anything else was there. He’s not saying that God has a beginning, he’s saying that in the beginning of the experience of time within the created universe, God was there, that there is no beginning for God, that God Himself started the beginning of existence that we as created beings experience. He’s not saying that God began; he’s saying that God *never* began. And John is saying that Word never began.

We call God “the Father” and we call Jesus “God the Son.” And it’s the nature of the father to be begetting his son. Now that begetting is not to be used in a biological way. As human beings, we start with a specific point of time in this creation. We are begotten. But this is an eternal begetting—one almighty, eternal begetting that is the expression of the nature of God the Father. He begets. And what does He beget? He begets His Son, always, forever.

Back before the beginning of this creation that we experience in time, God the Father, as Father by His very nature, was begetting God the Son. And God the Son, as God the Son by His very nature was begotten of the Father, time without end. Time is not actually applicable here. This is outside of time. When you’re talking about this, you’ve got to be very careful with words, because God does not actually exist in this way. When we’re talking about outside of time, the word “exists” does not apply. What we’re saying simply is, God *is*. Outside of time, God is. That’s it. God is. God has being. God is the being. He *is*. That’s what we’re saying. And John said, “In the beginning was the Word,” putting the Word on an equal footing with God the Father. In other words, he’s saying that the Word, as we shall see, was God.

Let’s keep reading. “and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” The preposition “with is a “with” that implies relationship on equal footing. It’s not used anywhere in Scripture other than to imply relationship—moving towards each other, literally; towards—face to face, staring one another in the eye—a relationship, an intimate relationship between equals.

“The Word was with God.” And here we have the revealing of a mystery, for we have a distinction. This Word which was with God from before the beginning, this Word who was there before God ever created, He must be God. He has to be God to be with God in a personal one-on-one, face-to-face equal relationship. Who else but God could be in such a relation with God?

And yet He must be different to the person with whom He’s relating. There must be some distinction, and the way that Scripture has given us to express that distinction is the distinction of father and son. That’s what God has given us. That’s how He has given us to understand His revelation of Himself: Father, Son—distinct. Yet He’s going to say that though a difference exists between these distinct persons, these persons are of one being.

Next phrase: “And the Word was God.” Now to get it a bit closer to what was actually written in the original, you’d probably say, “And God,”—comma—“was that Word.” We know, and our former Jehovah’s Witness here knows, that there is a false teaching around, and they come to your door two-by-two, and they knock on the door, and they try to confuse the issue, and they’ll tell you something along the lines, “Oh, there’s no definite article there before the word ‘God,’ therefore, it’s probably actually saying that the Word was ‘a’ god.” The problem is, first of all, that’s not actually the literal order in which the words were written. In the Greek, that statement starts off with “God.” That’s why I said you’d probably literally say, “God,”—comma—“the Word was.” God, the Word was. The Word was God.

Now when I gave you my little example earlier and said my great grandfather immigrated when Victoria was Queen, was there any necessity for me to say “the” Queen, to give you that definite article? Answer: No. Who else would I be speaking of when I said Victoria was Queen? We’re here in this once-English colony, speaking English. The flag on any flagpole features the Union Jack in the top left-hand corner. When someone in Australia says to you, “When Victoria was Queen,” you know exactly what they mean, and you know what they mean because of the background from which they’re speaking.

When John says, “And the Word was God,” you know exactly what he meant, because of the background from which he was speaking. He was speaking from a Jewish background: “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.” Two persons, being one God. Later on in the gospel, John’s going to introduce a third person being that one God—the Holy Spirit. But we’ll settle here right now with Father and the Son. He was speaking of God—one God, one essence, one being, two persons, “subsisting” a technical word, as one God. The Word was God.

Verse 2: “He was in the beginning with God.” That’s a summary statement. He was in the beginning with God. He’s now driving his point home. He’s saying, “Now, do you get this? Do you understand this?” This one who, before the beginning, before even the creation of time, this one who was God, and yet not God on His own, for there was another who is God. We have Father, we have Son, we have two persons being that one God. He was in the beginning with God. He’s wanting to make sure that we understand that he’s not speaking of something that happened in time. He’s speaking of God who is outside of time.

What this idea of the eternal begottenness of the Son is saying is that there has never been a time when there has not been God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit; that outside of our experience of time, God is, and God is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, three persons, one being; one essence; one nature; one God. He was in the beginning with God.

Now he wants to pile it on. “Do you really get this? Do you really understand what I’m saying?” “³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” What does he want you to understand? First of all, he wants you to understand that this Word is not a thing. He’s not a thing, because in this context, what is he calling a “thing”? A thing is anything that was created. And he wants you to understand that the Word was not a thing. He was not a made thing. He is uncreated, just as God the Father is uncreated.

If you're ever trying to read or understand Trinitarian doctrine, don't confuse "begotten" and "created." In Trinitarian doctrine, in the classic formulations regarding begottenness, they are not synonymous. You could say of me or yourself, that you were created on the day you were conceived, and you could say that you were begotten on the day you were conceived. But you can't use those two words like that when speaking of God. God is uncreated, and the distinction that the theologians want us to understand is that in divine terms, in the divine economy, in the Trinitarian relationship, to be begotten is not to be created. To be begotten is not to be born, even. There is this mysterious thing going on—technical word, perichoresis. It almost means a walk in time to music. That's sort of its literal meaning.

There's this mysterious thing going on, where we have three persons who are God. God the Father is begetting the Son, and God the Holy Spirit is proceeding from God the Father and God the Son. All three are uncreated; all three are not made; all three are God—one and one God only. This is what John is trying to get us to understand. All things were made through Him.

Now I'll mention our favorite heretics again. They want to try and tell you that Jesus was the first created being. Well, they've actually just turned Scripture into an illogical fantasy world, something that makes no sense, something that has no meaning. Because if He's the first thing that is created, and all things were created through Him, that would mean He existed before He existed to create Himself before He was created. You see what nonsense that is. You see that's rubbish. That's just gobbledy-gook. That makes absolutely no sense whatsoever.

But if He is uncreated, if His very nature is the nature of God, then all things being created through Him and by Him makes perfect sense. It's a logical progression. We never get to the bottom of this. If you're sitting there thinking, "You know, this is kind of really more than I will ever wrap my head around," don't worry. This is more than I've ever wrapped my head around. We are actually speaking of the very nature of God as He reveals Himself to us.

What you've got when it comes to Trinitarian theology and the Trinitarian formulations, like the Nicene Creed—what you've got is a boundary marker. And as long as your theology is within the boundary marker, you're sitting in a safe and orthodox place; you're sitting in a place of truth; you're sitting in a place of faith; you're sitting in the place of salvation. If you're within the boundaries of those creedal formulations, you're on the farm. You're in the kingdom. You're safe. And if you get outside those boundaries, you're not safe.

But just because you're within the boundaries, and just because we can learn from the revelation of God, from Scripture, and from the Nicene Creed itself, what the boundaries are, that doesn't mean we understand the secret of God. Who could? Who could understand the secret nature and being and Godness of God? My friends, we would know nothing if He wasn't revealing it to us Himself. We would not know a thing. And we know of Him. He reveals Himself to us, and He reveals things to us in words that we can understand. See the importance of the Word of God. "All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made."

Verse 4: "In him was life." We'll stop there. "In him was life." One of the titles in the Old Testament for God is "God, the living God." The living God! It's a title that sets a distinction between the real God and all other gods. What can an idol do? What can an idol say? What can

an idol communicate? An idol can do nothing but fall over, and there it lies. If it's broken it can't repair itself. If you're broken, it can't repair you. It exerts no control. It's a dead thing. "In him was life."

Turn to John chapter 5. Now Jesus here has been challenged by the Jews because He is calling God His own Father. Their accusation is that in calling God His own Father, He makes Himself equal with God. Reading from verse 19: "So Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise. ²⁰ For the Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing. And greater works than these will he show him, so that you may marvel. ²¹ For as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he will. ²² For the Father judges no one, but has given all judgment to the Son, ²³ that all may honor the Son, just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him. ²⁴ Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.'

"²⁵ 'Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. ²⁶ For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. ²⁷ And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man.'"

"As the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself." You see what John is saying to us here in chapter 1, verse 4—that simple statement, "In him was life." He's saying that He shares in the very life, nature, and essence of the living God. He shares in this being who is God. And Jesus Himself is God, fully, truly God. "Whoever does not honour the Son," said Jesus, "does not honour the Father who sent him."

Now to not honour the Son is to belittle, to reject, and disbelieve the very word of God. Remember as we began, I was trying explain to you as best I could to think about words, and how we know of a person through their words. Reject God's words, reject God. Honour God's word, honour God. Share in the life of God's word, and you share in the life of God. The Son has power to grant life to whomever He will.

When we accept, believe, submit to, surrender to, build our very thought processes upon the words of the Son, when we obey His commands—what we're doing is we're honouring the Son as we honour the Father, and we're living the life that is the life eternal. We're using God's word as it ought to be used, and we're worshipping God through His living word, His eternally begotten Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

"⁴ In him was life, and the life was the light of men." Now here is a reference back into that opening of the book of Genesis. What was the first thing God said? "Let there be light." Let there be light. His word was His action. Now I believe that in the book of Genesis—and I've said this to you before—exactly what the book of Genesis says happened, happened. God created the heavens and the earth less than ten thousand years ago, in six literal days, and rested on the seventh day from the work of creation.

But God is revealing more to us than just the fact that He created. He's actually revealing His very self to us, through creation. And that's the concept that John has grabbed hold of here. "The life was the light of men." You see, he's wanting us to go back and to look again at Genesis, and see how God first revealed Himself through light. And this light was the word, for the word has the very life of God, for He is God. The life was the light of men.

So John deals very much with this concept of light. And light, as we'll see, as we work through the gospel now, the Lord willing, that far as John is concerned, light is more than just what we see by. It's more than just this thing that makes things visible. We'll see that light becomes, in a way, symbolic, or a metaphor for goodness, and that darkness in the writings of John becomes symbolic and a metaphor for evil. Don't push it too far—he's not necessarily saying that that's what Moses was saying to us in Genesis, but he is definitely using the framework of Genesis to develop his ideas.

What was said in Genesis, chapter 1, is the foundation of what he's saying here: Light is the very revelation of God. And when we receive light, we receive life. When we receive God's light upon His word, we're receiving God's own life into our very souls. One of the reasons that I'm utterly convinced that the idea many people have that a person can lose their salvation is wrong, is that what they're basically saying is that regeneration, or to be born again, is nothing other than an idea that a man has—it's just the thought of your own mind. Today you're thinking like a Christian, tomorrow you wake up, you forget to think like a Christian, and you're not saved.

But that's not how Scripture describes regeneration. When Paul speaks in the book of Acts about his commissioning as an apostle to go out into the world and to preach the gospel, one of the things he was commanded to do was to turn people from darkness to light. And here we see that the light is the life of God that is a self-existent life, which is indeed God's own life.

So if a person's truly born again, truly regenerated, truly indwelt by the Holy Spirit of God granting understanding—light, faith, and obedience—to say that they can lose that is to say that the life of God can be quenched by the thoughts of a mere person. And I can't accept that. I consider that to be foolishness.

Now let's just qualify it a bit. Am I saying, therefore, that you can sin as you please? No, of course I'm not. Anyone who's truly regenerate doesn't want to sin as they please. They have been given the desires of God, the life. And the life and the power of the Holy Spirit is now the dominating force in their life, and their desires are the desires of godliness. We desire to please God, to do things that are godly. We desire to live Christ-like in this evil dark world. We desire to be evidently and openly the people of God. That's what a regenerate person is like. And that's not just something you switch on and off with an idea.

You know, you can change your favorite coffee order. You can walk into the coffee shop tomorrow and say, "You know what, instead of a cappuccino, I'll have a latte." But you can't change your own nature. We do not have that power. It is God who changes the nature of a human being. It is God who has the power to re-create His broken creations, to restore His broken image to a living image.

“In him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” What a wonderful thought: “The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” What would the darkness be? What would the light be?

Well, the darkness would be sin. John’s now taken us from Genesis chapter 1 to Genesis chapter 3, where the man and his wife were warned, “Eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and dying, you will die.” You will die, die. That’s what it says—“dying, you will die.” From that moment on, from the moment that they ate of the fruit—darkness. The sun still rose, the stars still shone, but darkness—darkness of head, darkness of heart, darkness of understanding. Darkness.

But the light shines in the darkness. Remember where it says in Genesis chapter 3 that God walked into His garden and called His people, drew them out of hiding? “Adam, where are you?” The light came. Now who came? Who walked in that garden? Well if you don’t know, jump down to John chapter 1, verse 18. “No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side, he has made him known.” Or for New King James readers—“The only begotten Son.” No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father’s side”—or “the only begotten Son”—has made him known.”

What was the light that came to Adam and Eve in Genesis chapter 3, promising a future salvation, when the head of the serpent would be crushed under the heel of the seed of woman? Who was it speaking to them then, if no one has ever seen God, but only God the Son, only God the Word has made God known? Who did they meet in the Garden? Pre-incarnate, the Lord Jesus Christ. They met God in the Garden. It gives me goosebumps to think that the God who was speaking to them promised that the seed of Eve would give birth to Himself, incarnate. Do you understand that’s what He’s saying? “The seed of the woman will crush your head.”

What He’s saying for the benefit of Eve, though she may not have understood this—I mean, we’ve got New Testament revelation in front of us—He’s saying, “Of the seed of the woman, of your seed, I will be born, and I will crush the serpent’s head. I’m not leaving you in the dark. Darkness will not reign. Darkness will not comprehend the light. Darkness will not rule, darkness will not get to destroy. Darkness will not overcome, because the light will come into the world in flesh, as a man, born of a virgin—truly God, truly man.” He Himself prophesied His own life, His own incarnation, to sinners in the Garden of Eden. He promised light.

And we’re to believe from Scripture that, believing that promise, from that moment on Adam and Eve once again had light, though death would reign. They had eaten, they had sinned, and God’s covenant of works would be fulfilled. They had sinned against God in the Garden. They had broken the covenant of works, and the wages of sin is death. You get what you work for. They worked for sin, they’ll get death. It’s that simple.

Yet they had light. They had the expectation of deliverance. They had the promise of coming light. And we New Testament believers, we have the Scripture, we have the promise of light that has come—light that is here. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” Light. Light in our darkened hearts, light in our darkened minds—God dealing with us so graciously, so condescendingly, taking folk like us and folk like John—a fisherman.

Now I'm not saying John was a simpleton—don't misunderstand me—but he was a fisherman of no great formal education. He was probably multilingual, probably spoke Aramaic and Ancient Greek, which is quite a good thing. He may well have been able to read. He may have written this through an amanuensis. He may have spoken and someone wrote it down for him. But John, the fisherman, wrote or spoke these mind-blowing, in a way incomprehensible, words.

I mean, you've got the words in front of you. But these things should be absolutely blowing our minds. We should be stunned and awestruck. This is the basis of our worship. And I invite you once again, ask our former Jehovah's Witness friend what kind of darkness that person was living in before they understood this, before they submitted to this, while their mind was still under that darkness of false teaching?

What kind of darkness? No hope, no happiness, a works-righteousness—works, works, works—must get out, must witness. Work, work, work, never done enough, couldn't do enough, never good enough. Constantly being pushed, constantly being narrowed and limited, and constantly being bossed around by a Watchtower Society, a bunch of men from somewhere overseas. I mean, they called the heavy-duty guys "pioneers." Life was nothing but darkness. They understood nothing. Deceived and deceiving, they'd go out themselves deceived, and teaching false teaching. But the light shone in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. It could not overcome the light. It only takes a candle in a dark room, and very quickly your eyes pick out everything that is there to be seen, even by candlelight.

That word "overcome" could also mean "apprehend," or "take hold of." It could even in a way mean "understand it." The darkness did not understand it. Now that's very much a John way of speaking. John loves to use words with double meanings. He loves to increase the impact of what he's saying by using words with double meanings. And there he says, "The darkness has not overcome it." "It has not overcome," therefore saying, "It has not defeated the light." The darkness cannot defeat the light. He's also most likely saying, "The darkness cannot understand the light." It cannot comprehend, it cannot take it in. The darkness cannot receive the light.

In a way, nothing's changed from back in the book of Genesis, because what does it say? It says that God put a division between darkness and light. And that dark division still exists now. Darkness could not apprehend, comprehend, or take in or receive light. It could only be pushed back by it, for God sets a division between darkness and light. And the only way one comes out of darkness is through the work of the light. God seeks. He seeks His people, He seeks His beloved. He rescues us from darkness, rescues us from sin and slavery. He takes us from darkness, He brings us into light. Through whom? Through the Word. Through the Word of God—the Living Word, God the Son of God.

Can I pile it up any higher? I wish I could. I wish I could, but it's beyond me. God the eternally begotten Son, God the Son, the Living Word, willingly, gladly, out of love for the Father and love for the Father's elect, willingly, gladly, entered into His creation—His creation!

What we've been learning is that He created, and that no other true God has ever been known, other than this one, the Word, God the Son. Willingly, happily, according to His love and His

goodness, He entered into His creation and there allowed His creation to attempt to destroy Him—and they probably thought they had, at least for just a little while, because He did truly go to a cross. Being truly incarnate, being both truly God and truly man, He truly died. And the darkness probably thought that they had beaten the light, just for a little while—just for a little while, because they can't understand light, they can't receive light, they can't comprehend light.

But He lives. He lives. Why? Because though He could suffer death, death could not defeat Him. Though He could suffer, He could not be beaten. He had no sin—therefore, death had no power. The sin He took to the cross was not His own, but ours. The sin that He died of is not His own, but ours. And He, being guilty of no sin, could not be held down by the penalty of sin, which is death. He was raised by the power of the Father, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

He was raised into new life, to be the light. He is still our light—the Word, the Word who came forth from God and who is God. I really wish I could do more with this, but I can't. I'm human. As I've tried to stress to you and keep saying, you'll never get to the bottom of this. The water here is crystal clear, and the bottom of it is beyond our reach.

You'll never understand it all, you'll never take it all in, but you can submit. You can believe. God has laid around you a boundary, within which you are safe—the boundary of His word, the boundary of His teaching, the boundary of His self-expression: Himself, Jesus. When Jesus speaks, God speaks. When we speak the words of Jesus—here's a frightening thought—we creatures of dust are speaking the words of God. When we speak God's words, God speaks through us.

We of all people are most blessed. This is our eternal life. This life that was in the Son, this life that is self-existent, that is not reliant upon any other thing—that's our life. That's our eternal life. It's eternal because it's God's life, given to us through the power of the Holy Spirit. This light that we have been given—the darkness cannot understand it, it cannot comprehend it, it cannot overcome it.

Like He did, my friends, we still face death. The way out of this world, should the Lord not return in our lives, is through death. Death has, in a way, become our exit. But death has no sting. For many it will be painful, but the light cannot be quenched. The light cannot be overcome, because it's God's light, God's word, God's life. And these things come from the very essence and nature of God, and through Jesus Christ they entered into flesh, and they are given to us. We created beings, we bearers of flesh, are bearers now of the image of God.

My friends, this is light. This is where we should be rejoicing. This should be the news that makes us the happiest of all people. Our God who created us, our God who is perfect, our God who is light, our God in whom not a shadow of darkness dwells, our God who is self-existent and reliant upon no other—our God has made Himself known through His word. Through *the* Word—through the Word who was God, who was with God in the beginning, before all time, outside of all creation, the eternally begotten Son—we know God. Why? Because God first knew us, and He has revealed Himself to us. But, my friends, we know God. We are in the light. We've got the Word. Let's close in prayer.

Father in heaven, we do thank you and we praise you, and we ask that you would help us to understand, to love, and to know you more, to know you better. Lord, let no foolish idolatrous thoughts find any place in our hearts. Let us not think the vain and foolish thoughts of men. We do not wish to worship idols, we do not wish to establish an idol of our own puny and foolish human thoughts in our head. We want to know you, the true living God, as you are, for who you are, through Jesus Christ your Son, by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Make yourself known to us. Help us to understand, and to love you as we should. We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.