

## **Sermon Draft**

***Text: John 1:4–5:***

### **Sermon: The Promised Light**

***“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.”***

A blessed Christmas Eve! The whole Christian Church on earth is preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus, born in a stable, in the little town of Bethlehem of Judea, the city of David. Even though his birth was over two thousand years ago, after all these centuries we continue to celebrate and rejoice, because Jesus is the light shining into the darkness of the world, the light that brings life, and the life in this light is eternal.

Christmas lights have been used since the eighteenth century when Christians in early modern Germany would use candles to decorate their trees with the light of Jesus.

By the late nineteenth century, incandescent light bulbs were beginning to be strung on Christmas trees to replace the more dangerous candles. One Christmas light has an interesting history. It was purchased by Edward and Lydelle Decker, from Evansville, Illinois, just two days after they were married on Thanksgiving Day in 1946. Out of a package of four, one bulb has continued to light up for over seventy years as it's been placed on all those years of Christmas trees, as well as on indoor and outdoor decorations. An ever-present light in their lives during the many Christmas seasons! Amazing it's lasted all these years!

Once, for a shorter time on earth, there was a light that was supposed to burn forever, not only during a brief season each year but every second. This light was the life that began with the creation of Adam and Eve.

At their creation, they knew nothing but the holy life and light God had created and placed in and around them. A life and light that continued for them until Satan lured them with temptation and lies, convincing them there was a better life. With sin, the light of life was extinguished, snuffed out.

Isn't it interesting the way we mix that metaphor? *Life*, we say, is extinguished, even snuffed out. But extinguishing, snuffing, actually has to do with *light*. You extinguish a fire; you snuff out a candle, the way the acolyte does at the end of the service. So, when life ends, the light goes out.

Now sin had been born in the world, and with it came the darkness of death, lives snuffed out. Death for Adam and Eve, death for their children . . . and for theirs . . . and for theirs . . . and for us. A vicious cycle, as the darkness of sin continued with each new life that would be born.

Regrettably, we often find ourselves needing to be convinced of this truth today. Each of us can come up with various reasons and excuses for our sinful thoughts, words, and actions. We want to be the creators of our own lives, regardless of the inevitable outcome of forfeiting our life with God and being ***“people who walked in darkness”*** (Isaiah 9:2).

Was this not Adam and Eve’s situation after they sinned? Was this not Israel’s situation after they sinned and rejected God after entering the Promised Land? Is it not our situation in our sinful nature? Walking, sitting, living under the cover of darkness, content and oblivious to the life in the light?

Yet in God’s faithfulness to Adam and Eve, to Israel, and to us, a new life was brought forth into this world. A baby in the likeness of all other babies, so meek and so mild.

From his appearance, it seemed the darkness would extinguish his life too. However, this was no ordinary child. It was Jesus, the one who would save his people from their sins, bringing them life out of the cover of darkness. As John declares in our text, ***“In him was life, and the life was the light of men”*** (v 4).

Jesus, true God from the beginning, was born of man to become man for the purpose of bringing us life and salvation. What was born on that night in Bethlehem was not just any ordinary life; it was the life that would overcome the death of the world. Sin, death, and darkness wanted to snuff out his life too, but they weren't able. Death wanted to swallow up his life from his birth all the way to his cross, yet Jesus is the life in us, born to crush the head of death, born to destroy the shadow of darkness, and born to remove the curse of sin.

Born to bring hope and salvation, through faith, that we would become the children of our heavenly Father. ***“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it”*** (v 5).

In Leviticus 23, the Lord gave instructions to Moses for the Israelites to celebrate his appointed feasts at specific times and according to his detailed instructions. The last of those feasts was called the Feast of Booths; it was also called the Feast of Tabernacles. In celebration, the Israelites would build booths, or small huts, outside their homes, where they were to live and eat during the eight days of the Feast, reminding them and teaching the next generations how the Lord had the Israelites live in such temporary shelters as they traveled through the wilderness to the Promised Land.

At the end of the first day, there would be a ceremony called the Illumination of the Temple, which involved the priest going into the Court of Women, where there were four golden oil-fed candelabras, or menorahs, standing seventy-five feet tall. After the ritual lighting, the lamps would remind the people of the pillar of fire the Lord used to guide them on their journey. All night the light would shine, illuminating the entire city. This ceremony was a reminder that God promised to send a light, *the Light*, to a sin-darkened world.

It may surprise some, but Jesus kept the Feast of Booths as well. Just imagine Jesus standing at the base of one of those huge candelabras and saying those comforting words, ***"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life"*** (John 8:12).

Jesus is the light piercing the darkness, illuminating not just a city but the whole world, bringing the lost out of the darkness and into his marvelous light.

We rejoice today as we celebrate the light coming into the world, piercing the darkness of night with the angelic announcement of his arrival to the shepherds as a baby lying in a manger. We also rejoice with the women who went thirty-three years later to his tomb early in the morning, while it was still dark, just three days after he was crucified.

Those women believed they were going to a closed tomb with their dearly loved Jesus dead and lying inside. The light of their hopes had been extinguished on the cross, but upon their arrival they were greatly surprised by the shining presence of more angels, lights that revoked the darkness of death.

Again, the angels announced the life in the light as they said, ***“Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but has risen”*** (Luke 24:5–6). Jesus is the life and the light illuminating the whole world! The grave cannot hold him; darkness cannot cover him. Even though death gripped him, it could not snuff him out.

There’s an interesting effect that this light generates, through the power of the Holy Spirit, in the life of a Christian. It’s called faith, faith that trusts in the forgiveness of sins. Faith that comforts us in our daily lives as we face the constant attacks of sin and darkness in this world. Faith that assures us in knowing Jesus is still with us and will come again in the brightness of his glory to take us to our heavenly home.

Yes, in faith, we rejoice. We celebrate that God loved us so much that he sent his light into the world to be born as a human, to be the long-awaited Messiah, to be the Suffering Savior, to be the conqueror of darkness, to be our life and light, our sure defense over sin and death.

As I think of Edward and Lydelle's Christmas light, I wonder just how long that light will continue to shine. It's quite impressive that it's burned during the Christmas seasons of more than seventy years.

As remarkable as that light has been, we know it will burn out. By contrast, the light of Jesus will never burn out, for it is the light that needs no electricity or oil to burn. It will never be snuffed, extinguished, because Jesus is the light of God's love, full of grace and truth.

He is the life in the light that brightly shines God's loving forgiveness for all eternity, lighting up the darkest fears and sins in our lives with mercy and peace. He is the life in the light of Christmas, shining continuously in this world until the new dawn comes and we meet him face-to-face.

Amen