

A Light in the Darkness

Part 3: Lights

Matthew 1:22-24

INTRO

Kids afraid of the dark.

- We are too... why we've always tried to get rid of it
 - Fire / Electricity

Two reasons... Darkness Isolates. And Darkness Conceals.

Darkness isolates and conceals.

Darkness isolates

Remember... Sitting in your bed. **ALONE** in the dark. It's you against whatever is out there. You're on your own. Everyone else is asleep.

As we get older the isolation becomes more apparent...

- See it in our country... more and more isolated as the anger and hate rises
- See it in our families... speak less and less as the annoyances and angers rise
- See it in ourselves... feel the darkness inside of us and so we keep the real us from ever shining through.

The darkness in the world convinces us that we are alone in the world.

Conceals reality.

- That pile of clothes on the chair is now a monster
- Can't see the room for what it is.
- You're about to be the victim of a vicious monster attack
- Better not do anything! Don't move, come out from under covers, or even breathe too hard

As we get older, the monsters change and become more real...

- There's too much darkness for good to come through...
- What use is trying to make the world a better place when there is so much evil and pain?
- What can one person do to help any of it?
- Especially one person alone in the dark?

The darkness in the world convinces us that we can't do anything for the world.

But Xmas is the true story of God breaking through the darkness and bringing the light of his love and forgiveness to all of us in unexpected ways

Christmas is the story of God ending our isolation and giving our lives purpose.

Let me show you...

GOD: Matthew- Joseph, Mary, divorce, Angel... save from sins...

Matthew then puts this account in the historical perspective... that God had a plan all along... made a promise through a man named Isaiah 700 years earlier...

Matthew 1:22-23 All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: "Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means 'God is with us.'"

I know... this xmas story is pretty crazy.

(especially after years of paintings of halos, blonde angels hovering over one of the worst built stables ever, songs about a baby who doesn't cry)

But even when you take all of that away, it's still a crazy story... Virgin birth, Visions, Angels, Stars, Prophecies...

But honestly the craziest part is what Matthew just said... it's also the most important part...

God (God the son to be exact) became human.

That's what is meant by Immanuel- God is WITH us.

God saw the isolation that the darkness of sin had caused humanity... saw how it robs us of seeing reality and meaning...

So he chose to come and, not just tell us he loved us,... but chose to enter into our humanity, into our vulnerability, weakness, and pain... and show us that he loves us and we are not alone.

Whatever we go through, whatever darkness we experience... Jesus has been there and is in it with us.

He experienced every human emotion. He knows our pain, loneliness, injustice.

God is so FOR us that he became one of us.

It's hard to believe that this actually happened at a moment in history in such an unexpected way...

But throughout his life, Jesus proved the truth of it by what he said, and what he did and ultimately...

As we said last episode... God the Son (Jesus) embraced our pain... took the pain we deserved... to give us life, eternal life.

And gave the ultimate proof of his divinity by raising himself from the dead and appeared to over 500 eye-witnesses.

BUT there's more to the story...

Jesus didn't come just to bring us a flash of light that lit up the darkness and then faded... giving us a glimpse that we aren't alone that maybe there is more to life...

His death and resurrection gave us forgiveness and life... but it didn't stop there...

Jesus didn't come just so we could leave Earth and go to heaven someday... he came so that we can bring the light of Heaven to Earth now.

Jesus was the light of Heaven that ignited millions of other lights to bring the light of God's love and forgiveness to every dark corner of humanity.

Didn't just bring us eternal life but brought a life of **purpose** now.

YOU: God gave us his light in order for us to BE his light.

Jesus... **Matthew 5:14-16**. "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

He didn't say you *have* light but you **ARE** the light.

If you are a JF... you are empowered, by HS, to BE the light of God and show the world that they are not alone in the darkness... there is a reality and purpose just waiting for them to experience

Being the light is so much more than being nice. (Nice doesn't change the world)

- Not just stopping bad habits.
- Doing a few charitable things now and then
- Not going to a religious club once a week to sing some songs.

It involves a complete transformation of our identity...

Ephesians 5:8 For once you were full of darkness, but now you have light from the Lord. So live as people of light!

- A Jf's identity is not their occupation, family, race, country, political party, even their local church
- A Jf's identity is the light of Jesus.

Being the light of God means reorienting your life around the love of Jesus.

- You are freed from worrying about YOU... fighting for YOU.
- It means you are free to be second
- You are free to make your opinions, preferences, even RIGHTS second.
- No longer have to make decisions based on... "What does this mean for me, my family, my country..."
- You get to live for a higher purpose!
- You are free and empowered to always ask...
- **A Jf's main question is... What will shine Jesus' love the brightest?**

It's not always easy... never has been.

Look at the end of this account... **Matthew 1:24** **When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife.**

- Reputation ruined: Either he didn't care about his wife sleeping around or he had dishonored both families
 - Gave up family identity
- Seen to not care for cultural traditions and norms.
 - Gave up community identity
- Not what he had planned for his life

But it didn't stop him b/c he knew God had asked him to do something of eternal importance.

He was to play a major role in bringing the Light of Life to the dark world.

- Wasn't easy... But it was worth it.

He knew God was FOR him

That God had come for him

And that God was with him.

WE:

You are not alone in the dark...

God is For you

God has come for you

God is with you

Jesus removed the darkness that conceals the purpose of our lives...

This Christmas... **You are invited to be God's light to the world.**

Ask... **What will shine Jesus' love the brightest?**

What is there to stop you?

What is darkness?... it's nothing. Reality is, in the face of light it's weak, pathetic, non-existent.

The darkness in the world cannot withstand the light of Jesus radiating out of the followers of Jesus.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning the Word already existed. The Word was with God, and the Word was God.

He existed in the beginning with God. God created everything through him and nothing was created except through him.

The Word gave life to everything that was created, and his life brought light to everyone.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it.