

## John 1:1-5 – “Dawn of a New Light”

The story of the Bible begins with, “In the beginning.” What was the first thing God spoke into creation? Light! Today we celebrate the dawn of a *new* light. The new *day* began with a sunrise. The new year begins with the days getting longer. A new life begins when an infant views the world for the first time in the light. And a new era in human history began when God’s light came shining into the world through Jesus.

That’s why we’re in John’s gospel today. John doesn’t give us an account of Jesus’ birth like Matthew and Luke. He has a different take on Jesus’ origins. John’s gospel tells us that what came into being through Jesus wasn’t just a new religion, a new theology, or a new set of principles or teachings. Sure, those things happened eventually, but John says that the point of Jesus coming into the world was to *give life, vitality and a sense of aliveness*. And now that Jesus has come, that “aliveness” is here to enlighten all people everywhere.

Some people don’t see it yet, and you know ... that’s okay. But then there are some who don’t *want* to see it. These are the ones who have shady plans that they want to keep under the cover of darkness. We’re talking petty thieves to corrupt politicians ... human traffickers to loan sharks ... terrorists of all shapes and sizes plotting from hidden cells spreading their message of hate. They don’t welcome the light because the light exposes their plans and deeds for what they are: Evil. So they like the darkness.

But then there are those who *welcome* the light. They receive it as a gift, and in that receiving, they let God’s holy, radiant aliveness come into their lives. They become portals of light in our world and they start living as members of God’s family. And if you’re a part of God’s family, that means you’re related to *all* of God’s creation. And that relatedness is the essence of enlightenment.

What do we mean when we say Jesus is the light? Think about that glow that you see over here on the foothills first thing in the morning. That means the long night is almost over. Jesus’ birth signals the beginning of the end for the dark night of fear, hostility, violence, and greed that has descended into our

world. Jesus' birth signals the start of a new day and a new understanding of what it means to be alive.

Jesus teaches that aliveness is a gift that's available to all by God's grace. It flows not from taking but rather by giving. Not from fear, but from faith. Not from conflict, but from reconciliation. Not from domination, but from service. It's not found in all the outward trappings of religion. Not in rules and rituals, controversies and ethics, temples and traditions. No, this is something that springs up from our innermost being like a fountain of living water. It turns life from a disappointment to a banquet. This new light of aliveness and love opens us up to rethink everything. To go back and become like little children again. Then we can rediscover the world with fresh, childlike wonder ... seeing the world in a new light ... the light of Christ.

So here on this Christmas day, we remember the weary travelers Joseph and Mary. We remember the great distance they traveled from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Mary was "great with child" as the old King James version says. Mary went into labor, and because nobody could provide them with a normal bed in a normal house, she gave birth to her son in a stable. We can imagine the sights, sounds, and smells of a stable filling the air as Mary wrapped her baby up in swaddling clothes and laid him in a feed trough. On that very dark night, in such a humble place, here was this tiny, vulnerable, homeless, and helpless baby. And God's light began to glow.

Business tycoons scramble for a bigger piece of the pie. Politicians compete for the highest offices. Armies march and scientists study and philosophers philosophize and preachers preach and laborers sweat. But in that ... baby, lying in a manger, the power of God's light flickered, began to pulsate, and grew in wisdom and grace ... more so than any of us can imagine. To be alive in the adventure of Jesus is to kneel at the manger and gaze upon that little baby who is radiant with so much promise for our world today. So we light this final candle in the Advent Wreath for the Christ Child. The word made flesh. Let our hearts glow with that light that was in him, so that we too become lamps through which his light shines still. Let there be light. (Light final candle).