

“THE WORD AND THE LIGHT”
Jeremiah 31:7-14, Psalm 147:12-20, John 1:1-18
January 4 & 5, 2020

One of my life verses is Psalm 119:105. What do I mean by a life verse? It’s a verse that I have memorized and fitted into my life that guides me and directs me. It is a grounding verse that has become one of the foundations of my faith. The verse is printed on your outline today, “*Thy **Word** is a lamp unto my feet, and a **Light** unto my path.*” The Word of God illuminates my life, gives light to all that surrounds me, and guides me along so that I might keep true to God as I follow Jesus Christ. It is the Word of God, the Bible, that has all the answers for my life, all the encouragement I need to live as a faithful Christian, and it gives me encouragement and hope in the face of the stuff of this world. God’s Word, the Bible, instructs me and leads me in the ways of God, and keeps me focused on following God’s will so that I may be pleasing to Him in all I do and all I say. In this one verse we see a direct connection between God’s Word and the Light that He provides for those who keep His commands.

Today we look at this connection between the Word of God and the Light in the Gospel of John. Listen to the first verses of John. (READ John 1:1-18)

When we compare the gospel accounts, we see that Matthew and Luke begin their life account of Jesus with the birth narratives. We’ve been going through these during Advent and Christmas. They tell what took place before and right after Jesus began His earthly life. Together they account how God enabled His Son to be a part of the world.

Mark begins his gospel account with Jesus’ adult life, with no mention of His early years. John the Baptist is listed as the one going before the Messiah to prepare the people for Him, and then we get right into the baptism account of Jesus.

But here in John’s Gospel, we see that the writer starts at the beginning, establishing the divinity of Jesus from the very start of all that we know. The writer of John’s Gospel desires to help all those who read this account to get a deeper understanding of who Jesus is and what His purpose was here among us. Jesus is **THE WORD** who brings **THE LIGHT** of God to us.

John uses the title “Word” in its Greek understanding – *logos*. To understand the significance of this use of “Word” we have to understand the meanings. A first meaning refers to the spoken word, with the focus on the meaning rather than just the utterance of sound. John uses *logos* to express personality within the communication. Second, *logos* indicates that there is creative power. Third, the Hebrew understanding of “word” (*logos*) claims a divine personality attached to it. Fourth, the Greek use of *logos* indicates a rational mind that ruled the universe. So John uses *logos*, “the Word,” to indicate that all of the visible aspects of the universe was brought into being through One who was in existence before the world and all that is in it. John uses *logos* to reveal the full significance of the Incarnation of God into the world, both for the Jew and the Gentile.

When John uses this term *logos*, “Word,” he is indicating that Jesus was more than merely human, but rather a universal person who has ultimate authority. In His preexistence, Jesus was WITH God and IS God, thus He is much greater than any created being. This means that Jesus is highly superior to any pagan concept of a materialistic deity, but is fully authoritative and creative.

And when John says “*the Word was with God*” he indicates that there is equality with God, yet distinctly individualistic in nature. This means that Jesus identified with God as being a part of God. This leads us into our understanding of Trinity, one God with three distinct “personalities” of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We’re not talking about multiple gods, like the Romans and Greeks had in their understanding of deity. This is the same God distinguishing Himself in three different ways. The phrase “*the Word was with God*” implies personality, and a coexistence with the Creator and yet right alongside of God. The Word was an expression of the creative being of God. He was deity, one with God, rather than “a god” or another being of the same class. John writes about the unity of the Word with God.

This first verse of John’s Gospel brings us back to the first verse of Genesis. We hear Genesis 1:1 say, “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” This is the reflection that John uses when he refers to Jesus, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was*

God' (John 1:1). John lifts up Jesus as being preexistent with God at the beginning of time when all things were put into being. Therefore Jesus is has authority above every other being here on the earth, high above any created pagan "god," and is greatly superior to any other person who has ever lived on the earth. He was truly God in the flesh, fully human and yet fully divine at the same time. I know, it's a difficult concept to understand, but let me try to help you grasp it a little better.

Since Jesus was with God at the very beginning, He **MADE** all things, standing right next to God the Father at creation. Why else would God say in Genesis 1:26, when referring to the creation of humans, "*Let US make man in OUR image, according to OUR likeness...*?" We see the very plural, yet united, focus on the creation of the world. It was through God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, that everything was made. So John credits Jesus with divine creativity as being with the Father when all things were made. Remember the creative nature in *logos*? The Word was spoken and everything came into existence. God spoke "the word" and the Word brought it into being, not as a process that happened over a long period of time, but spontaneously, instantaneously, it came into existence.

John describes it well when he says, "*The Word was the source of **LIFE**, and **this life brought LIGHT to mankind***" (1:4). The Word, Jesus, brings all things into being through His life, and in His life each of us finds life and light in us. No Jesus, no life. No life, no light. Whether or not we give credit to Him, Jesus is the One who is the life in the world, and through Him we all have our being here on the earth. Through Jesus we have the light of God available to us. But why is the light of Jesus so important to us? What difference does Jesus make?

You see, life is more than this physical being that we have. It's more than walking and talking and moving around. Life is not just the physical, but also the spiritual part of who we are. In Jesus, God's purpose and power are made possible for us to have within us to use for God's glory. It is the life of Jesus that brings light to people. Without the Light of Jesus in our lives we really have no life – it's just merely existence without Jesus. But what is the purpose of the light of Jesus?

Light dispels all darkness. The Light of Jesus cannot be put out. When you use a light in a dark

room, darkness can no longer reside in that place. When you turn on a light, the darkness must leave because the two cannot coexist with each other. And when we see “light and darkness” representing good and evil, we quickly see that good and evil cannot coexist with each other either. There is one of there is the other, but there is not both at the same time in that same person. So when the light of Jesus Christ comes into our lives, when we receive the Light and let Him reside in us, there is no room for the darkness, because the light forces the darkness away. Similarly, when ask Jesus into our lives, He brings His light into our lives, and that means that He brings His goodness to us. That goodness cannot tolerate any evil, so as long as we let the life of Jesus live in us, the darkness cannot reside. So our lives are transformed from evil to good, from unrighteous to righteous, from wicked to gracious.

When we have the light of Jesus Christ in us, we are invited, “Don’t cover it up.” Don’t be ashamed of the light and life that Jesus gives to you as you believe in Him and receive Him into your life. The light of Jesus makes you a new person. So don’t cover it up and hide it from those around you.

In Matthew 5:14-15 Jesus tells us, “*You are like light for the whole world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one lights a lamp and puts it under a bowl; instead he puts it on the lampstand, where it gives light for everyone in the house.*” The light of Jesus in your life is to be demonstrated to everyone around you, so that they might see that light in you and then seek that same light from Jesus.

Then in Matthew 6:22 we are told, “*The eyes are like a lamp for the body. If your eyes are sound, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are no good, your body will be in darkness. So if the light in you is darkness, how terribly dark it will be!*” When the light of Jesus comes into you, when you receive Him and follow His teachings, that light drives out all the darkness and brings gladness and wholeness into your life. But if the light of Jesus does not reside in you, oh what that darkness does to make us miserable, hurtful, and wicked people. Yet, once you have the light of Jesus in you, the world cannot put it out, no matter how hard they try.

So let the light of Jesus shine! Just as light dispels the darkness around you, so that light of Jesus dispels the wickedness and evil from you. His light changes your life, it changes your thoughts, it

changes your words, it changes your actions. And as the light of Jesus begins to change you, people take notice of it and begin to question what is going on inside of you. They see the light of Jesus shining out from you and they begin to want what you have in you. So Jesus tells us, *“In the same way your light must shine before people, so that they will see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven”* (Matthew 5:16). Since the light of Jesus makes that great a difference in you, those around you will begin to see the changes Jesus makes, and they will begin to want what you have. Let that light shine.

Jesus told the Pharisees, *“I am the light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life”* (John 8:12). When we let Jesus reside in us, and live in us, and lead us, we no longer want to live according to the evil and wickedness of the world. When we begin to see the difference that Jesus makes in us, we never want to return to the darkness again. Jesus makes the difference in us that completely changes our lives and we never want the stuff of the world any longer because we know the goodness of Jesus is more precious than anything the world can provide. Let His light shine in you! Experience what the light of Jesus can do in your life.

But as we see in the nativity narratives of Matthew and Luke, many people will NOT RECOGNIZE Him, but some will. Many people will be offended because of Jesus, they will be threatened by His presence and they will reject Him because they do not recognize Him as the Word, the Only Begotten Son of the Father. They will want to hang onto their positions of power and authority. They will want to continue seeking the ways of the world. Many will prefer to live in the darkness of their sin. They don't recognize Jesus as the Savior, the Son of God, “who takes away the sins of the world” (John 1:29). They will think they have too much to give up if they receive Jesus, so they reject Him and search even more diligently for the things of this world. They think that their lives are just fine the way that they are, so they refuse to let Jesus' light live in them, and they live in the darkness and wickedness of the world instead. And when trials and struggles come to them, they search for more and more support from the world, which leads them further and further into the darkness of the world.

But there are some who WILL receive Jesus and believe in Him as the Word of God; preexistent, all powerful, creative, loving and willing to supply us with our needs. They are the ones who make the connection between His being With God and Really God, so they trust in Him, and accept Him, and humble themselves to Him, to guide them throughout their lives. They are the ones that find the life of the Word in them and discover the Light of Jesus shining through them. It is those who receive Jesus who have the right to become children of God (Jn. 1:12). Though we are all created by God, only those who seek Jesus and claim Jesus and follow Jesus have the right to be the children of God. The wicked, the evil, the unjust, the unrighteous have no place with God, so how can they be the children of God?

Yes, God created them, but it is OUR CHOICE to become a child of God through our acceptance of Jesus. Though we are all born “*by natural means by being born as the children of a human father*” (Jn. 1:13), that is not what makes us a child of God. Believing in Jesus as the Word, the Messiah, the Son of God, and receiving Him as our Savior, and following His commands, THAT is what makes us children of God. Just being born as a human does not automatically make us a child of God. It is our choice of claiming Jesus, “*the Word who was with God and is God,*” that gives us the right to become a child of God.

But let me ask you this, if God, the Creator of the heavens and the earth, the Giver of life, the One who makes all things new, were to suddenly show up in all of His magnificence and glory, how would we ever be able to understand Him, or comprehend Him, or even have the courage to stand before Him? If God showed up right now right here in this place, how would we even be able to live? He would be too much for our limited understanding to comprehend. Just like the people of Israel could not bear to look at the presence of God, and Moses had to be protected by the hand of God so that he would not see the face of God, there is no way we can even begin to understand God when He is in His full glory. He is too much for us to comprehend. It would be like us trying to understand electricity by putting our finger into a light socket – we’d be fried to a crisp before we could understand God’s will and God’s way for us.

So how could God, in all of His glory and power, show Himself to us so that we could learn about Him and come to know Him and dare to follow Him and stand before Him? John 1:14 tells us, *“The Word became a human being and, full of grace and truth, lived among us. We saw His glory, the glory which He received as the Father’s only Son.”* You see, the Word has **BECOME** like us – Jesus, the son of Mary and Joseph, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born in a stable, laid in a manger, like us in every way, except without sin, being in the very nature of God, yet for a few short years, confined into the form of a man, so we could learn from Him about God’s desire for us, so that we could see the power of God through Him, and so that we could begin to understand the ultimate love of God for us, so that we might once more turn to God and trust in His way and follow His will and turn from our wicked ways and let Him be our God. Jesus became like us so that we could understand who God is and so that we could let Him be the One to rule over us and bring us back to life in God.

And as we claim Jesus as the Word, with God and is God, the Light of Jesus brings **BLESSINGS** to us, *“one blessing after another”* (Jn. 1:16). As we put our faith and trust in Jesus as the Word, we become the children of God, and we find ourselves in the family of God. And God is pleased to bless His family. But that doesn’t mean we’ll be freed from financial hardships, or personal difficulties, or other hardships. We live in a broken and sinful world and we are surrounded by the darkness of the world, the evil, and wickedness, and selfishness of that darkness. But despite our struggles, our hardships or our difficulties, God blesses us with His love, His joy, His peace, His patience, His kindness, His goodness, His faithfulness, His gentleness and His self-control so that we might truly enjoy this life that He has given to us. Life is not about collecting as much wealth and possessions as we can before we die. It’s about living with the light of Jesus in us, touching those around us so that they might experience the great love of God, too.

So the most important thing that the Word does for us is this, Jesus **REVEALS** God to us – no one else does this like Him. Throughout His life here on the earth, Jesus demonstrated the love of God, He taught the concepts of God, and He brought to us the forgiveness of God. In every aspect of His

perfect life here among us, Jesus lived to show us who God is, so that our limited minds could begin to understand the One who made the heavens and the earth, the One who made every creature, and the One who made us in His image to live for His glory by following His commands. Jesus, the Only Begotten Son of the Father, came to the earth to show us who God is and to bring Salvation to us so that we could move from the dark valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4) into the light of eternal life through Him. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and only through Him are we able to come to the Father (John 14:6).

God loves us enough to save us from our sin by give us His only Son, Jesus, that as we put our trust and faith in Him we will no longer be condemned to death because of that sin, but find eternal life through Jesus (John 3:16). And John's Gospel tells us right up front that this is the reason for the Word of God coming to the earth.

But we can't just leave it there. This demands a response on our part. You are called to be the light of Jesus to our world! When you claimed Jesus to be your Savior, you were also invited Him to be the Lord of your life, the One who calls all the shots, who guides your decisions, the One who commands your obedience. We are not called to be secret Christians, living so that no one else knows our faith and trust in Jesus. If we do that, there is question as to the real validity of your faith. No, you were called to live your faith as openly as the clothes you are wearing right now.

You see, the world needs the light of Jesus to dispel the darkness that envelops us all too quickly. The world needs to see the difference that Jesus makes, so as you live with the light of Jesus within you, and you let that light shine into the darkness of our world, people will begin to have hope, they will begin to see possibilities for life, they will begin to become attracted to the Light of Jesus.

But how will they come to know God if you don't live for Jesus? How will they see the difference that Jesus makes if you live like everyone else? The Apostle Paul gives us this great challenge, "*Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so WALK IN HIM*" (Colossians 2:6).

So you be the **LIGHT OF CHRIST** for our world today. Follow the Word and be the Light.