

January 20, 2013  
Light!

### ***Let There Be Light!***

Genesis 1:1-5

#### **Opening words:**

How many people do you know struggle during the month of January? If you live in the state of Ohio, it feels like the longest month of the year. There is a variety of reasons. The days are long and cold, forcing us to live inside. The excitement of Christmas has been replaced by the arrival of tax forms. Spring feels a million miles away. Personally, the hardest thing about January is the darkness. During the month of January we receive only about nine and a half hours of light a day. That means we spend fourteen and a half hours a day in darkness. This fact is important. Psychologists tell us darkness is one of the reasons we grow depressed. How many people do you know struggle with depression? Light is important!

Today, I begin a new sermon series called *Light!* By the time we are done we will have looked at four different passages that deal with light. Today, I am going to look at the first mention of light in the Bible, Genesis 1:1-5. Let me call this message *Let there be light!*

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#### **Genesis 1:1-5**

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. 5 God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

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Where's the brightest place in the world? Do you have a guess? I was in Time Square several weeks ago. It is filled with many brightly colored signs. It could be the brightest place in the world but it isn't. London's business district is full of energy and light. It could be the brightest place in the world but it isn't. Mumbai, India is the largest city in the world. It could be the brightest city in the world but it isn't. Satellites tell us the brightest place in the world is Las Vegas, Nevada. Many people tell me I must go to there. It really isn't on my list. I don't gamble. I don't like shows. I don't like crowds and I really hate the heat. I may never go to Las Vegas, but it is the brightest place in the world. I am not surprised this church was not the brightest place in the world.

For years, I have walked down the halls of this building and turned lights on every Sunday morning. For years, you have followed behind me and turned the lights off. I know you are only trying to save money and that is the number one goal in the life of the church! However, nothing says "welcome" to visitors like a dark hall. Have you ever noticed they don't turn the lights off at the mall when you leave the department store?

Does anyone here miss the Christmas lights that used to decorate our neighborhoods? Kathryn and I would drive around to see all the lights. Some people spent large amounts of money to decorate their homes for the holiday. The season has now passed and the lights are gone. Kathryn and I stay at home because we don't care to look at the darkness.

The people who live behind me have a security light. It is motion-sensitive. I don't like it. Every time a small animal enters his yard it turns on. The brightness of that light disrupts my television viewing!

The other night I met a young couple here who is getting married in October. Brian and Chelsea walked past the external security lights by my office and entered the dark hall. We walked into the darker parlor and bumped into a chair. When I turned the lights on, the bride said, "That's better!" When I turned the lights on to see the sanctuary, she just smiled.

I tell you those random stories about light for one reason. Light is the main topic in the scripture lesson for today. Let us look at the passage together. We find ourselves in the first chapter of the Bible, the first chapter of Genesis. Tradition tells us Moses, the great law giver, wrote the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible. It is important that you know Genesis means "birth," "genealogy," or "history of origin." In other words, it is a book of beginnings. The title, Genesis, summarizes the entire book. The first verse tells us how the world began. *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.* Verse two tells us God created the heavens and the earth out of nothing. *The earth was formless and empty.* Verse three tells us the first thing God created on the first day of creation, light. *Let there be light and there was light.*

This is not the only place in the Bible the word light is used. The word light is used 272 times. Sometimes, light means something that glows. Sometimes, it means more. In the New Testament Paul uses the word light to symbolize the re-creation in Jesus. For example, Jesus said, "I am the light." In the Old Testament the word light means life or blessing. God knows what we often forget. Light is important.

Today, I want to remind you of the importance of light. I want to talk about two shocking things that light does. (They are shocking because there are only two, not three!) First, light generates life. I challenge you to grow your garden on the shadiest spot on your property. Plants need light to thrive. How difficult it is for life to exist in complete darkness. Second, light offers us security. How many of you are afraid of the dark? How many of you use a night light at your advanced age? So if you are ready to begin say, "**Amen!**" First, light makes life possible.

### **Life**

Several years ago, I was visiting someone in the hospital. They were in the intensive care unit. On my way out of ICU, I stuck my head into the family waiting room. I do this regularly. You would be surprised by who is there. On that day, I found a woman I knew. She was surrounded by her family. She gave me a hug and introduced me to her family. Everyone greeted me warmly, except one brother. He was having a hard time. He had bent his elbow a few times to ease the pain. They told me their other brother was a patient and things weren't going well. I asked them if I could pray with them.

They all said, "Yes!" except for the struggling brother. He looked at me and said, "No! What the hell has your God done for me?" The family apologized and I said, "I understand." I was not shocked. (I went to Harding; it takes more than a little profanity to run me off!) I wasn't mad at the man; I was sad for the man. God isn't *my* personal God; God is *our* God. Life is hard. How do you live life without God? How do you look at the creation and not believe in God? It is so diverse, creative and sophisticated. Consider these facts with me. You can see the fingerprints of God in these five facts:

Did you know the Hubble Telescope is helping scientists estimate there are 35,000,000,000 galaxies out there? (That figure is conservative.)

Did you know a caterpillar has 228 muscles in its head?

Did you know the average elm tree has 6 million leaves on it?

Did you know your heart generates enough pressure to shoot blood 30 feet?

Did you know there are 3,000 different trees in an average square mile in the Amazon rain forest?

God said, "Let there be light!" and there was life! And all of God's people said, **Amen!** Second, light offers us security.

### **Security**

Dave and Tracey Meeks had been married for four years, when he was diagnosed with a malignant inoperable brain tumor. Over the next three and a half years, he lost his ability to communicate and think. In time, that brain tumor took his life. Reflecting back on those challenging days, Tracey said, "Going through this stripped me of everything I thought I knew about God." How do you believe in a loving, merciful God in the midst of hardship? Tracey Meeks's story is not unique. Our understanding of God is challenged when life is hard.

You know it is true. Each one of us knows of someone who is struggling at this moment. We have witnessed it a million times. For many, faith is conditional. It is easy to believe in a loving, merciful God when you are standing on a sunny beach. It is easy to believe in a loving, merciful God when you are holding a newborn baby. It is easy to believe in a loving, merciful God when you are holding the hand of a new love. It is not so easy to believe in a loving, merciful God after another school shooting. It is not so easy to believe in a loving, merciful God after another "hurricane of the ages". It is not so easy to believe in a loving, merciful God as you holding the hand of a dying loved one. Our faith is tested when life is hard. What is your understanding of God?

Dave and Tracy's story reminds us of the fact that life is hard. Every day we play the part of Job. Every day Satan wants us to denounce our faith, but we are not going to do it. The reason is simple. We have the light of the world, Jesus! In the end, we are going to win. We are going to heaven and be reunited with all our loved ones. When you are in heaven you may want to look for Dave and Tracey. Your understanding of God *must* include Jesus, the light of the world! God said "let there be light" and there was security! And all of God's people said, **Amen!**

Do you know where the darkest place in the world is located? According to satellites, North Korea is the darkest place in the world. It is the darkest place on several levels. Their neighbors, Japan and South Korea, are economically successful.

They are supported by China. They have money, but their government spends it on military weapons. There is very little left for common people. I never want to go to North Korea. No country upsets me more than North Korea. I don't want to see the darkness of their society.

I need the light and so do you. God said, "Let there be light" and there was light. In the light we have life! In the light we have security! In the light we have Jesus! Albert Einstein once said, "*God did not create evil. Just as darkness is the absence of light, evil is the absence of God.*" And all of God's people said "**Amen!**"