

Opening Summary

Jesus Christ is not merely a giver of life or a teacher who points toward truth. He is the Life and the true Light, and darkness cannot comprehend or overcome Him. The sermon calls us beyond knowing facts about Jesus to receiving Christ by faith, walking openly in His light, and bearing faithful witness so that others hear the gospel and look to Him. Through the lenses of Hungry, Humble, and Teachable discipleship and Determined Discipleship Through Relationship, believers are called to stay near Christ, bring hidden darkness into His light, encourage one another toward holiness, and testify clearly that life is found in Jesus alone.

Doctrine

We believe that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God and Creator, has life in Himself and is the true Light of mankind. Fallen humanity lives in spiritual darkness and cannot save itself, but those who receive Christ and believe in His name are graciously given the right to become children of God. This new birth is not produced by ancestry, human effort, religious works, or another person's decision, but is the gracious work of God, received through faith and resulting in a transformed life of holiness, good works, fellowship, and witness. Those who have received Christ do not become the source of light or life; rather, they bear witness to Christ, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit, so that others may hear and believe.

Scripture anchors: John 1:4-13; John 14:6; Ephesians 2:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:6.

Opening Prayer

Father, You are the Creator and giver of every good thing, and we ask You to direct our hearts toward Your Son. Make us hungry for truth rather than satisfied with mere information, humble enough to let Your Word expose what we would rather hide, and teachable when You correct and reshape us.

Lord Jesus, You are the Life and the true Light. Thank You that salvation is not found in our performance, religious knowledge, or ability to make ourselves acceptable. Give us grace to receive from Your fullness, to trust Your finished work, to walk openly with You, and to point others toward You rather than toward ourselves.

Holy Spirit, illuminate the Word, convict us of sin, expose darkness without allowing us to hide in shame, and lead us into repentance, faith, holiness, and obedience. Form the character of Christ in us and give us courage to bear witness with both holy lives and clear words. Teach us determined discipleship through relationship so that we bear one another's burdens, speak truth in love, and continually lead one another toward Christ. Amen.

1. T1: Jesus Is the Life

Narrative Summary

John begins not by directing us inward to discover the meaning of life but by directing us to Jesus Christ. The sermon emphasized that Jesus does not merely possess a quantity of life that He can distribute. Life is in Him. The One through whom all creation came into being is also the One in whom sinners find eternal life. This gives John 1:4 its enormous theological weight: created things are dependent, but the Son is not presented as another dependent creature. He is the eternal Word through whom creation received its existence.

The sermon contrasted the modern world's enormous storehouse of information with its inability to answer ultimate questions. Humanity can describe complex processes in DNA, cells, proteins, and biological systems, yet knowing how something functions does not by itself answer why life exists, where it ultimately comes from, or what it is for. John's answer is not first a mechanism or a theory. John points to a Person: "In Him was life."

This truth reaches beyond physical creation to salvation. Jesus identifies Himself in John 14:6 not merely as someone who knows the way, speaks truth, or distributes life. He is the way, the truth, and the life. Therefore discipleship does not begin with self-improvement. It begins with dependence upon Christ. Hungry disciples keep coming to Him because life is in Him. Humble disciples admit that they cannot manufacture spiritual life. Teachable disciples allow Christ's Word to correct every competing idea of where meaningful and eternal life is found.

Scriptures Used

John 1:4-5; John 14:6; Romans 1:20.

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** What is the difference between saying that Jesus gives life and saying, as John does, that life is "in Him"?
2. **Heart-Level Conviction:** Where are you most tempted to look for meaning, identity, security, or satisfaction apart from Christ?
3. **Relational Application:** How could your relationships help you and others remain dependent upon Christ rather than quietly drifting toward self-sufficiency?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** What would it look like for you to approach Christ this week with greater hunger for Him, humility about your dependence, and teachability under His Word?
5. **Obedience Step:** What is one concrete habit, distraction, or substitute source of "life" that you need to put in its proper place so that you deliberately seek Christ first?

2. T2: Jesus Is the True Light and Darkness Cannot Overcome Him

Narrative Summary

John moves from life to light. The sermon explained the richness of the word translated “comprehend” in John 1:5, noting that the idea can involve grasping, seizing, or overcoming. The central point was that darkness neither properly understands the Light nor succeeds in conquering it. Jesus does not need to shine more brightly because darkness presents Him with an equal opposing power. Christ is the true Light, and darkness loses when He shines.

The deeper problem is therefore not a shortage of information. John 3:19-21 explains that fallen people love darkness because their deeds are evil. A person may possess facts about Jesus and still resist Jesus. Biblical knowledge, religious vocabulary, or outward morality cannot substitute for coming to Christ Himself. This is why the sermon moved from doctrine to personal examination: Is there anything we are protecting from Christ’s light because we do not want it exposed?

The application of 1 John 1 is relational as well as individual. Walking in the light means abandoning the patterns of hiding, pretending, excusing sin, and making peace with darkness. Believers bring sin into the truth of God’s presence, repent, receive cleansing in Christ, and walk honestly with one another. Determined Discipleship Through Relationship means that Christian fellowship becomes a place where burdens are carried, confession is safe but sin is not excused, truth is spoken in love, and brothers and sisters help one another continue toward holiness.

Doctrinal clarification: The sermon’s strong warning about walking in the light should not be understood to mean that our obedience earns or causes the cleansing power of Christ’s blood. In 1 John 1:5-2:2, walking in the light describes the life of genuine fellowship with God: believers do not pretend to be sinless but confess their sins and depend upon Christ. The ground of cleansing is Christ and His blood; walking in the light is the fruit and evidence of life with Him, not a meritorious cause of forgiveness. Ephesians 2:8-10 preserves the same order: salvation is by grace, and good works follow as God’s workmanship.

Scriptures Used

John 1:5; John 3:19-21; 1 John 1:5-7.

Direct Speaker Quotes

Pastor Daren: “The problem isn’t that the light failed to shine, The problem is that fallen hearts love darkness.”

Pastor Daren: “So we have to ask ourselves, am I coming into Christ’s light or am I protecting something I would rather leave in darkness?”

Pastor Daren: “Life with Jesus is life in the light.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** According to John 1 and John 3, why is humanity's problem deeper than simply lacking enough information?
2. **Heart-Level Conviction:** Is there a sin, fear, habit, wound, attitude, or relationship you are tempted to keep hidden from Christ's light?
3. **Relational Application:** What would honest, grace-filled fellowship look like in a relationship where you need help walking out of darkness?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** How does hunger for holiness, humility to confess sin, and teachability under Scripture protect us from pretending that darkness is light?
5. **Obedience Step:** What specifically will you bring into the light through repentance, prayer, confession to God, and, where appropriate, honest conversation with a mature believer?

3. T3: Believers Are Witnesses to the Light, Not the Light

Narrative Summary

John 1:6-8 introduces John the Baptist by deliberately distinguishing him from Jesus. Jesus eternally “was.” John “came” as a man sent by God. John was not the Light, could not regenerate sinners, could not forgive sin, and could not save anyone. His assignment was to testify about the One who can. The goal of the witness was not admiration for John but faith in Christ.

The sermon applied this distinction directly to Christian witness. Believers are not responsible to manufacture spiritual life in another person. We cannot repent for someone else, perform enough works to save someone else, or make our personality impressive enough to overcome a spiritually dead heart. That relieves us of a burden God never assigned to us. God gives life. Our responsibility is faithful testimony.

At the same time, the sermon rejected a passive understanding of witness. Christian conduct matters. Kindness, generosity, service, love of neighbor, holiness, and good works should display God’s transforming grace. Yet these works should not leave people permanently guessing about their source. The witness eventually speaks. People need to hear who Jesus is, why He came, what He accomplished, why sinners need Him, and why they should repent and believe. The Christian witness therefore joins a transformed life to clear gospel words.

This is especially important for Determined Discipleship Through Relationship. Evangelism is not merely a program. God places people around us in families, neighborhoods, friendships, workplaces, and churches. A humble witness does not make the relationship about personal impressiveness. A hungry witness wants others to know Christ. A teachable witness grows in the ability to explain the gospel accurately, lovingly, patiently, and courageously.

Scriptures Used

John 1:6-8; Matthew 3:2; Acts 1:8; Isaiah 43:10; Philippians 2:15-16; Matthew 5:14-16.

Direct Speaker Quotes

Pastor Daren: “The witness is not the light. The witness points people to the light so that they may believe.”

Pastor Daren: “Our job is to witness and point to Jesus who is a life and a light.”

Pastor Daren: “Eventually, the witness of the light, we use words. In fact, brothers and sisters, we have to use words.”

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** What is the difference between being a witness to the Light and acting as though we are responsible to create spiritual life in another person?
2. **Heart-Level Conviction:** Does fear of rejection, embarrassment, lack of knowledge, or desire for approval keep you from speaking clearly about Jesus?
3. **Relational Application:** Who has God already placed in your ordinary relationships who needs more than your kindness and may need to hear why you follow Christ?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** How can we remain hungry for people to know Christ while staying humble about our inability to save them and teachable about becoming better witnesses?
5. **Obedience Step:** Identify one person and one specific opportunity in which you can clearly and lovingly testify about Jesus rather than leaving that person to guess the reason for your hope.

4. T4: The True Light Is Rejected by Many but Received Through Faith

Narrative Summary

John presents one of the great tragedies of the incarnation: the Creator entered the world He made, yet the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. The sermon especially noted Israel's covenant privileges, but the rejection exposes a broader human condition. The problem is not simply insufficient religious education. Fallen hearts can possess Scripture, speak religious language, practice outward morality, and still refuse the One to whom Scripture points.

John 5:39-40 becomes a searching warning. The religious leaders studied the Scriptures because they believed eternal life was found there, yet Jesus said those very Scriptures testified about Him and they were unwilling to come to Him for life. Scripture rightly read leads us to Christ. Religious activity becomes dangerous when it is used as a substitute for receiving the Christ whom the Bible reveals.

The sermon's statement that "religion cannot give me life" should therefore be understood as a rejection of works-righteousness and Christless religiosity, not as a rejection of biblical worship, doctrine, church life, obedience, or the ordinary means God uses to disciple His people. The error is not Scripture, church, obedience, or doctrine. The error is trusting those things as a substitute for Christ or treating religious performance as the ground of salvation.

Yet rejection is not the end of John's message. John 1:12 begins with hope: those who receive Christ and believe in His name are given the right to become children of God. Saving faith is more than acknowledging that Jesus existed or admiring Him as a teacher. It receives the true Christ, trusting His person, authority, identity, and saving work.

Scriptures Used

John 1:9-12; John 3:19-21; John 5:39-40.

Direct Speaker Quotes

Pastor Daren: "The Creator entered his creation and the creation didn't recognize him."

Pastor Daren: "Brothers and sisters, religion cannot give me life. Only Christ can."

Pastor Daren: "There is hope for people in darkness. The light has come."

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** How can a person know Bible facts or practice religion and still refuse the Christ to whom Scripture points?
2. **Heart-Level Conviction:** Where might you be tempted to rely on church involvement, theological knowledge, morality, family background, or ministry activity rather than personally resting in Christ?
3. **Relational Application:** How can we help one another distinguish genuine faith in Christ from merely knowing Christian language or participating in Christian culture?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** What would it look like to remain hungry for Christ Himself, humble about the limits of our knowledge, and teachable whenever Scripture confronts merely outward religion?
5. **Obedience Step:** What will you do to move from merely knowing something true about Jesus to actively trusting, following, worshiping, or speaking about Him?

5. T5: New Birth and Adoption Are God's Gracious Work

Narrative Summary

John 1:12-13 brings the sermon to its soteriological center. Those who receive Christ and believe in His name are given the right to become children of God. The language of "given" matters. Adoption is not owed to sinners, inherited from Christian parents, achieved through natural power, purchased through works, or bestowed because another human being wills it. The right to become God's child is graciously given in Christ.

Verse 13 then explains the source beneath the believer's response. The new birth is "of God." The sermon strongly emphasized that sinners genuinely repent and believe, but neither repentance nor faith provides grounds for boasting as though salvation originated in human superiority. This fits Ephesians 2:8-10: salvation is by grace through faith, not as a result of works, and the saved person becomes God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works God prepared.

This protects both grace and obedience. Grace does not make faith unreal. Faith truly receives Christ. Repentance truly turns from sin. Good works truly matter. Holiness truly matters. But these are never transformed into a ladder by which sinners climb into God's family. God makes alive, God gives grace, God adopts, and then His workmanship walks in the good works He prepared.

This doctrine also creates humble confidence in evangelism. We faithfully proclaim Christ because God is able to do what we cannot. We do not manipulate people into the kingdom. We preach Christ, call people to repentance and faith, pray for the Spirit's work, love patiently, and trust God for the increase. This is both determined and relational discipleship because grace produces people who depend upon God while faithfully investing in others.

Scriptures Used

John 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:8-10; Philippians 2:15-16.

Direct Speaker Quotes

Pastor Daren: "The eternal son brings adopted sons and daughters into the family. It's his work. It's not ours."

Pastor Daren: "New birth is of God. It is the will of God."

Pastor Daren: "You're not saved because of the work that you've done or because you've cleaned your life up."

Discussion and Reflection Questions

1. **Understanding:** According to John 1:12-13, what is the relationship between receiving Christ, believing in His name, becoming God's child, and being born of God?
2. **Heart-Level Conviction:** Where are you tempted either to take credit for God's grace or to measure your standing with Him by your recent performance?
3. **Relational Application:** How should God's sovereign grace change the way we evangelize, disciple, correct, encourage, and pray for other people?
4. **Hungry, Humble, Teachable:** How does new birth make us hungry for God's grace, humble about our inability to save ourselves, and teachable as the Spirit sanctifies us?
5. **Obedience Step:** What good work, act of holiness, reconciliation, service, generosity, or witness has God placed before you that you can now walk in as His workmanship rather than trying to earn His acceptance?

Group Prayer

Begin by asking the group to sit quietly before the Lord and invite the Holy Spirit to use the Word to expose darkness and renew the mind. Encourage people to pray from dependence rather than performance, moving from old patterns of hiding, self-reliance, fear, and works-righteousness toward the new life God gives in Christ.

Pray together around these themes:

- **Christ our Life:** Father, expose every place where we seek identity, satisfaction, security, approval, or meaning apart from Your Son. Teach us to believe that life is in Christ.
- **Christ our Light:** Ask the Spirit to expose hidden sin gently but truthfully. Pray for repentance without self-justification, and confidence in the sufficiency of Christ's blood.
- **Fellowship in the Light:** Pray for relationships in which believers can confess sin, carry burdens, speak truth in love, forgive, encourage holiness, and refuse both condemnation and compromise.
- **Hunger:** Ask God to create deeper desire for Scripture, prayer, holiness, worship, fellowship, and communion with Christ.
- **Humility:** Confess that we cannot save ourselves, sanctify ourselves by sheer willpower, or regenerate anyone else.
- **Teachability:** Ask the Holy Spirit to correct cherished assumptions, habits, or interpretations whenever they conflict with Scripture.
- **Witness:** Pray by name for unbelieving family members, friends, neighbors, and coworkers. Ask God for open doors and clear, courageous gospel words.
- **Holy Living:** Ask the Spirit to make Christ's character visible through love, generosity, purity, kindness, truthfulness, patience, and good works.
- **Grace and New Birth:** Thank the Father that salvation leaves no room for boasting. Ask Him to grant repentance and faith to those who remain in darkness.
- **Determined Discipleship Through Relationship:** Pray that no one in the group would attempt to follow Christ in isolation. Ask God to make the group a community where people deliberately help one another stay near the Light.

Leader questions for compassionate prayer: Where do you most need Christ's light rather than advice? Is there a burden you have been carrying alone that trusted believers could help you carry? Is there someone for whom you have almost stopped praying? What kind of courage do you need in order to testify about Jesus? Where do you need the Spirit to replace an old pattern of thinking with the truth of Christ?

Closing Prayer

Father, thank You that life did not originate in us and salvation does not depend upon our ability to rescue ourselves. You have given Your Son, and in Him is life.

Lord Jesus, You are the true Light. Keep us near You. Where Your light has exposed sin, give us grace to repent rather than hide. Where we are weak, teach us to depend upon Your finished work. Where we have remained silent, give us courage to testify faithfully.

Holy Spirit, renew our minds through the Word. Conform us increasingly to Christ so that His holiness, love, patience, truth, and mercy become visible in us. Make us hungry for Christ, humble before God and one another, and teachable under Scripture. Build determined disciples who refuse isolation, carry one another's burdens, walk in the light together, and lovingly point others toward Jesus.

Father, make our lives and relationships faithful testimonies that there is life in Christ and light in Christ. We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Challenge

Each day, deliberately come into Christ's light by asking Him to expose one attitude, desire, habit, or relationship that needs repentance and renewed obedience. Then identify one person God has placed in your relational world and move beyond merely being a "nice Christian" by speaking one clear truth about who Jesus is or what He has done. Stay hungry, humble, and teachable, remembering that your responsibility is faithful witness while God alone gives life.

Daily Devotionals

Day 1: Life Is in Christ

Narrative: We often ask Jesus to improve the life we have already designed. John gives us something far greater. Life itself is in Christ. Our deepest need is not merely assistance from Jesus but Jesus Himself.

Scripture Focus: John 1:4-5; John 14:6.

Practical Challenge: Notice one place where you instinctively look for life apart from Christ. Deliberately turn that desire into prayer and seek Christ before reaching for the substitute.

Prayer Prompt: Lord Jesus, You are my Life. Teach me to stop asking created things to give what can only be found in You.

Day 2: Come Into the Light

Narrative: Darkness survives through hiding. Christ's light calls us out of pretending and into truthful fellowship with God. The believer's hope is not that no sin remains, but that we can bring sin honestly before the One whose blood cleanses His people.

Scripture Focus: John 3:19-21; 1 John 1:5-7.

Practical Challenge: Name one area you have been tempted to hide, excuse, minimize, or protect. Confess it to God and, where wisdom calls for it, seek prayer and accountability from a trustworthy believer.

Prayer Prompt: Holy Spirit, expose darkness in me and give me humility to repent, confidence in Christ, and courage to walk honestly with others.

Day 3: You Are a Witness

Narrative: John the Baptist knew that he was not the Light. That freed him to point beyond himself. We do not need to be impressive enough to save anyone. We need to be faithful enough to tell the truth about Jesus.

Scripture Focus: John 1:6-8; Acts 1:8.

Practical Challenge: Write down the name of one person who needs Christ. Pray for that person and prepare one or two clear sentences explaining why Jesus matters to you.

Prayer Prompt: Holy Spirit, give me power and courage to point away from myself and clearly toward Christ.

Day 4: Do Not Substitute Religion for Christ

Narrative: The religious leaders knew Scripture yet refused the One to whom Scripture testified. Good theology, church attendance, ministry, and moral discipline are precious when they bring us nearer to Christ, but none of them can replace Christ.

Scripture Focus: John 5:39-40; John 1:9-12.

Practical Challenge: Ask yourself whether any Christian activity has become a substitute for personal trust, prayer, worship, or obedience to Jesus. Turn that activity back toward its proper purpose of knowing and honoring Christ.

Prayer Prompt: Father, protect me from possessing Christian knowledge while my heart drifts from Your Son. Bring me continually to Christ for life.

Day 5: Born of God for Good Works

Narrative: New birth leaves no room for boasting. God gives life, God gives grace, and God makes His people His workmanship. Yet grace does not produce passivity. Those made alive in Christ walk in the good works God prepared.

Scripture Focus: John 1:12-13; Ephesians 2:8-10.

Practical Challenge: Do one intentional work of love, service, generosity, reconciliation, or witness without using it to prove your worth. Receive your identity from Christ, then obey from gratitude.

Prayer Prompt: Father, thank You that salvation is Your gift. Help me walk faithfully in the works You have prepared without confusing obedience with earning Your grace.

Key Verses

John 1:4-13, NASB95

- 4 In Him was life, and the life was the Light of men.
5 The Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.
6 There came a man sent from God, whose name was John.
7 He came as a witness, to testify about the Light, so that all might believe through him.
8 He was not the Light, but he came to testify about the Light.
9 There was the true Light which, coming into the world, enlightens every man.
10 He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.
11 He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.
12 But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,
13 who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

Life Group Leader Note: This is the sermon's controlling text. It supplies all five major movements: Christ as Life, Christ as Light, John as witness, rejection and reception, and new birth as the work of God.

Ephesians 2:8-10, NASB95

- 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God;
9 not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.
10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

Life Group Leader Note: The sermon used this passage to protect the gracious character of regeneration and salvation while still affirming the necessity and goodness of obedience. Good works follow God's saving grace rather than purchasing it.

Philippians 2:15-16, NASB95

- 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,
16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Life Group Leader Note: This text connects identity as God's children with visible holiness and holding fast the word of life. The sermon used it to show that believers shine because Christ's life and truth are at work in them.

Matthew 5:14-16, NASB95

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden;
15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand,
and it gives light to all who are in the house.
16 Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good
works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.”

Life Group Leader Note: The sermon used Jesus’ teaching to connect good works with witness. The goal is not that others glorify the believer but that they see God’s work and glorify the Father.

2 Corinthians 4:6, NASB95

For God, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

Life Group Leader Note: This passage supplied the sermon’s concluding hope. Christian witness does not begin with trying harder to shine; it begins with God shining into hearts through Christ.

Supporting Verses

- **John 14:6:** Jesus identifies Himself exclusively as the way, the truth, and the life.
- **Romans 1:20:** Creation renders humanity without excuse and displays God’s power and divine nature.
- **John 3:19-21:** Explains why fallen humanity resists the Light and why coming to the Light exposes deeds.
- **1 John 1:5-7:** Connects walking in God’s light with fellowship and cleansing through the blood of Jesus.
- **Acts 1:8:** The Holy Spirit empowers believers to be Christ’s witnesses.
- **Isaiah 43:10:** God’s people are called to testify to who He is.
- **John 5:39-40:** Scripture points to Christ, yet biblical knowledge without coming to Him cannot give life.
- **Matthew 3:2:** John the Baptist’s preaching called people to repentance in preparation for the coming King.
- **Psalms 36:9:** God is the fountain of life, and in His light we see light.