

Message from the Master

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I have gone cave-exploring only one time in my life. My eighth grade class took a field trip to tour some underground caves.

Our tour guide led us into the mouth of the cave and into the ground. And as we went along, we saw the rays of the bright shining sun less and less and became more and more thankful for the electric lights that had been installed throughout the path on which we were walking.

After walking for quite some time our tour guide wanted to remind us just how far underground we really were and how dependent on light we really are. He told us all to grab a hold of the railing that was on the left side of the path and hang on tightly.

Once everyone was set, he turned off the lights. And we couldn't see a thing. He told us to wave our free hand in front of our faces and try to see it. We couldn't. Normally, when you're in a dark room, your eyes will adjust to the lack of light and you will be able to identify the objects in the room once your eyes have done that. But when there is no light, no matter how hard your eyes try, they will never be able to identify anything.

Our tour guide then told us to walk toward him, making sure not to let go of the railing. We walked for what seemed to be a couple hundred feet before he told us to stop and turn our bodies so that we were facing the railing.

He turned on the lights, and we almost got sick on account of what we were looking at. On the other side of the railing was a massive drop-off. And we were standing about 5 inches away from it, with only the railing between us. I'm sure the drop-off had a bottom, but none of us saw it, the drop-off dropped off so far.

Our tour guide didn't turn the lights off the rest of the trip. Point well-taken. It was dark in the cave. And in the darkness, light is very important.

In the first chapter of the book of John, the apostle tells us about a very important light that has been with us since the creation of this world. It is a light that comes directly from the Son of God, who didn't just create the world, but also made life pleasing and perfect for everyone in the world.

John writes about the Son of God, **Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men.**

That light was seen most clearly by Adam & Eve, and they saw it every day. When there was a need, the Lord fulfilled it. Adam realized he needed a companion. That need was fulfilled in Eve. Their every day needs were already part of the world. They had food to eat, places to sleep, and a society of peace. They were even given the ability to contribute to their own happiness. They had muscles to work, intelligence to use, and emotions to express as they realized that the dream world they lived in came specifically from the heart of the God who loved them.

That enlightened their world. Life was good knowing that God desired that they have everything they need, that all their needs be met. Life was good knowing that what God desired most was them and their happiness, knowing that the only thing God ever intended to enlighten and satisfy anyone's world was already in the world, and that is God himself enjoying life with the crown of his creation. But the world has

lost sight of that light.

Now, that's somewhat of a strange thought. It's understandable that you might get lost in a cave when your light goes out, if your flashlight batteries go dead or you drop your flashlight into the center of the earth and you are surrounded by complete darkness. It doesn't really make sense that anyone would get lost in the darkness when their light is still there, yet that is exactly what has happened in this world.

God's presence in the world has not changed. He's still here. His desire to love the world and make everyone in the world happy has not changed, or we wouldn't still be here. Yet there is no doubt that there is quite a bit of darkness in this world.

It started with one sin by one person, a casual reception of a juicy bite of forbidden fruit, but it continued with the murder of a brother, the sale of a brother, the arrogance of a nation, the invention of false gods, a stubborn refusal to submit to God, immoral governments, selfish rulers, and so forth and so on. Soon after the creation of the world and the promise of God's light in the world, the world turned away from that light and created a darkness in the world that most certainly does not please the God who made the world.

But the Lord was not quick to give up on his creation. "I will come visibly in the world," said the Son of God, "and reveal that God still desires the happiness of this world. I will give up my throne in heaven. I will give up my right to be happy. I, the Creator, will go down to the people I created and call them back to the God I made them for. He did.

John tells us, **He was in the world. But though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.** "A newborn child cannot be the eternal God." "A child dependant on a mother cannot be the creator of this world." "A humble, lowly, and poor boy cannot be the King of all kings and Lord of all Lords."

"But if I stay long enough," he thought, "if I prove to them the extent of God's love for them, then I will be received by them. If I heal their sick and show compassion for their poor, if I confirm my promise to be with them by living among them, eating with them, if I give up sleep for them, if I give up food for them, if I dedicate myself and my life solely to theirs and even give up my life for them, then this world I have made by my own power and out of God's most earnest desire must receive me." But the world did not. John says, **He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.**

No, his world rejected him. They plotted to remove him from the world. They ridiculed his compassion. They laughed at his promises. They kept him from their meals and made fun of his friends. The dark world dedicated itself to taking the light of his life from him, and this world that was made by his power and out of God's most earnest desire rejected him. And it still does.

A world that has removed the Son of God from the celebration of his own birth into the world has rejected him. A world that shows compassion for the poor without giving credit to the one who taught this world compassion has rejected him. A world full of people who give more money towards Christmas gifts that have nothing to do with the Son of God than they do to the work commanded by the Son of God has rejected him. A world that celebrates family without thanking the one who gave this world families has rejected him. A world that sees church attendance spike only on the days when more people will be watching has rejected him. His presence in the world has revealed the extent of darkness in the world, a darkness that is still here.

But it has revealed something else too. The fact that our Lord's presence is still in the world, that he has not withdrawn his light from our dark world, reveals that his desire to love everyone in the world is also still here. And since you are, as of right now, part of this world, that means his desire is to enlighten your life and set you free from the darkness of this world.

John extends the Lord's invitation to you when he writes, **Yet to all who received him, to those who**

believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. You do not have the right to something just because you desire something. You do not have the right to a Lincoln Navigator just because you desire one. You do not have the right to a Playstation 3 just because you desire one. You do not have the right to more money just because you desire it. If you can, by your work, earn those things; or, if someone else desires that you should have any of these things, and they give them to you, then you have the right to hold onto them. Then they are yours.

You do not have the right to be in the family of God, to feel the love of God, to live in the light of God just because you want to. You gave that right up the moment your parents conceived you as an enemy of God who desired everything contrary to God. You have not done anything to earn that right back.

There is nothing you can do from here on out to earn that right. You have already ignored God too often, used God's name to curse too often, kept your first fruits back from God too often, gone entire days without speaking to God or letting him speak to you too often.

And yet John writes that you have the right to become a child in the family of God because that has been the desire of God since long before you knew God. Your existence fills God with life. Your happiness gives God happiness. Your life is still the most important to God, and you can see proof of that revealed in the enlightened manger and life of the Son of God.

How much does God desire your presence in his world? Enough to give up the light of heaven and dwell among the darkness of this world. Enough to give up his glorious throne to live among our darkness so he could look us in the eyes and promise us the full glory of an eternal home. Enough to become poor so that you could become rich. Enough to be born into the world so you could be born again into the light of God's world. Enough to leave his Father so that you could have life forever with the Father. Enough to choose a condemnation from the Father so that your condemnation would be spared by the Father. Enough to live a hard life leading toward a difficult death so that you would be spared eternal death. That's why the Lord enlightens our world, so that you will find peace, joy, and hope in the light of God's love for you, the most valuable part of his world.