

TITLE

“Faith that makes a difference” series.

PARTY CONFERENCES

Party conference season – lots of rhetoric. Lots of heat but not much light. Lots of good intentions, but not much practical outworking for ordinary people. Lots of ideals but little relation to the real world.

GOOD INTENTIONS

Politics often reflects life. We don't like to think so but it does. Big difference between our words and intentions and what we are actually like and what we do. PICTURE 2

WHAT DIFFERENCE DOES OUR FAITH ACTUALLY HAVE?

That's what our Christian faith can be like too. We sing the big words of the Christian faith, but do we live them? We all know that the reality of our day to day faith can be quite different to what we say and sing.

Why? We have all had experience of presence of God, the power of God in our lives. Why so often do we live like the world, have the same lack of hope etc.?

We believe our faith is one that makes a difference; that it transforms lives. But what about our lives? How much is our faith making a difference to us – NOW. How much is our faith making a difference to other people NOW?

God wants that difference to be in our lives. We've been saved for it. We've been made different in Christ. We are people who should be living the presence and power of God in our lives. But is that how we ACTUALLY feel?

But the reality should be different lives and positively different. God has gone to a lot of trouble to make sure that is so. We were reminded again in our reading this morning that He came to where we were. In verse 14 we get told this – the Word became an human being and came into our neighbourhood (Message).

And as we read all four gospels and the other books we read how Jesus had a big impact in people's lives. They witnessed amazing miracles, many were healed, they heard profound words. And we know they all happen today too. Actually quite a lot – but how much do we see? How much do we ask for them? How much do we actually take notice of or take seriously when we hear of them?

It was quite common a few years ago for Christians to deny miracles and sign gifts and say that they died out with the completion of the NT. Why? There was a spirit of rationalism in the church in that age that made people neither look for or seek the activity of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world. People who expect nothing are rarely disappointed.

Let's be realistic. If you are a Christian, if you know Jesus as your Saviour and Lord this morning, then you already know about the presence and power of God in your life. You're here aren't you? But we have a God who so much wants us to have so much of Him in our lives. The Holy Spirit should make that difference. We should actively seek the presence and power of God in our lives because it's all part of the gift that God has given us in Christ. And what's more, we know that – we've heard plenty of sermons about it anyway?

LIST

So what is the barrier that stops us being released into having a faith that makes a difference? Over the few weeks before Christmas we are going to explore the miracles of Jesus in John as he only gives us 8 in his gospel, and we are going to discover the impact that Jesus had on the people involved and what we learn about it to make a difference in our lives.

We don't have to look far for miracles – it's a matter of opening our eyes. Answered prayer is a great way of understanding how God is dealing with us and others. But how often are we looking for it – or asking for that matter?

And what effect should seeing the power of God in our lives have? What should we be looking for? The problem with miracles, either ones that we pray for, see in our lives or see in others is that we have an expectation of what its benefit is beyond what God has given it for.

Think about the miracles of Jesus in John:

The marriage of Cana in Galilee – people had a great time in a party awash with high quality wine. That was the one and only time they did.

The official's son, the paralytic, blind man, Lazarus – all got sick and died.

5000 fed – first and last time they ever had that kind of free meal

Walking on water – you don't see that every day – only happened once

None of the miracles had permanency – they happened and then people's lives returned to normal. What was the lasting effect? There were many who saw and experienced these miracles that had their lives changed forever. At the root of Jesus' miracles was changed lives. This is what John says of Jesus signs/miracles: *John 20: 30 Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. 31 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.*

Are you praying for a miracle for your life or someone else's. Good. Please do. But have thought on why you want that miracle. What difference is it going to make to you, or anyone else.

Let's go back to one of the verses we read this morning. VERSE 4 - *In him was life, and that life was the light of men.* What is Jesus about? Why did He come? He brought two things life and light.

In him was life - the Word is the source of all life. The ancient Greek word translated life is *zoe*, which means “the life principle,” not *bios*, which is mere biological life. This life is the light of men, speaking of spiritual light as well as natural light. It isn't that the Word “contains” life and light; He *is* life and light. Therefore, without Jesus, we are *dead* and in *darkness*. We are lost. Significantly, man has an inborn fear towards both death and darkness.

The good news is in VERSE 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.

The Word came to give life and light to people – to make us alive to God and release us from the fear that darkness brings. That's the big story we should be praying about for others and for ourselves.

So let's go back to where we were. God wants us to experience His power and presence in our lives. If we don't know Jesus, He wants us to experience His love, presence and forgiveness as we recognise our own sin and our need to follow Jesus. If we are Christians, He doesn't want our experience of Him to be occasionally, but daily.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

We'll often pray for God's power don't we? What I believe He wants us to focus on this morning is what we are asking for and expecting from a God who desires to bless us and who has already blessed us with life in Christ.

Why? Because if we just ask for respite now, and an answer now, then it is for now and that's that. We have a Saviour in whom there is light and life, ask Him to give you the bigger picture in relation to your pain, your struggles and your situation – or when you are interceding for others. Often God doesn't give us the miracle of freeing us from difficult problems and situations, but helps us to discover that His grace is sufficient for us and that there is a bigger picture that draws us closer to God, who makes us walk and pray in the Spirit more closely and find things about ourselves and about Jesus than we ever knew. Why? Because He can see the big picture, the eternal picture, ; things how they really are.

Therefore, at the root of what we should be praying for anyone including ourselves is life and light. Life so that we live as God truly wants us to, light so that we no longer live with the fear of darkness and all the bad things life can throw at us. Jesus came to free us from all that.

Challenge. Want to know more of His presence? See more of His power? Why aren't we? I'm not going to make any sweeping generalisations or criticisms, just to say that if we want it we have a God who is gracious and loving and want to bless. Just pray that He will break down the barriers and ask for the Spirit to be poured out afresh on you. How do I know that? Because in Jesus we see a God who goes to extraordinary lengths for His people.

DELIVERER

FAITH THAT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

*Preached by Mark Reid
MRBC Felixstowe 22/9/13
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Jesus did miracles – does miracles in people's lives today. If only we saw miracles? Wouldn't that make a difference? How much of one.

1. [Changing water into wine](#) in [John 2:1-11](#)
2. [Healing the royal official's son](#) in [Capernaum](#) in [John 4:46-54](#)
3. [Healing the paralytic at Bethesda](#) in [John 5:1-18](#)
4. [Feeding the 5000](#) in [John 6:5-14](#)
5. [Jesus' walk on water](#) in [John 6:16-24](#)
6. [Healing the blind at birth](#) in [John 9:1-7](#)
7. [Raising of Lazarus](#) in [John 11:1-45](#)

Miracles in John – what was the significance of each?

Many was most of them. What difference did it make?

- to the many
- to the few

A purpose was John 1:1 - in Him was life – these are put here not to make a short term difference but to make an eternal difference.

So – expect and look for the power of God.
Allow God to take you through these to make a difference.

4) John

(4a) John 1:1-5,9

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being 4 in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... 9 The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world.

Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος, καὶ ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν, καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος. οὗτος ἦν ἐν ἀρχῇ πρὸς τὸν θεόν. πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο, καὶ χωρὶς αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο οὐδὲ ἓν. ὃ γέγονεν ἐν αὐτῷ ζωὴ ἦν, καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἦν τὸ φῶς τῶν ἀνθρώπων· καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ φαίνει, καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸ οὐ κατέλαβεν... Ἦν τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν, ὃ φωτίζει πάντα ἄνθρωπον, ἐρχόμενον εἰς τὸν κόσμον. (John 1:1–5, 9 GNT-T)

? (4c) John 9:4-5

We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming when no

one can work. 5 As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

ἡμᾶς δεῖ ἐργάζεσθαι τὰ ἔργα τοῦ πέμψαντός με ἕως ἡμέρα ἐστίν· ἔρχεται νύξ ὅτε οὐδείς δύναται ἐργάζεσθαι. ὅταν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ᾶ, φῶς εἰμι τοῦ κόσμου. (John 9:4–5 GNT-T)

(4b) John 8:12

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life."

Πάλιν οὖν αὐτοῖς ἐλάλησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων· ἐγώ εἰμι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου· ὁ ἀκολουθῶν ἐμοὶ οὐ μὴ περιπατήσῃ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ, ἀλλ' ἔξει τὸ φῶς τῆς ζωῆς. (John 8:12 GNT-T)

(4d) John 11:9-10

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. 10 But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them."

ἀπεκρίθη Ἰησοῦς· οὐχὶ δώδεκα ὥραι εἰσιν τῆς ἡμέρας; ἐὰν τις περιπατῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ, οὐ προσκόπτει, ὅτι τὸ φῶς τοῦ κόσμου τούτου βλέπει· ἐὰν δέ τις περιπατῇ ἐν τῇ νυκτί, προσκόπτει, ὅτι τὸ φῶς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν αὐτῷ. (John 11:9–10 GNT-T)

(4e) John 12:35-36

Jesus said to them, "The light is with you for a little longer. Walk while you have the light, so that the darkness may not overtake you. If you walk in the darkness, you do not know where you are going. 36 While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may become children of light." After Jesus had said this, he departed and hid from them.

εἶπεν οὖν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς· ἔτι μικρὸν χρόνον τὸ φῶς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστίν· περιπατεῖτε ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε, ἵνα μὴ σκοτία ὑμᾶς καταλάβῃ· καὶ ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει· ὡς τὸ φῶς ἔχετε, πιστεύετε εἰς τὸ φῶς, ἵνα υἱοὶ φωτός γένησθε. ταῦτα ἐλάλησεν Ἰησοῦς, καὶ ἀπελθὼν ἐκρύβη ἀπ' αὐτῶν. (John 12:35–36 GNT-T)

His life, manifest in the incarnation, is our light (Jn 1:4). In this Gospel light always refers to the revelation and salvation that Jesus is and offers (cf. 8:12; 11:9 is the one exception). In order to have life we need to know God, and Jesus is our source of such knowledge. As our light, his life is our guide. He is our wisdom, that which reveals all else to us and enables us to see. In Jewish thought it is the law that plays this role (for example, Wisdom of Solomon 18:4; cf. Hengel 1974:1:171; 2:112; Kittel 1967:134-36), but for John it is the incarnation of the Word that makes sense of all of life.

Thus, here at the outset we have the two most fundamental affirmations about Jesus in this Gospel, namely that he himself is the presence of God's own life and light and that he makes this life and

light available to human beings. In one profound sentence we have the central assertion of this Gospel concerning the revelation of the Son and the salvation he offers.

The story will reveal the glory described in these opening verses, but it will be a tragic story of conflict, because humanity is in the darkness of rebellion. The shining of the light is an ongoing, continuous activity (*phainei*, present tense, v. 5), for it is the very nature of light to shine. But when that light and life came amongst us as a human being, the darkness did not grasp, or master, the light; it neither comprehended it nor overcame it (*katelaben*; cf. the NIV text and note). The story will show both senses of this word to be true.

b. In Him was life: The Word is the source of all life. The ancient Greek word translated life is *zoe*, which means “the life principle,” not *bios*, which is mere biological life. This life is the light of men, speaking of spiritual light as well as natural light. It isn’t that the Word “contains” life and light; He *is* life and light.

i. Therefore, without Jesus, we are *dead* and in *darkness*. We are lost. Significantly, man has an inborn fear towards both death and darkness.

c. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it: Did not comprehend can also be translated *did not overcome*. The light can not lose against the darkness; the darkness will never overcome it.

1:4 ejn aujtw'/ zwhv h Regarding John’s use of *zwhv*: John uses the term 37 times. 17 times it occurs with *aijwvniw*”, and in the remaining occurrences **outside** the Prologue it is clear from context that ‘eternal’ life is meant. The 2 uses in 1:4, if they do not refer to ‘eternal’ life, would be the only exceptions.

Also (as a footnote) **1 John** uses *zwhv* 13 times, always of ‘eternal’ life.

For the meaning of the verse we should probably turn to [Psalm 36:9](#): “For with Thee is the **fountain of life**; In Thy light we see light.” In later Judaism, 1 Baruch 4:2 expresses a similar idea. **Life, especially eternal life, will become one of the major themes of the gospel.**

Finally, John asserts the full divinity of the Word with yet another symbol or metaphor. Here, he refers to Christ as the “**light of men**.” This statement needs to be understood with 1 John 1:5 in view. There we read that “**God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.**” As A. W. Pink notes, “The conclusion, then, is irresistible, and the proof complete and final, that the Lord Jesus is none other than God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity” [25]. In addition, John declares that Christ, the light, “**shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.**” In other words, the moral and spiritual darkness in which men reside (and which resides in their hearts) never can apprehend or accept the light of Christ. By nature all human beings “love darkness because their deeds are evil (3:19), and when the light does put in an appearance, they hate it, because they do not want their deeds to be exposed” [Carson, 120-21]. Thus, “nothing short of a miracle of saving grace can ever bring one out of darkness into God’s marvelous light” [Pink, 26]

Verse 4 says, "In Him was life." Well listen look back at verse 3, if He created everything I guess it was. I guess it had to be in Him. After all He made everything that's alive. In Him was life. He must be the source of all life. Listen, Jesus Christ is the source of life from a butterfly to an archangel, but John's particular message isn't so much concerned with physical life as it is with spiritual and

eternal life and that's really what he's talking about. And he uses the word *dzoay*, which is the word for spiritual life. The word *bios* from which we get biology is the word for physical life. He uses *dzoay*, Jesus Christ is the source of spiritual life. You say well what do you mean by spiritual life? Well if we define spiritual death maybe you'll understand spiritual life.

Paul says in [Ephesians 2:1](#), that the unsaved man is dead in sin. Spiritual death means that you can't respond to God. It's like a dead corpse. You punch it with a pin and nothing happens. A person who doesn't know God you can jab him with spiritual truth there's no response, but Christ comes and what's the one thing a dead man needs most life so Christ comes and gives him life. And that's why 54 times in John's gospel he talks about life. You know the world is populated by a bunch of dead people. People who don't know Christ are existing in death and Christ came to give them life. After all they're not going to get it anywhere else, are they? He's the source. That's why it's so ridiculous for people to think they find the answer to life in all kinds of diddly little things that, Christ is the only source of life. The only thing that ever made a dead man come alive was Jesus Christ.

So John 54 times in his gospel talks about life. That's why Christ came. What did He say? "I am come that you might have, what, life. You will not come unto Me that you might have, what, life? I am the way, the truth and, what, the life." John says, "He that hath the Son hath life." Life, life, life for dead people, dead in sin, insensitive to God, insensible, existing in deadness, and Christ comes and He can breathe into us spiritual life and we come alive. In Him was life, and then he brought that life into the world and the next part of the verse says, "And the life was the light of men." Jesus brought that life into this world and you know what, he was like a light. You take the light itself and the rays of light that come from it and John says, "Christ came in with that life and that life was like light." As light emanates from its source, so did life emanate from its source.

And Jesus came into this world the light of life. He uses these terms light illustrates life. It's not something different; it's the same thing illustrated. Just like light emanates from its source, so that life emanated from Christ. And His life was the light of man. And the life of Jesus Christ resurrection spiritual life scattered all over this world and you know how many men it affected?

Look at verse 4: *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men....* And by men, of course, it means men, women, boys, and girls. His life is the light of everyone. He is the light of humanity in general and of every individual—you and me—in particular.

Notice how closely John begins his Gospel by following the themes of Genesis 1. He begins with the same words, "In the beginning...." He introduces the concept of an eternal creating God who made all things. He describes this God as the source of created and derived life. And the first thing that God creates is light. He said, "Let there be light." John is following the same pattern, telling us that just as God created the world, now He is re-creating it through the salvation offered in Jesus Christ, who is the light of the world.

Now, here I'll have to be honest with you. I can usually study out the meaning and significance of biblical symbols and metaphors. But when the Bible uses the word "light" it frustrates me (exegetically speaking), because it is used in so many ways to symbolize so many things.

Let's take just a moment to see how the Old Testament uses the ideas of light and darkness.

Sometimes, of course, when it refers to light it is referring to **literal, actual physical light**. When the Bible says that God dwells in inapproachable light, I believe that includes the reality of physical light. Psalm 104 says that God covers Himself with light as with a garment. When saw the risen and glorified Christ on the road to , our Lord shone brighter than the sun, and 's eyesight was instantly destroyed. In the New Jerusalem, there will be no need for the sun and moon, for the light radiating from the Lord Jesus Christ will illumine the entire city.

Sometimes in the Old Testament, light was a symbol of the **holiness and righteousness** of God. Psalm 37:6 says, "He shall bring forth Your righteousness as the light and Your justice as the noonday."

Sometimes it referred to **salvation and deliverance**. Isaiah 9 says: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelled in the land on the shadow of death, on them a great light has shined.”

Sometimes in the Old Testament, light was a metaphor for **truth**, for the Scriptures. Psalm 43:3 says, “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me to Your holy hill.” Psalm 119 says, “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my pathway.”

Sometimes in the Old Testament, light referred to God’s **blessings** on our lives. The Old Testament writers spoke of the light of God’s countenance, and Job recalled those wonderful days when he had walked in the light of the Lord, referring to days of prosperity and blessing.

Sometimes light referred to **joy** and radiance of heart. Esther 8:15-16 says: “So Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel of blue and white, with a great crown of gold and a garment of fine linen and purple; and the city of Shushan rejoiced and was glad. The Jews had light and gladness, joy and honor.”

So how do you summarize all this? We have to say that light in the Old Testament, when it was used like this, described the very presence and being of God and all His manifold blessings on our lives. It represented His presence. It represented His holiness. It represented His truth and His Word. It represented His salvation and His blessings.

It is perhaps the most comprehensive figure in the entire Bible used to describe God and all He offers to us.

So John latches onto this theme in his prologue and in His Gospel. And when he says that Jesus Christ is the light, that He is the light of the world, that He is the light that shines in darkness, that He is the light that the world could not comprehend, which Old Testament idea is he employing. Well, I’ve finally made an exegetical decision about this. I think John is saying, “Jesus Christ is physically, emotionally, spiritually, intellectually, morally the light of all the world and the light of everyone who walks in darkness.”

In Him was life and this life was the light of men and women and boys and girls. And this is the great theme that John is going to bring up again and again in His Gospel, in his first Gospel, and in his book of Revelation.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John 1:1 In the beginning the Word already existed; the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 From the very beginning the Word was with God. 3 Through him God made all things; not one thing in all creation was made without him. 4 The Word was the source of life, and this life brought light to people. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has never put it out.