

# CELEBRATING THE LIGHT

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Alright. So this is the last Wednesday before Christmas. And I want to talk about the fundamental question. And maybe we would disagree on what the fundamental question is. But I think the fundamental question is: What's your spiritual purpose?

I think everything revolves around how you answer that question. What is your purpose? And in the 80s and the 90s -- if you were alive then -- it was a big thing in spiritual circles to know what your purpose is, and you had to know what your purpose is. And we spent a lot of time and energy knowing what our spiritual purpose is.

And we're just going to like, really solve that for all of you tonight. By the time you leave today, you're going to know what your purpose is. And you'll really never have to ask yourself that question again.

How many of you want to vote -- this is where I get myself into trouble! How many of you want to vote that your purpose is spiritual growth? Okay. I'm not going to vote for that one. [Congregation laughs] I believe that our purpose is to embody God.

And that spiritual growth is one of the most deceptive concepts that we have in spiritual circles. Because the moment we tell ourselves that we're here to grow spiritually, our ego steps in. Because the moment you tell yourself that you have to grow spiritually, it's like God created you "almost done." Half-baked. And that our job is to finish the journey. Right?

I heard a speaker one time say that he believed that we were 7/8ths of the way to enlightenment. I'm not sure how he got there. [Congregation laughs] I always felt I was more like 3/4s, but if I was 7/8ths, I was actually further along than I thought.

And it's this idea that we're created in the image and likeness of God, but not quite. We're not quite there; we're not quite done. And our ego loves that! Right? Because if you're not quite done, your ego says, "*Great! God gave it a good try! God's getting old ...*" [Congregation laughs] Right? "*You're just a little off-base, but I can get you there!*" And so then our ego steps in and begins to do the work that we feel needs to be done

But what if the truth was that you were created in the image and likeness of God, and you're not almost there; you're completely there? And that your job is not to finish the work that God started, but to realize the work has already been done?

See, we talk about this idea of enlightenment and spiritual progress as a way of saying to ourselves, "*Well, I'm only a little broken. I'm only a little messed up. I'm only a little 'less than.'* But don't worry! My ego -- the next class; the next thing; the next program -- is going to finish the job."

And then when we take the next thing -- whatever the next thing is -- and it doesn't really work, then we go, "*That's alright, because there's always the next thing.*" And our ego then continually keeps us on this path of almost getting there. And it's so seductive! It's so seductive to think if we just try a little bit harder ... Because we all know we're messed up!

How many of you have ever been told -- in one way or another -- that you're really almost there. But you know that you're just a little bit messed up. Or you're just not quite right. Or you're just a little bit inadequate? Right? And then we go, "*Great! Then I'll just recommit to trying harder and harder and harder to be better and better and better!*"

But what if the truth is that we are whole and complete and lacking in nothing? And our only job is to realize it?!? Our only job is to appreciate it! Our only job is to express it! That we're not here to get better; we're here to allow the infinite light that we are to shine! That's why I love that line in 1 James: "*You are whole and complete and lacking in nothing.*" That our job is to let go! Because it's easy to believe we're broken! But our job is to let go of that concept that we're broken and be the magnificent expression of God that we are. To be God's expression in three-dimensional form.

In the Scripture, light is the first expression of the embodiment of God in three-dimensional form. When we look at the Gospel of John, John 1, we read about God becoming flesh and living amongst us. And what I want you to see is that all of us have that within us! All of us have that perfection of the Spirit of God within us. And it's our job to give expression to that. To allow it to be our dominant way that we see ourselves. To be the dominant way that we experience ourselves.

Reading from the Gospel of John 1-4:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; and all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. And in him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it.*

Also from 1 John, Verses 14, 16 and 17:

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father. And from his fullness we have received grace upon grace. For the law was given to use by Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*

And I love that! Like, in the darkest times -- you know, where we're celebrating the Winter Solstice; when we're celebrating Hanukkah tonight -- in the darkest times, we celebrate that the light in us can never be overcome! That whatever you're walking through right now, you are the embodiment -- you are the three-dimensional expression -- of the light of God!

And if we fear the outer -- if we fear the circumstance or the situation -- we are really missing the point. The truest spiritual point is that you were created in the image and the likeness of God, and the light in you cannot be overcome. It cannot be put down. It can be hidden; we can turn it down. But it does not take away from who we were created to be at our essence and at our core.

We are that living expression! We are the embodiment of that light! And this time we celebrate with light! Everywhere we look, we're celebrating with light: in our homes; in our businesses. You know, we embody that light! We see it all around us!

Matthew 2:2:

*For we have seen the star in the East, and we have come to worship it.*

I want you to see that that star -- that light -- is God in us! And sometimes it looks like it's outside of us. But it's always within us! And the whole Christmas story is about following that star.

In Matthew 2, 9 and 10:

*And lo, the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it had come to rest over the place where the child was born.*

And I love to look at that from a metaphysical point of view; from a spiritual point of view. That they followed the star until it came to rest over the place where the child was born. Sometimes we see the star, and it looks like it's outside of us. Have you ever had an adventure in your life that you really felt

guided and directed to take? That you thought this adventure, this situation -- whether it was a job, a relationship -- and maybe it went very different than you thought it was going to be.

But in your willingness to be faithful, and to follow the star, it really unleashed something so deep within you: a power; a light; a presence within you. And you just had to keep following the star. And that star, you realized, wasn't outside you at all! It looked like it was outside of you; it looked like it was "out there," and you were just trying to get to that. But the closer you get to the star, you realize it's within you.

And there is a part of us that falls down and worships it. That acknowledges it. That celebrates that you were created in the image and likeness of God. That you were whole and complete and lacking in nothing. That you are the one!

J.R. Rim said this: *"Having a dream is like having sunshine. Without it, you cannot see as clearly. With it, your world shines. Have a dream, and the light will fill your eyes with hope."*

And as we follow the light over and over again, we realize that the light has never been outside of us. We see expressions of it -- reflections of it -- all around us. But the light is always within us!

Brene Brown said this: *"Owning our story can be hard, but not nearly as difficult as spending our lives running from it. Embracing our vulnerabilities is risky, but not nearly as dangerous as giving up on love and belonging and joy -- the experiences that make us the most vulnerable. Only when we are brave enough to explore the darkness can we discover the infinite light within us."*

I love that! I love that! Because there's a part of us that -- as we're learning to discover the light within us; as that light of God is illumined within our soul -- in the beginning of our spiritual awakening and process, the first thing that we often see when the light is shining within us is all the places where we've been wounded.

Have you ever had that experience in prayer or in meditation where you experience, "Eww." Right? The light comes on within and it's like, *"Eww! Turn that thing off!"* [Congregation laughs] *"Like, I don't want to see that! I don't want to see where I've been wounded! I don't want to see where I've made a mistake! I don't want to see where I've been unjust to someone. I don't want to see it! Just turn that light off and, thank you very much; I'll just walk in darkness. Darkness isn't this bad; I'll stub my toe a few more times, but I'll adjust. It'll be fine!"*

But when you turn the light on within your soul, and you see those places in yourself where you may have made a mistake; where you might have made a new choice; where you could have had another outcome. When you see those places in yourself where you have been wounded by life, and you leave the light on within, it allows you to heal it. Because you can't heal what you can't see.

And as that radiant light of God is shining within us, we can then make the choice to release it; to let go; to love it; to allow the past to be released. And we realize that there is an even greater light within us. That we have a light within us that is truly amazing! That, when we fear the dark -- when we fear the light -- it limits our expression of who we are. Because then we can only express those parts of us -- those aspects of us -- that we are comfortable in looking at.

But the truth of who you are is that you are so much more than that! That you were created in the image and likeness of God, and the light that is within you is truly amazing!

Matthew 5:14:

*For you are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid. Nor men light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, where it gives light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and give glory to God.*

Jesus said:

*There is a light -- a true light -- which comes into the world and enlightens every man.*

See, tonight I want you to see -- in this longest night; in this time where there is the most darkness in our world -- that the light that is within you cannot be overcome. The light that is within you is greater than anything in the world, and that light is a reflection of all that God is. It's your light! It's the God in you that is whole and complete and lacking in nothing!

That, as we release the past; as we let go of all those wounded images of ourselves; as we let go of all the choices that weren't the highest and the best; as we forgive ourselves; as we forgive others, we become more and more that radiant expression of God.

Jesus said, "*I am the light. I am the light of the world.*" And what's true for Jesus is true for you! You are the light of the world! And if you continue to look at yourself as broken; as less than; as somehow not quite enough, we really distort the image of God in us.

That no matter what's ever happened to you in your life; no matter what you've gone through; no matter what the disappointments or pain of the past have been, you have always been the light of God. And the light of God knows no limits.

Will you pray with me?

I invite you tonight to take a deep breath and to allow the gorgeous light of God within you to shine brighter than ever before. To trust that you truly are that magnificent of God. And in this week where we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, to let your light so shine that others see your good works and give glory to God. That sometimes it's scary to be brighter. Sometimes it's scary to unleash the full power of God within us. But that's how the whole planet moves forward. That, as spiritual people, we have to stop arguing for limitations and be the magnificent light of God. So in the name and through the power of the Living Christ, we give thanks. And so it is. Amen.

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