

010525 Sermon "New Year with the Light of Life" John 1:1-4

Happy New Year! A new year is a fresh start, a chance to think about what really matters and to look to Jesus for hope and guidance. It's fitting to start our year with the powerful opening of the Gospel of John, which reminds us of the eternal nature of Christ and His light that shines in the darkness.

The Gospel of John starts in a big, important way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This shows us who Jesus really is. Unlike Matthew, Mark, and Luke, which start with the birth of Jesus or His baptism, John opens with a cosmic declaration of Jesus' identity. John takes us back to the very beginning, echoing the opening words of Genesis. This philosophical introduction reminds us that Jesus is more than a historical figure—He is the eternal Word of God. He was there in the beginning, before anything was created. He is God and the Creator of everything.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the three Synoptic Gospels. The word "synoptic" means "see-together," and these first three Gospels present the life of Jesus in pretty much the same format. They focus more on what Jesus taught and did—His parables, miracles, and interactions with people. John's Gospel, on the other hand, focuses more on who Jesus is, emphasizing His divine nature and relationship with God.

The Bible has four Gospels, and each one teaches us something special about Jesus: Matthew shows that Jesus came from Abraham and David, saying He is the promised Savior. Mark tells us about Jesus coming from Nazareth, showing He came as a servant. Luke says Jesus came from Adam, showing He is the perfect human. John tells us Jesus came from heaven, proving He is God. A key verse for understanding the Gospel of John is found at the end of the book: "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name" (John 20:31).

Last Sunday we had a baptism service. It is a time of grace for not only for the person being baptized, but also for all of us who have witnessed the baptism as a congregation to reaffirm our own commitment to God. In a baptism service, many questions are asked and answered. These are important questions that form the basis of a Christian's life. Among the questions asked in the baptism was, "Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior, put your whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as your Lord, in union with the church which Christ has opened to people of all ages, nations, and races?" The reason we, as

Christians, believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior is because, as John chapter 1 tells us today, Jesus, the Word, the Logos, is God.

John 1:4 tells us, "In him was life, and that life was the light of all people." Jesus came to bring life and light to a world shrouded in darkness. As we reflect on the past year and the challenges we faced, let us remember that the light of Christ continues to shine, guiding us and giving us hope. But this grand vision isn't meant to stay abstract.

The question for us is, how does this truth change our daily reality? How can we specifically experience Jesus, the light of life, in our own lives? When we believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, does our daily life miraculously improve? Or does our daily life instantly transform into ease and perfection? Not necessarily.

However, through many stories in the Bible and many examples of people who believed in Jesus as their Lord and Savior over the past two thousand years, we can confirm that as we believe in God's word and obey God's will, our lives definitely change. As we build a close relationship with God, light shines in our relationships near and far.

At times when shadows are cast over my life, I have experienced countless times that when I meditate on God's Word, believe it, and try to obey it, God's light shines upon my life. I have clearly experienced—and am still convinced—that as we draw closer to God, our lives transform.

For example, the Apostle Paul writes in Colossians 3:12-14 that we are to clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. These are not just abstract virtues; they are the building blocks of relationships that reflect the light of Christ. The light of Jesus is not just philosophical; it is deeply practical. When His light shines into our hearts, it illuminates the way we relate to others. This includes the most personal and significant connections: with your loved ones, spouses, children, and grandchildren.

As we believe in God's Word and obey God's will, our hearts are reshaped. We become more patient, forgiving, and loving—qualities that light up our relationships. Through Christ, we learn to love sacrificially, just as He loved his Church. As we reflect Christ's character, we become examples of faith, hope, and love for the next generation. Relationships of light extend beyond family, shaping friendships, church fellowship, and our role in the world.

As John writes, the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it (John 1:5). When we embody this light, we bring healing and hope to the brokenness around us.

To conclude, let's reflect on the hymn "Shine, Jesus, Shine."

Shine, Jesus, shine,

Fill this land with the Father's glory.

Blaze, Spirit, blaze,

Set our hearts on fire.

This hymn beautifully captures the essence of John's message—Jesus, the Light of the World, shining in and through us. As we sing this hymn, let us pray for His light to fill our lives and our world, transforming us and bringing hope and renewal in this New Year. As we sing these words, may we be reminded of the light of Christ that guides us, and may we carry this light into the world, shining His love and grace in all we do.

Dear beloved sisters and brothers in Christ, as we enter this New Year, let us commit to walking in the light of Christ. Fairfield Grace, may God's grace, peace, goodness, and mercy be with you, your family, your business, your studies, and with the lives of your children. To Christ be thanks and praise. Amen.