

John 1:4-8 "The Light and Life of Men"

Two weeks ago we started a new study as we began with the fourth gospel in the word of God, the gospel of John. This gospel has some of the most well known passages in all of the bible, not the least of which is John 3:16.

JOH 3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

But just as recognizable is the very beginning of this gospel.

JOH 1:1-3 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."

This is the passage we looked into last time as we discovered that this Word which John speaks of is none other than God Himself, the very God who created the world and universe. And it turns out that this Word is Jesus Christ, who is very God and very man.

But as we come to our text this morning we now begin to discover that this Creator God and Savior, is also the one who gives life. The very life we possess, both physically and spiritually, can come only from the One who created us.

Life cannot come from non-life. Honest scientists have always understood this. You can't get a dog from a rock. And so, to suggest that this world and the life in this world, came into being from nothing, which means from non-life, without a master designer and a life giver, is to suggest that we created ourselves, which would make us gods.

Now some might argue that we didn't create ourselves, we couldn't have. But, rather we were evolved over eons of time. Well, at some point we have to come up with life to produce more life. At some point, according to evolution theory, the first one celled life form had to come into existence. But since non-life cannot produce life this is impossible without a life giver.

But even non-life, or inanimate matter, had to come from somewhere. It had to be produced from someone. Just as you and I would laugh at the idea that any piece of art came into being out of thin air without the artist bringing it into existence, it would be just

as absurd for this most complex world and universe to come into being without an artist, if you will, who designed it.

As the analogy has often been used, to suggest that this intricately balanced earth came into being by accident, is to suggest that a Boeing 727 can come into existence as a result of a tornado traveling through a junk yard. It is simply absurd.

In this gospel John introduces us to the master designer of all things and now he continues to expound the truth that this master designer puts life on this planet.

JOH 1:4 "In him was life, and that life was the light of men."

This Word which John speaks of in our text, who is the One in verse two of whom we're told, "all things came into existence through Him", is the One in whom there is life. And we would expect that of a God who can create out of nothing. And this is actually one of the designations of Jesus Christ.

JOH 14:6 "Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth **and the life**. No one comes to the Father except through me."

Now, when John says that, "in Christ is life", what does he mean by the last phrase of verse four, "and that life was the light of men?"

Well, keeping the context in mind which has been dealing with the Word, or Christ as being the creator, this life is in connection to all life which this creator has brought into being, specifically mankind.

And so, at this point we're not talking about spiritual life or eternal life as it has been extended to sinful man through the Savior. At this point in the text John is simply establishing the fact that the Word has given life to man as He brought man into existence.

So, in what sense is this life light to men? In this sense; man is aware of his God because man has been made in the image of God. This is made quite clear in the book of Genesis.

GEN 1:26-27 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." 27 So God created man in

his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

But to be made in the image of God doesn't mean to be made a god. Rather, as the Hebrew word for image in Genesis suggests, to be made in God's image is to have been given those attributes which reflect God. In fact that Hebrew word for image could be literally translated, resemblance.

We resemble our Creator in the sense that just as He has life, we have life. Just as He has personality, we have personality. Just as He has compassion and love and mercy, we too resemble all of these qualities as He has created them into our beings. But we only resemble our God in these ways in a very limited way, since we are not God.

Man was originally created by God to reflect Him and His life and glory. But when man sinned against his Creator, that ability to reflect His life died in a very real way. Not died in the sense that no vestiges of the character of God could be reflected in man, but died in the sense that now the life which was given to man was self-limited because of his sin nature which prefers to reflect sinful self.

And so, John points out in our text that this life, which was originally given to man, is a light, or an illumination of the fact that there is a God who put that light or life there in the first place.

And what the word of God tells us is that this light cannot be fully quenched in man and therefore man cannot use the excuse that he has no indication that there is a God who wants fellowship with mankind whom He created, which means man is accountable to this holy God.

Man's very make-up tells him there is a God. This is why anthropologists are so intrigued when studying different civilizations. In every instance, no matter how primitive they determine a civilization was or is, a concept of God exists in them all. It may be a distorted concept of God as seen in the worship of the sun, or the moon, or nature, but it exists.

Man instinctively knows that there is a power greater than himself outside of his own experience and yet he tries to tap into it so as to get to know this god or gods, or to try and gain power in some way from this god or gods as they perceive it.

Even atheists will have to admit that though they may deny the existence of God, in their very denial they fight the concept of God. But if God does not exist, then the concept of God cannot exist.

From a philosophical viewpoint how do you conceive of anything which does not exist or could possibly exist? You can't. Now wait a minute. Men couldn't conceive of television, or air planes 4,000 years ago. Does that mean if they couldn't conceive of these things that they couldn't exist?

The truth is that men have always been able to conceive or dream of these things in one form or another. Man has always dreamed of flight as he has watched the birds fly over-head. And he has always conceived of having better and faster means of communication whether he could dream of a phone or not.

Simply because they haven't been invented doesn't mean they couldn't be conceived. And simply because an atheist makes a statement about God, even though he believes there is no God, doesn't mean he doesn't have that light in him which tells him there really is a God.

Soldiers have said it for years. There are no atheists in foxholes under combat.

And yet some will still try to insist that God is non-existent, or at least not relevant. David wrote about this in Psalm 14.

PSA 14:1 "The fool says in his heart, "There is no God."

And the reason it is foolish is because man's very existence states otherwise. Man's very conscience bears witness that God has placed a light there which is meant to shine in such a way as to demonstrate that our life comes from the life-giver.

And one particular aspect of this life demonstrates the image of the God we bear, even in its tarnished state due to sin. This is what Paul points out to the Jews when he was writing to the church in Rome as he was showing how, despite the fact that the Gentiles did not receive the Mosaic law given by God, they still would abide by those same principles, which are Godly in nature.

ROM 2:14-15 "(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, 15 since they

show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness..."

This is the light John is speaking of in our text. And so, when he says that the Word is life and the life is the light of men, he's simply stating the fact that whatever life we have comes from the One who is life and initiates life in us, and we cannot escape that.

We didn't create ourselves, and we didn't give ourselves life. It came from God our creator. But it is a life which is meant to be in conformity with our creator.

Now, does John mean to suggest that this light, which all men possess, is a divine spark waiting to be fanned so that the flame of spiritual life can come to the surface? No. That's not the light John is speaking of here. When it comes to spiritual life, and here we're talking about a life which is united to God who is Spirit, this is not something which man can initiate precisely because of his sin nature which only produces death.

The reason for this is because spiritually speaking we are dead. This doesn't mean we don't have a spirit, or that we don't have spiritual tendencies. But it does mean that when it comes to spiritual life, and by this we mean eternal life, that has to be given to us as a gift which is outside of our ability because we are sinful creatures.

Remember, we need only go back to the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were given the choice to either love and obey God, or rebel. One choice sustained the perfect life they already possessed, which included perfect fellowship with God. The other choice produced death, which is separation from God our Creator forever.

They chose the latter. And remember that God told them that in the day they made that choice to rebel they would surely die. And that death included, not just physical death, but spiritual death. In other words, that perfect fellowship which man originally enjoyed with his God.

That was now gone. But in God's grace and mercy He secured a way for man to come back to God and have that relationship reestablished. And that's when God gave Adam and Eve the promise that He would send a Savior, born of a woman, who would come into this world and take our death penalty and pay our debt Himself.

Outside of God coming to us, as he did with Adam and Eve after they sinned, and making this possible, we don't have enough light, if you will, to create this kind of a relationship with God. And again, the reason being is that spiritually speaking, we are dead. This is precisely what Paul told the Ephesian Christians.

Speaking to people who now have life in Christ he says this to them.

EPH 2:1 "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins..."

The Greek word for dead in this verse is *nekros* which essentially means a corpse. You were a corpse in your transgressions and sins. Corpses don't give themselves life. Corpses don't initiate relationships with the living.

And spiritually speaking corpses, who are dead, don't initiate a relationship with the living God. This is made abundantly clear in Romans 3:10.

ROM 3:10-11 "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; 11 there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God."

And here Paul means the one true God; the only God, and the God who gives life.

Men have been given light in their inner beings, in their spirits, to recognize that there is a God. And therefore they are without excuse for not seeking Him. But that is different from saying that they have a light which is the equivalent to a divine life residing in them waiting to be awakened.

No, as Paul says, we are dead in trespasses and sins. But in that very same passage in Ephesians chapter two he goes on to say.

EPH 2:3-5 "All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved."

Where there was no spiritual life God created a new life in us as we are now enabled to embrace His Son Jesus Christ, whom John says in our text is life.

This new life in Christ is the very life Jesus spoke of with Nicodemus when He told Nicodemus that you must be born again, or born from above. It is a spiritual birth which comes exclusively from God, not a birth we can make happen ourselves. That's why eternal life is called a gift.

A gift is something given to us from someone else. And the gift of eternal life with our God comes from God. It originates with God who is life.

JAM 1:17-18 "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created."

He chose to give us birth. He caused us to be born again; not a physical rebirth, but a spiritual birth which only He could initiate and bring to pass in us. This is why we are called new creations.

2CO 5:17-18 "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:..."

This is the light that God shines upon men to open their minds and hearts to receive Him and His Savior by faith. And yet, if He had not done this as His Spirit has opened our eyes, we would continue to go our own way, which is the way of destruction.

In fact, this is exactly what John continues to point out in our text.

JOH 1:5 "The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."

Here John uses the metaphors of light and darkness to represent the light and life of God and the darkness of man's heart who rejects the one true God.

In other words, Christ shines, but that doesn't mean spiritually blind people can see it or understand the light. But in terms of the effects of God's light in this world as it relates to His existence,

that light cannot be hid. All of creation screams of His existence. Is this not what we read in Romans 1:20-25?

Romans 1:20-25 ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. ²¹ For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. ²⁴ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. ²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

And yet, what we are told in our text is that despite the fact that this very God and Creator, who is light, has come into the world with the express purpose of shining into the darkness of this world, the world did not comprehend Him as God and Savior.

And this is where John abruptly breaks in and begins describing another character in our narrative. Up to this point, it is the Word, the Creator, the light and life John has been speaking of as he refers to Jesus Christ. But now, another person is introduced who will bear witness to this light.

JOH 1:6-8 "There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John. ⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. ⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light."

What we see in the ministry of John here in our passage is the very essence of the ministry of every child of God in Christ. We are called to be witnesses. John was a witness to the fact that the O.T. Scriptures foretold of this Messiah. This was a significant part of his ministry as he taught about the Christ.

But the other part of John being a witness was to also witness to the fact that this Christ or Messiah was now here.

By the way, the John being spoken of in our text is not the John who is writing this gospel, though the John who wrote this gospel was also a witness to Christ.

The John being spoken of in verses 6-9 describe the special ministry of one John the Baptist. He was called out by God to prepare the way for the Messiah as he went about preaching repentance, and the need for people to turn to God for forgiveness.

In fact, his father, Zacharias, prophesied about his son's special place in God's plan to come to Israel and declare that the promised Messiah had now come.

LUK 1:76-79 "And you, my child, will be called a prophet of the Most High; for you will go on before the Lord to prepare the way for him, 77 to give his people the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, 78 because of the tender mercy of our God, by which the rising sun will come to us from heaven 79 to shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the path of peace."

And of course, this is precisely what John grew up to be and do as we see him fulfilling his ministry as an adult having grown up at the same time with his cousin, Jesus. Both John and Jesus were related through their mothers; John being some six months older than Jesus.

MAT 3:1-3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: "A voice of one calling in the desert, 'Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him.'"

This is the John of verse 7 of our text.

JOH 1:7 "He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe."

God has never left Himself without a witness. And John is that special witness to the light who has come into the world to save us from our sin.

JOH 1:8 "He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light."

John the Baptist would never have assumed the role of the light of the world, but he was compelled to bear witness to the light who is Christ. In fact, on one occasion he made it a point to make sure all attention went away from him and toward Jesus.

JOH 3:30 "He must increase; but I must become decrease."

Like John the Baptist, every child of God who has embraced the light, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, as Lord and Savior, has the responsibility and privilege of being a witness to the light who came into this world to give us life eternal.

Witnesses bear testimony to the facts. And we bear testimony, both with our lives and our words, that this Jesus Christ is none other than the living Son of God who came into this world to redeem men and bring them back into a living relationship with Him forever.

We bear witness to the fact that this Jesus is none other than the creator of the universe and has now come into the world. And despite how the world may reject Him we are still compelled to give witness to the fact that He is the only Savior and Lord and God.

In fact, the word witness as used in our text is the Greek word *martureo* which means to be a witness, (i.e. to affirm that one has seen or heard or experienced something). It's where we get our English word martyr. We often think of martyrs as only one's who gives their lives for the faith.

But the word actually means bearing testimony to the truth and giving that testimony faithfully, even unto death if necessary. And so, in that sense one who gives their life for Christ is simply bearing testimony to the facts, and holds those facts of the Savior as to be so real that they could do no less than die for the truth.

JOH 1:9 "The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world."

John the Baptist was not the true light this world needed so as to be able to come out of its darkness of sin, but it is interesting that God would use regular men and women to participate in the means by which people come to the Savior.

We have the privilege to be used by God in bringing people the truth of who Christ is and that God would be pleased to use us in the role of witness as Paul points out in Romans.

ROM 10:14-15 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they

have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? 15 And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

Jesus Christ is the true light and yet you and I are the ones whom God has personally called to be those witnesses to the light and life which is found only in Christ. To think that the creator of the universe has ordained the means by which people come to the Savior and allows us to be part of that means is nothing short of awesome.

Don't ever be afraid to share the gospel with someone. It is God who has given us such a commission. And when God speaks we need to listen and act and be a part of the plan of God to bring people from darkness to the light as we give glory to God who is that light.

May we be found faithful to our God and love this world enough to give them the truth in love. And God will be faithful to open the eyes of the blind and bring many into His kingdom through our witness of His Word.

May God be glorified!