

“Christmas, A Call to Closeness”

1 John 4

1 That which was **from the beginning**, which we **have heard**, which we **have seen** with our eyes, which we **have looked** upon, and our **hands have handled**, concerning the **Word of life**— 2 the **life was manifested**, and we **have seen**, and **bear witness**, and **declare to you that eternal life** which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that **you also may have fellowship with us**; and truly **our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ**. 4 And these things we write to you that **your joy may be full**.

The true **wonder of Christmas** isn't found **under the tree**. It isn't in the carols, falling flakes of snow, the Christmas crafts or the cheer they seem to bring. Christmas is **so-much-more**. In fact it's **more than** the human **heart** can even **comprehend**, *yet at the same time* it's **more simple** than we even want to believe. We are going to ask the King of Christmas to help us understand the gift of Christmas a little more today. (Prayer)

The incredible **wonder of Christmas** is this...that God, infinite Creator of ALL things, came **to us**, creators of *nothing*, **God** came to **us** in human form. **Ask the question why would He do that?** Because we could never come close to Him on our own & our Father is a God of great love.

Mankind was created solely for **one purpose**; having **closeness with the Lord**. Remember Adam, Eve, they walked in the garden with God, until pride pulled them away from their true love.

Jesus came so that we can be close to Him... like really **really close**, intimately close, **relationally close**. Christmas marks a definitive point in time that changed the course of people's relationship with God, + all relationships forever. Not to mention our **measure of time** itself. Why is it the year 2020? Time started over at the birth of Christ!

Christmas allows us to have closeness to God; a **partnership** with Him, to have a relationship of **mutual sharing**, fellowship or **deep bonding** with Him through Jesus. Describing what Christians **call communion**.

God closing the gap; this is what Christmas is about, so we can finally experience what we were **created for**, fellowship with God, which **brings ultimate JOY** to the human heart...

You see John knew that babe in a manger, was so much more than a mere teacher-to-be, a wise man-to-be, a gifted speaker, preacher, healer, miracle worker...

That wonderful night, out there in the little town of Bethlehem, under the starry night sky, God Himself would **sneak into the world**, quietly, seemingly unnoticed, with no fanfare, no kingdom or castle, no royal entry or royal robes. Just a few lowly shepherds, some angels, and two teenagers to care for the God of everything + Savior of sinners....

That baby was God in the flesh who came to restore humanity back to our True Love again!

From the text John wants us to **really know** that Jesus is **more**.

The obvious; John & the disciples were declaring the person of Jesus Christ.

The **not-so-obvious**.1 That which was **from the beginning**,...declaring that this Jesus had no beginning.

This is a description of **God Himself**. Yes, Jesus was born in human form, but that wasn't His beginning! Go back to Adam & Eve, Jesus was there, Go back to the creation of the world, Jesus was there, Go back 500 billion yrs before that, JESUS always was there because He is one with God. From the beginning.

This Jesus was the **the Word of life....**, John tells the reader, Jesus is the WORD of Life.

Logos, Greek word used to describe the calculated order of the universe, unknown to them the world at large, the word, logos, is Jesus Himself,

John wrote some ½ century before in John 1

now more than just the Word, He is the **Word of life**, *the one who gave order to everything* would also be the one to come and give LIFE back.

Ever feel like you are just going through the motions, barely surviving emotionally, physically? Life is really being **lived** when we are in harmony with Jesus, He is the divine order, Creator of the earth, but He is so much more...

Jesus is that Word in the flesh... Made visible...

John says God in Christ was **life was manifested**, the living breathing form of **God manifested**; **readily perceived** by the senses, God's existence was proven through Christ Jesus of Christmas. **God manifested** and **visible to see, appearing before mankind**, evidence, God in the flesh!

Jesus is....**that eternal life** with the Father.. Not only did Jesus not have a beginning , he also **has no end, eternal**. This is only possible of God Himself.

Jesus' life is locked in with the Father's life. Notice the communion, closeness, relationship talk (**with the Father**). They are one... John 17:20 "I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through **their word**; 21 that they **all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You**; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. The idea of communion, community, deep bonding relationship should be growing!

How do we have, experience eternal life? By KNOWING Jesus, to know God is to Know Jesus, to know Jesus is to have eternal life.

Eternal life for us **through Christ**. John 17:3 And this **is eternal life, that they may know You**, the only **true God, and Jesus Christ** whom You have sent.

John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.7 "If you had **known Me, you would have known My Father** also; and from now on you know Him and have **seen Him**."

This knowing God is so much more than head knowledge, its relational knowledge! To really know someone you **must be part of them**.

Marriage is the closest thing we have on earth that illustrates a relationship with God. Two become one flesh, there are vows, promises are made before God to love through everything. To complete a wedding the married couple goes off on that wedding night & through **intimacy become ONE FLESH!** You could say that a married couple knows one another more than any other relationship on the planet.

This is the kind of “**knowing**” John says will **give us eternal life**. But to know someone intimately, you have to be able to see them, touch them, feel them, observe and speak with them...

John says in our text... I have touched, seen, witnessed the life & presence of God through Jesus the Christ! which we **have heard**, which we **have seen** with our eyes, which we **have looked** upon, and our **hands have handled**, concerning the **Word of life— 2 the life was manifested**, and we **have seen**, and **bear witness**, and **declare to you that eternal life** which was with the Father and **was manifested to us—**

John says, alright its been 75+ years since Jesus took His first steps on earth... none of you have seen Him. So John uses language you would see in the legal sector. Court speak... What John does is give a **sworn statement of truth**, sworn testimony. He is giving us his own witness account and that of the other disciples... heard, seen with our own eyes, looked upon, hands have touched Him....

Remember the account after the resurrection when Jesus appears to the disciples then to Thomas? John 20:25 So the other disciples told him, “We have **seen the Lord!**” But he said to them, “**Unless I see** the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, **I will not believe.**”

26 ...Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; **see my hands**. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, “**My Lord and my God!**”

Jesus said, touch Me, handle Me, watch Me eat! Now John is saying, Little Children, it's me, papa John telling you not myths and fables, but things I've seen myself. Jesus, who is the Lord Himself, He is the Word of Life, Eternal Life, I have held him, seen Him, touched Him...

John is giving us personally eyewitness testimony of Jesus being close! **Why???**

To understand *this*... If Christmas really happened & the reason God humbly came in the flesh is to **restore us** back to what we were made for.... **The results**, the **outcome** of these truths **will be JOY**. Unparalleled, Unmistakeable, **Unshakeable joy** that is unyielding to the world's horrors and hang ups.

Joy vs Happiness... Happiness is easily altered. (Dylan & I building manger scene, **Kyrah**)

Joy is unshaken by circumstance. Joy is untakeable by happenstance. Joy is a deep sense of **everything is alright** and always will be. Joy carries a sense of deep peace. But joy is only possible when we **have intimacy with God**.

3 that which we have seen and heard **we declare** to you, **that you also may have fellowship with us**; and truly **our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ**. 4 And **these things** we write to you that **your joy may be full**.

There is a **reason for Christmas**, there was a reason the disciples then and today spoke so strongly about, proclaimed so adamantly the Word of Life...

John says, I am declaring Jesus to you **for a reason**, not for me, for money, for fame, notoriety, or power.... It's **for you** to have the same joy as John & the disciples had, **all through fellowship**, koinonia, communion with God.

Intimacy with God can only happen through the Christ of Christmas! By handling Him, holding Him, seeing God in the person of Jesus Christ, knowing Him so deeply as to be one with HIM! Christmas is a call to closeness! Maybe that's why we need it annually!

John knew then the true and only **secret to "happiness"** is through a loving relationship with the Lord Jesus..

What gave him that joy, what gives us this kind of joy is having Fellowship with the Father through the forgiveness and **manifest** presence of the Savior JC!

Intimacy with God, Fellowship with God **is only possible** through the life, death, and resurrection of that beautiful baby we see in a manger... This is the reason God came, the **reason for Christmas**, to call us close again...

ONLY Closeness to Christ can bring us full JOY that is **untakeable**. It's not by living your best life now. Not by all things being neat and orderly, not by having all your ducks in a row...

Psalms 30 says Weeping **may endure** for a night, But **joy comes in the morning**... Christmas morning a light dawned, a Savior was born to punch holes in the darkness of our empty hearts, replacing fear and dread with **true life and true joy!**

John 16:22 Therefore you now have sorrow; but **I will see you again and your heart will rejoice**, and **your joy** no one **will take** from you.

Joy plants deep roots,,, Joy of Christmas is also like

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

2 But **his delight is in the law of the Lord**, And in His law he meditates day and night.

3 He shall **be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water**, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper.

Fellowship, communion with God is what we were made for!!! God is calling us all into a deep closeness with Him. We can see the face of God through the face of Jesus! We were made for this, **called to closeness!**

Fellowship of JS

1 Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into **the fellowship of His Son**, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Communion joy talk, fellowship talk....

John 17:13 But now I come to You, and **these things I speak** in the world, that **they may have My joy** fulfilled in themselves.

Fellowship is with the Father and JC, this is the reason for Christmas. This is what John & the disciples were sharing. This is why we have a Christmas season of sharing Christmas cheer... so that others will have fellowship with God, along with us.

Not fellowship with *us*, it's that people might share in the closeness we have with God, JC. Christmas screams out NOEL NOEL, come and see what God has done, the light of the world, GIVEN for us!!! Oh the JOY that is found in the Christ of Christmas!!

The Joy of the Lord is our strength, it's a glowing force inside of every believer. Up to you to let that light so shine before others, up to you to NOT cover that light under a bushel of fear, doubt, insecurity, anger, pride, and resentment...We get to share *that* JOY with others!

And guess what, *that* is **what brings Christmas Joy**, that is what fills a heart with JOY, is sharing the greatest gift ever to hit the planet... Fellowship with Jesus.

Back in Isaiah, 700 BC, 43.19

Behold, I will do a new thing,

Now it shall spring forth;

Shall you not know it?

I will even make a road in the wilderness

And rivers in the desert.

Closing..

Romans 16:25 Now to **Him who is able to establish you** according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery kept secret** since the world began 26 but **now made manifest**, and by the prophetic Scriptures made known to all nations, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, for obedience to the faith— 27 **to God**, alone wise, **be glory through Jesus Christ forever**. Amen.

Communion Cup [1Co 10:16 NKJV] 16 The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?

Because the babe born, was God in the flesh, we can know Him and easily identify with Him. Because the Lord born a babe grew up & was sacrificed for our sin... we can have a close fellowship with Him.