

## Christmas Eve 2025 John 1, The Light that Found Us

While the Gospels of Matthew and Luke tell us the familiar facts of Christmas— shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary and Joseph—John tells us what all of that *means*. Which is so important because with the trappings of Christmas, and the familiarity of the story it's easy for all of it to get lost in the sauce. So tonight we want to explore- what does Christmas really mean? It means three things we want to explore.

**#1 Christmas means that God came down to find us.** v.14 *The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.* The Word- the eternal creator God himself...came down from heaven in his incarnation (becoming human) to be with us. And this turns upside down what everyone thought about how to reach God. Let me illustrate what I mean by that.

As some of you know, I used to be into mountaineering. **[Picture of Me]** And let me tell you— high-altitude mountaineering is *not* just a long walk up a hill. You have to train your body, master breathing techniques, know your equipment, and study routes so you don't get lost. And then there's the climb itself—cold, wind, exhaustion, danger, unknown obstacles. You push yourself to the absolute edge of what your body and mind can handle. Sounds fun, right? People used to ask me, "Why would you do that?" And honestly... I don't know. Something was wrong with me.

But here's why I tell you that. A lot of people think about spirituality—or religion— like a mountain climb.

If I work hard enough...

if I discipline myself enough...

if I do the right religious things...

if I level up in my religious organization high enough...

eventually, I'll reach the summit—and *there*, I'll find God, I'll find salvation.

That's how most religions work—climb high enough, perform well enough, and maybe God will meet you at the top. But Christmas tells us something radically different. Here in John 1, we see the first thing that Christmas means: **#1 It means that God came down to find us.** The heart of Christianity is not about humanity climbing up to God. It's about God coming down the mountain to us.

John continues to show us what he did when he came down.

**#2 Christmas means light overcomes darkness.** Notice the metaphor that John uses 7x throughout this passage- light and darkness. **5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Or verse **9 The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.**

Anyone familiar with the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah would have immediately recognized John was making a connection to *Isaiah 9:2 The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

This metaphor of light and darkness has two primary components. The first, to talk about light, has an intellectual component—that light is truth, and darkness is ignorance, deception, or error. We use this metaphor this way still- When you come downstairs in the morning and there are cheerios all over the floor in the kitchen- and you ask your kids- “Can someone shed some light on what happened here?” Or we say, “Don’t leave me in the dark.” So light is knowledge of the truth.

But there’s not just an intellectual component when the Bible talks about light. There’s also a moral component—that light is moral purity and darkness is evil. When Isaiah is confronting his people about their moral perversity and the injustice they perpetrate, and he says their problem is “they call evil good and they call good evil. They exchange darkness for light and light for darkness.” So he parallels those: light is good, darkness is sin. Again we use light and darkness this way today. Light is truth, and light is moral purity. Darkness is deception or error, and it’s also moral evil.

So when John says that Jesus came as light into darkness this is what he means. That Jesus came as the embodiment of truth and absolute purity and goodness into a world, into a humanity living in ignorance and deception, and moral sin and evil. And the light not only exposes the darkness but overcomes it. And that light now comes to us. Leads us to

**#3 Christmas means that Jesus came on a Rescue Mission.** *12 Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God*

He came to bring his children home. Jesus came on a rescue mission because humanity was not only lost in darkness off the trailhead in a snow storm, but injured, incapacitated and in grave danger on the side of a cliff. When people are truly lost on a mountain—injured, exhausted, trapped in the dark—no one says, “Just climb harder.”

God couldn’t just stay on that heavenly mountaintop and shout down at us “do better!” The bible is clear that we are totally incapable in ourselves to save ourselves from our spiritual situation.

Rescue only happens when someone is willing to come *down* into the danger, step into the cold, enter the storm, and also equipped to do so, to have within themselves the ability to seek and rescue those in danger and carry them to safety.

And that’s what Christmas is. Not us searching for God in the heights— but God coming down to seek and to save us.

If you want to see what God’s rescue mission looks like in real life, let me tell you about a man named Zaccheaus in Luke 19. We learn that Zaccheaus was a chief tax collector and was very

wealthy. Now we aren't too fond of the IRS today, but being Jewish tax collector was about the worst thing you could be called. Tax collectors worked for Rome, the occupying enemy. They were notorious for extortion and corruption. They were considered traitors, thieves, and religiously unclean. And he wasn't just any tax collector, he was the chief tax collector. The fact that he was so wealthy likely indicates that he was exploiting his own people.

But Jesus seeks him out from the crowds, calls him by name, and invites himself to his home. During his visit, Jesus brings light- truth and goodness into a dark place of ignorance, deception, and sin that Zacchaeus was living in. In this encounter, Zacchaeus is changed, he repents and gives his life to Jesus. Jesus responds, *"Today salvation has come to this house. **10** For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost."*

Zacchaeus was lost morally, lost socially, lost spiritually, and incapable of fixing himself. Which makes him the perfect candidate to receive the light of Jesus' rescue.

Friends, all of us start out as Zacchaeus. We are lost because of our own self-centeredness, and self-deception. Like Zacchaeus we often hide behind our success, or security, or some other identity. Which makes us the perfect candidate for an encounter with Jesus. For the light to come into our darkness and rescue us, and change us. Jesus came in his incarnation to seek and save you and me.

**So how does Jesus actually rescue us?** The light that entered the world at Christmas didn't come just to shine *around* our darkness—but to step *into* it.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost, and He knew that rescuing us would cost Him everything. On the cross, Jesus entered the deepest darkness we know—sin, guilt, shame, brokenness, even death itself. The One who is light took our darkness upon Himself. He was treated as we deserved, so we could be forgiven and brought home.

But the rescue didn't end there.

Three days later, Jesus rose from the grave. The darkness did not win. Death did not have the final word. The light was not extinguished—it overcame the darkness.

That's what forgiveness means. It means your past doesn't define you. Your failures don't have the final say. Your sin is not stronger than His grace. Because Jesus died and rose again, anyone who trusts Him is rescued—out of darkness and into light.

This is why Christmas matters. The baby in the manger came on a rescue mission. And that rescue reaches us not because we climbed our way to God, but because God came all the way to us.

Tonight, the light still shines in the darkness. And it's still calling people by name.

The light of Jesus came to rescue me in my darkness when I was 18, lost in my own self-centeredness, habits I couldn't break, and shame held me captive. He met me there.

And if you have not yet trusted Jesus as your savior, he has come to meet you here today.