

**Sermon Notes of  
Pastor Craig Kuhlman's Sermon on December 24, 2017**

**"Transformed Living:  
Walking in Light and Love of Incarnation (1 John 1)"**

**Fourth Sunday of Advent – Love**

**[In today's sermon (Fourth Sunday of Advent), "Transformed Living: Walking in Light and Love of Incarnation (1 John 1)" Pastor Craig Kuhlman shows that the birth of Jesus brought God's Light and Love to humanity in a dark world.]**

Notes

Introduction:

- Merry Christmas to each and every one of you.
- Christmas is a time of traditions, history and of doing things with family.
- One of the Christmas traditions of pastor Craig's family is that on Christmas Eve, they would watch Jimmy Stewart's "It's a Wonderful Life" before they opened at least one gift then.
- But now they don't do it anymore.
  
- Now there's a distinct history with Christmas itself as it relates to the Christian Church.
- Up until the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> century, Christmas was not observed.
- The Church primarily celebrated only Easter.
- The observance of Christmas started with the Church wanting to evangelize and to reach out and share the Gospel with the Celtic folks.
  
- The Celts had their own tradition and their lives revolved around the harvest season.
- And in the middle of that was the dead of winter – the winter solstice, which was the darkest point of the year.
- After the solstice, in their minds, the sun was reborn and then, the days became longer and longer.
- The Celts that all of this was related to their spiritual practice and disciplines that brought the sun back.
- And of course, in their belief, the sun was their life-giving force.
  
- And so when the Christian Church decided to reach out the Celts and share the Gospel of Jesus Christ, they saw some parallels as to what nature was telling humanity.
- You know the saying that "It's always the darkest before dawn"
- There are some very clear parallels as to what nature was telling us and the birth of Jesus – that out of the darkest moment came the re-birth and light.
- Christians knew this as the "Son" and the Celts knew it as the "Sun."
- Nature was showing the Church at that time and the not-yet-believers at that time what the Gospel declares.

- And so when we think of Christmas, we think about Light and Life, meaning and hope, and peace and joy and love – these are all related to the fact that Jesus became the Light of the world.
- At the time of greatest need, and at the time of greatest darkness, Jesus appeared through the Incarnation.
- Early on, there were four Gospel stories of Christmas that relate to the Light and Love of Jesus' Incarnation.
  - The first Gospel of Christmas comes out of the genealogy of Matthew.
  - Matthew's Gospel points out the lineage of Jesus.
  - Now there were 5 distinct stopping points in that lineage of male descendants.
  - At these stopping points, Matthew interjected women in that lineage.
  - In that lineage, there were 5 points of darkness in history and yet born into that darkness was the Light of Jesus Christ and the hope and the love that came out of that telling us that even in our most dark moments of life, Jesus does it all.
  - The second Gospel of Christmas tells us about the angels coming to the shepherds.
  - Now the shepherds at that time weren't listed in one of the 10 top careers.
  - Being a shepherd was a despised way of making a living, because it also had a certain odor that came with it.
  - Yet that was the group of people that the angles reached out to, in a positive way, to introduce the Light of the world.
  - Third Gospel of Christmas shows that those shepherds actually saw the baby Jesus in that manger.
  - And the fourth Gospel of Christmas is the prologue of John where he talks about the Word and the relationship of the Father and Son together before time that would ultimately produce the plan of Incarnation.
  - What we find is that when we celebrate Christmas with the Incarnation, it's tied to the Light of the world, because that's who Jesus was.
- So we see that Jesus came at a time that was the ultimate point of darkness.
- And so the message today and what we'll see from 1 John 1 that as a result of that Incarnation, today we walk in that same Light and Love of Jesus Christ.
- So, as we read 1 John 1, we will note some things.

From the beginning:

**1 John 1:1 (NASB), What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life –**

- So, the Incarnation was established first from the beginning of time.
- God planned that Jesus' Incarnation would be a part of our salvation.
- And that eternal life would come from that.

Eternal life:

**2) and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us –**

- So, we see that the Incarnation is the very message of the Gospel.
- The gospel message that was proclaimed shows that if Jesus hadn't done what He did, then we would still remain in that darkness.

Proclaiming the gospel and our fellowship with God completes our joy:

**3) what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4) These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.**

- So, "walking in Light" as John called it, or as Paul called it, "Walking in the Spirit", we find that the means toward a transformed life come once again out of the Holy Spirit.
- It's walking in that Light and that Love of Jesus Christ, walking in the Spirit, that we become changed.
- And in that process, we have fellowship with one another.

God is Light:

**5) This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. 6) If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;**

- How do we walk in darkness?
- First of all, as believers, we walk in Light because Jesus has declared us righteous.
- Yet there is also some involvement and response; there's also participation with the Holy Spirit.
- As we said before, if we try to do it on our own, it just doesn't work.
- So how do we walk in the Light – we stay yielded and surrender to the Father, Son and Spirit.
- We engage in conversation (prayer), curiosity Bible study) and contemplation (meditation) and then that Light lives through us because we know that through His incarnation, Jesus resides in us.

As we walk in the Light – we have fellowship with one another and are cleansed of all sin:

**7) but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8) If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.**

- Even though Jesus has declared us righteous by what He did, we know that there's a process of sanctification going on.
- So, because of our human nature, we're never going to escape sin – it's just a part of who we are.
- But we know that this is not a problem, because Jesus came to forgive us of our sins.
- And we also know that, through the Father's eyes, we are forgiven.

- And yet, through our own eyes, at times we stumble and we don't always do the right thing and we don't always say the right thing.
- But you know what – the Father, Son and Spirit never ever give up on us.
- And so we are encouraged to pick ourselves up and continue to walk in the Light and on the path of grace.
- So we never ever have to worry or be concerned that God does not love us always, unconditionally regardless of how screwed up we may think our lives are at times.
- Now that's not always easy to do.
- So we need to remind ourselves of who we are in the Father, Son and Spirit and what Jesus did, as the result of the Incarnation, including his death, resurrection & ascension, forever took care of our sin issue, even though we don't always live like we should.
- One of pastor Craig's psychology professor said that a lot of our problems come about because we spend too much time "shoulding" ourselves.
- We think, "We should have done this", "We should have done that."
- In God's eyes, He's taken care of "the shoulds."
- When Jesus came here and included all of humanity in Himself, the "shoulds" were taken care of.
- But at times, we "should" on ourselves, but we need to get beyond that.
- We can rest assured that through the Father's eyes, He sees every one of us through the love, life and light of Jesus Christ, which means we are righteous and we're forgiven and we will stay in that state until Jesus returns.
- Now the Holy Spirit is working in us, through the process Paul calls sanctification, meaning that we are being conformed daily and renewed daily to become more and more like Jesus Christ, our Savior.
- We know, in reality, our transformation won't happen fully or completely until we're glorified.
- And so we just have to keep on "keeping on."

Repentance declares our righteousness in Jesus:

**9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.**

- So John acknowledged the sin issue. And Jesus dealt with the sin issue.
- So when we confess our sins and repent of them, we are simply acknowledging that Jesus saved us.
- We then need to turn our minds around to acknowledge who we are – that we are redeemed, saved, and reconciled in the life and light of Jesus Christ.
- This is what Christmas and this time of Incarnation declares to us.
- And that's why Advent represents hope and peace and joy and love – we can't have these things without Jesus.

**1 John 1 (Mirror)**

**1 John 1:1, The Logos is the source; everything commences in him. The initial reports concerning him that have reached our ears, and which we indeed bore witness to with our eyes – to the point that we became irresistibly attracted – now captivates our gaze. In him we witnessed tangible life in its most articulate form.**

**2) The same life that was face to face with the Father from the beginning, has now dawned on us! The infinite life of the Father became visible before our eyes in a human person!**

- So we know that before time began, the Father, Son and Spirit had this face to face relationship and mutual love for each other that the Greeks called “perichoresis.”
- And it was in this perichoretic or ontological union, as it’s also been called, that the Father, Son and Spirit existed and that they then wanted to share their relationship with all of humanity.
- Now what has been given to us through the Incarnation is that same relationship that the eternal Creator had from the beginning of time.
- And the reason for this is because God loved us, not that we loved Him.
- All of this was initiated by the Father, Son and Spirit.

**3) We include you in this conversation; you are the immediate audience of the logic of God! This is the Word that always was; we saw him incarnate and witnessed his language as defining our lives. In the incarnation Jesus includes Mankind in the eternal friendship of the Father and the Son! This life now finds expression in an unreserved union.**

- That union, as a result of the Incarnation, was what bound humanity to Jesus and then that relationship relates us to the Father through the Spirit.
- Now we can believe it, accept it and then experience it or we can disbelieve it, not accept it, and not experience it.
- Whether we believe it or not doesn’t change one thing other than our experience.
- And so our role in proclaiming that Gospel to not-yet-believers is to point out who they are and whose they are and the relationship that exists between them and Jesus.

**4) What we enjoy equally belongs to you! I am writing this for your reference, so that joy may be yours in its most complete measure.**

**5) My conversation with you flows from the same source which illuminates this fellowship of union with the Father and the Son. This, then, is the essence of the message: God is radiant light and in him there exists not even a trace of obscurity or darkness at all.**

**6) This is the real deal! To live a life of pretense is such a waste of time! The truth has no competition. Truth inspires the poetry of friendship in total contrast to a fake, performance-based fellowship! Light is not threatened by darkness! Why say something with darkness as your reference?**

- And so living that transformed life then becomes the reason and the means for why Jesus came here and included us in the first place.
- Walking in the Light of Jesus is what changes us through the Spirit.

**7) We are invited to explore the dimensions of the same light that engulfs God; when we see the light in his light, fellowship ignites! In his light we understand how the blood of Jesus Christ is the removal of every stain of sin! The success of the cross celebrates our redeemed innocence!**

- As a result of the cross, which came about because of the Incarnation, God has declared us redeemed and innocent.
- Now, we don't always feel innocent, because there are times when we do things that don't make us innocent.
- We often say to ourselves, "I should have been more caring, I should have been more loving, or I should have been less focused on my humanity." Now there's room for that.
- There's room always to get better and grow out of who naturally we are.
- So, we need to get very comfortable with the fact that we are innocent in God's eyes because of what Jesus did for us.

**8) To claim innocence by our own efforts under the law of personal performance is to deceive ourselves and to deliberately ignore the truth. The truth about you does not mean that you now have to go into denial if you have done something wrong!**

- So, when we do something wrong, we don't need to deny that, if anything we need to understand that there will times when we mess up. That's just the nature of who we are.
- What God desires is relationship, fellowship.
- God wants to know that as we lean into our own problems, we also need to lean into that relationship which will take care of those problems.
- While we shouldn't deny we sometimes have problems, neither should we beat up on ourselves because of them.
- We need to repent, get back up on our feet, and acknowledge who we are in the Father, Son and Spirit and we move forward, walking and living in that Light and Love of the Incarnation.

**9) When we communicate what God says about our sins, we discover what he believes concerning our redeemed oneness and innocence! We are cleansed from every distortion we believed about ourselves! Likeness is redeemed!**

**10) If we judge ourselves innocent by the law of our own works, then we make Jesus Christ, and his word and blood communicate within us irrelevant.**

- We don't address our mistakes by what we do in a performance based system, because that denies what Jesus did for us.
- But what should do is acknowledge what Jesus has done for us and live out of that relationship with Him and acknowledge that we have been redeemed and made righteous by Jesus Christ.
- So, we need to move on and share that with others.

#### Conclusion:

- So what is our response to Jesus' Incarnation – it is to walk in the Light and Love of Jesus.
- And in that daily walk, we come across the paths of others and we share, we provide and we help and we live.

- It's that simple, but it's not always easy, because sometimes we let ourselves get in the way.
- And so we always have to remind ourselves that Jesus is the source, He's the Light, He is the One in whom we live and walk.
- And if we keep that focus day after day, sooner or later through that sanctification process, we will all achieve (what Paul said) "glorification" and live out for eternity that eternal life that's already been granted to us.
- Merry Christmas.

#### Communion by Assistant Pastor Fred Stevens:

- Maybe you've noticed that this Christmas season has created a lot of interesting traffic.
- When we went to the airport, the line to get off the freeway was longer than the runway for the planes to land.
- And the line at Trader Joe's was longer than Trader Joe's.
- That's because everyone is going somewhere to gather together with other people to fellowship, talk and converse.
- And of course people love to come together to eat.
- God has made us to love to eat and to love to come together to eat.
- God and the Incarnated Jesus came to fellowship with us, came to be with us and asks us to come together with Him.
- And there was food involved in Egypt at the time when the Passover was instituted.
- The Israelites came together and had that lamb and put the blood on the door to be protected by God.
- There was a time in the wandering in the wilderness when the Israelites were starving and hungry and cried out to God who gave them this unusual bread called manna, which He provided for them every day.
- And then at the end of Jesus' ministry, as he was about to leave, He desired to eat the Passover together with His disciples.
- And during that special meal, which we're about to celebrate, He made a very valuable point of being together with Him, fellowshiping with Him, consuming with Him, and actually consuming Him.
- As Jesus seeks to grasp all of us in His embrace, he asks us to remember Him and to consume Him through this ceremony, which we now call the Communion service.
- This is where we commune with Jesus, for He, indeed, is our food – He is the Bread from heaven who came down to us.
- Jesus is, indeed, our source of connection with the Father.
- He, indeed, is the One who calls us together and connects us together with each other.
- Jesus came to us, in the Incarnation, and asks always to come to Him every day and in everything we do.
- We need to eat and we need to consume Him.
- And we need to be in Him and Him in us.

- And so the lesson of the Communion is that He invites us to come to His table, to come and accept Him, to accept His sacrifice and give of ourselves in devotion to Him as a result.
- People then came forward to take the bread and cup back to their seats so everyone would be able to take Communion together.
- Once everyone returned to their seats, Communion prayer was offered.