

What Christmas Promises: Be Not Bound

by Warren Wiersbe

The sermon emphasizes the importance of understanding the true meaning of Christmas, which is the manifestation of God's life, and how we can receive and share this life with others.

Duration: 33:43

Scripture: 1 John 1:1

Topics: "Eternal Life", "Salvation Experience"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the experience of receiving eternal life through Jesus Christ. He explains that this experience has four stages: the recognition of the need for life, the manifestation of eternal life, the reception of eternal life, and the sharing of this life with others. The preacher emphasizes that Jesus came into the world because there was a need for eternal life. He encourages listeners to examine where they are in this experience and challenges them to receive the life offered by Jesus Christ. The sermon is based on the first four verses of 1 John 1, where John describes his own experience with Jesus and the purpose of sharing this experience with others.

Transcript

I read the word of God from the first epistle of John, chapter one, the first four verses. 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 of the word of life. For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us. And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

May God help us to see in Christ eternal life. A friend of mine used to say to me each time the Christmas season would arrive, why does Christmas have to come at a time when the stores are so crowded? And yet it's good to know that something that happened two thousand years ago can still create traffic jams in Chicago. But if a visitor from outer space were to come to Chicago during this season, park his flying saucer out in Grant Park somewhere, and behold what goes on, I wonder if he'd know what it's all about.

In fact, I wonder if the people who are pushing, and shoving, and striving, and driving know what it's all about. There are many people who just don't understand what this Christmas season really means. They

have a sentimental view of it, and they shed a few tears over a poor little couple that had a little baby, and they were rejected.

It might be good for us to go back to those who were there. Let's go back to the apostle John who knew Jesus. Let's go back to the first epistle of John which was written by the apostle that we might know Jesus Christ personally, and be sure of our salvation.

Because several times in this little letter, the apostle John uses a very important word. It's the word manifested. In chapter 1 of 1 John verse 2, he says that when Jesus came, the life was manifested.

You turn the page over to chapter 3 and verse 5, and you know that he was manifested to take away our sins, and so forgiveness was manifested. In chapter 3 and verse 8, for this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil, and so victory was manifested. Over in chapter 4 and verse 9, in this was manifested the love of God toward us, that God sent his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him.

Love was manifested. This is what it's all about. Now, the first of these manifestations is life, and we read from 1 John chapter 1 verses 1 through 4, and the key word in this section is the word life.

The word of life. The life was manifested. We show unto you that eternal life.

John is talking here about the manifestation of life. He's talking here about the experience of eternal life. Now, each one here today, and those listening in our radio congregation, have experienced physical life, otherwise you wouldn't be here.

But John is talking about something much more wonderful, much deeper, much more thrilling, much more exciting. He's talking about the manifestation of God's life. He's talking about an experience that you and I can have that transcends anything we've ever had before.

He's talking about an experience that takes everything that's natural and makes it supernatural. Everything that is of our first birth and transforms it by a second birth. And he tells us in these four verses that this experience of life has four stages in it.

And I'm wondering today at what stage you are. Stage number one, the life was needed, otherwise he never would have come. Stage number two, the life was manifested.

Stage number three, the life was received. Stage number four, the life was shared with others. Those are the four stages of this experience of life that John writes about in first John chapter one, the first four verses.

Let's take these stages one by one and find out where we are. Stage number one, the life was needed. Jesus Christ came into this world because there was a need.

It cost him too much to come for any other purpose. Now, what was that need? John does not describe it in detail, but Matthew does. If you go back to the gospel of Matthew in chapter four and verse 16, this Jewish writer, Levi, Matthew, the publican, reaches back into Isaiah chapter nine and he takes an ancient Old Testament prophecy and he says this tells us what the need was when Jesus came.

Matthew chapter four and verse 16. The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them who sat in the region and shadow of death, light is sprung up. The life was needed for three reasons.

Number one, there was darkness. He's talking about people sitting in darkness. Now in the Bible, darkness never means just the absence of light.

When the great city of New York City was plunged into darkness again, that was simply the absence of light. But in the Bible, darkness stands for a realm. Darkness stands for a reality, a spiritual reality.

Darkness in the Bible is as real as light. When God sent those plagues down upon the land of Egypt in Moses' day, the darkness was so thick you could feel it. Three days of darkness upon that land, a darkness that you breathed, a darkness that pushed against you.

It was something like trying to swim through jello. It was real. It was oppressive.

It created anxiety and fear, and that was the condition when Jesus came. The world was in darkness. Now darkness in the Bible is a picture of sin.

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. Darkness is a picture of hatred. He that loves not his brother walks in darkness.

Darkness is a picture of Satan. He's the prince of darkness. Darkness is a picture of hell.

Hell is outer darkness. And there was darkness. This world was enveloped by an atmosphere of darkness, satanic darkness, sinful darkness.

And people were sitting in darkness. And then Jesus came to manifest God's life. Now there is a certain amount of life in darkness.

I recall when we were in Mammoth Cave and we go down, down, down, and they show you these pools and they turn the lights off, and it's so dark you just can't grasp it. And the guide said there are forms of life that can live in darkness, but none of us wants to be one of those forms. None of us wants to be a fungus on a cave side.

None of us wants to be a blind fish swimming through cold cave waters. We want something more than that. And when Jesus came, He revealed the life because the life was needed.

People were in darkness and people were in death. Notice that. The people who sat in darkness saw a great light, and to them who sat in the region in the shadow of death.

You see, people have always been afraid of death, and rightly so. A fear of death is not a wrong motive. You drive on the right side of the street, I trust, because you're afraid to die.

And you don't want to kill anybody else who doesn't want to die. When I say afraid to die, I don't mean we're afraid of the experience of death. We as Christians realize that death for us is just the door into the presence of God.

But each one of us does everything he can to stay alive. We take medicine. We go to the doctor.

We're careful about the way we do things to stay alive. The fear of death is not a wrong motive. But when Jesus came to this earth, the world was sitting in the shadow of death, in the confinement of death.

The fear of death had driven men down. And Satan had taken the fear of death not as a tool to build with, but as a weapon to fight with. And he beat people with it.

And people worshipped Satan. And people turned to all kinds of dirty, foul, ugly sewage to forget the fear of death. When you read what the world was like when Jesus came, you see our world today.

Back in our Lord's day, all of the great ideas were falling apart. The great institutions were falling apart. There had been an invasion of eastern religions and cults, mysticism, the occult.

And our Lord Jesus came because life was needed. People were sitting in darkness, and people were sitting in death, and people were sitting in despair and defeat. You see, Isaiah doesn't use the word sat.

When you read Isaiah's prophecy, it says, the people who walked in darkness. Matthew says, the people who sat in darkness. What had happened in the 700 years from Isaiah to Jesus, people had given up.

They sat down and they said, we're in total despair. There's no hope. Wherever we look, there's darkness.

Wherever we go, there's death, despair. The life was needed. Now, let me say this to you personally.

Do you need this life? Do I speak to someone who says, I'm in darkness? I haven't a single clue about things spiritual. My mind is dark and my heart is dark and I live in the dark and I need some life and some light. That's why Jesus came.

Someone is in despair and disappointment and you're ready to quit. Someone is worried about death. I say to you, the life was needed.

The second stage, praise God, the life was manifested. Notice the word that he uses for the life was manifested, not manufactured. The life was manifested.

This word manifest means to reveal that which has been hidden. This word is used of the sun in Greek writings. It's dark and cold and out there somewhere is the sun and then our world gets into the right position and the sun appears.

Now, the morning does not invent the sun. The dawn does not manufacture the sun. The dawn reveals the sun.

When Jesus Christ came, He wasn't inventing life. He wasn't manufacturing life. He was revealing life.

To manifest means to take the invisible and make it visible. To take the hidden and make it open. Jesus Christ didn't come to confuse people.

He didn't come to bring darkness. He came to bring light and the life was manifested. Now, what life was manifested? The life of God.

You see, God is not only light, 1 John chapter 1 verse 5, but God is life. When you get to the end of the first epistle of John, He says this in verse 20, And we know that the Son of God is come and hath given us an understanding that we may know Him that is true. And we are in Him that is true, even in His Son, Jesus Christ.

This is the true God and eternal life. Now, if someone comes to you with a book and says Jesus Christ is not God, you show him 1 John 5 verse 20. This is the true God and eternal life.

God is life. And the life was manifested. Now, up till now, this life had been invisible.

God is invisible. And now the invisible was made visible. God stepped out of that light which no man can approach unto and came down and said here I am.

The eternal stepped into the realm of the temporal. The unapproachable approached us. Now, this is a miracle.

If I were God and people treated my world and my law the way they had treated His world and His law, I would never come and visit them. And yet they said the day spring from on high hath visited us. The life was manifested.

Now, if you want to know what kind of life God wants you to live, look at Jesus Christ. Not the Ten Commandments. They are good in their place.

Look at Jesus Christ. Jesus boldly said He that hath seen me hath seen the Father. Have I been so long time with you, He said to His men, and you don't know me.

To look at Jesus Christ means to see God. And this is the miracle of the whole thing. The life was manifested.

He stepped out of the picture. He stepped out of the heavens. And He said here, let me show you what God is like.

And on His lips was one word that people would not believe. Father, Father, Father, Father. I have manifested Thy name unto them.

What name? Father. Our Lord Jesus, during the years of His ministry and His earthly life, tried to get people to understand that God was a loving Father who would forgive and receive. They continued to make God a religious autocrat, a dictator, a tyrant who said do this or else.

The life was manifested. What kind of life was it? Well, it's eternal life, that which was from the beginning. This eternal life.

We show unto you that eternal life. You see, God's life is eternal life. Now, please don't get confused.

Eternal means the life of God. It doesn't just mean living forever. You're going to live forever, saved or unsaved.

When God created man, He created man with the kind of spiritual nature within that's going to live forever. That means immortal. And whether you're saved or unsaved, a child of God or not a child of God, a believer or an unbeliever, you're going to live forever, either in heaven or hell, either in light or darkness, either in love or eternal hatred and conflict.

He's not talking about that. He's talking about a quality of life that is so marvelous. It is God's life in us.

Eternal life doesn't just mean living forever. It means living forever with God. And it means right now living with Him, having fellowship with Him, the life of God in the heart of man, a miracle, a miracle of grace.

And He manifested this life and said, oh, if you just come, come, it's eternal life. A lot of folks have the idea Jesus came to repair our old life. He was a carpenter, you know.

And somebody would come hobbling up and say, oh, I've made a mess of my life. He said, well, let me repair this. Let me replace that.

Oh, no. Salvation is not repairing and replacing. Salvation is receiving a whole new life.

It's eternal life. Now, it's not only eternal, but it's real. It's the real thing, if you'll excuse the phrase.

John said we saw Him. He was not a phantom, a ghost, a myth, hallucination. We saw Him.

We studied Him. We even felt Him. We heard Him speak.

Now, people hear voices and there's nobody there, but it wasn't that. We heard Him, but more than that, we saw Him. More than that, we scrutinized Him.

More than that, we actually felt Him. This thing is real. Our Lord did not come to give us some kind of abstraction.

It's real. It's the kind of thing you can get your hands on. And it's joyful.

These things write we unto you that your joy may be full. There was not much joy in the world when Jesus came. We sing joy to the world, the Lord is come.

There wasn't much joy. All of their religions were empty shells, empty husks. Everything was falling to pieces.

A dark cloud of fear was raining over society when Jesus came. And then the angel appeared and said, we bring you good tidings of great joy. It's a joyful life.

Not an easy life, but a joyful life. Not a life that is protected from sorrow and pain, but a joyful life, joy in the midst of sorrow and pain. It's a loving life that you may have fellowship with us.

You see, sin tears everything apart. Sin walks into a family and wrecks it. Sin walks into a person's life and wrecks it.

But Jesus Christ comes in and there's fellowship, having in common, a oneness. He puts things together. And so the life was manifested, eternal life, real life, joyful life, loving life.

The third stage is that the life was received. John said, I had an experience with Jesus Christ. John could never forget that day when he was standing by the Jordan River.

John the Baptist was standing there and John the Baptist said to John and Andrew, behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. And they went and followed him. He said, what are you looking for? They said, master, where do you dwell? He said, come and see.

And they dwelt with him that day. And their lives were changed. They got a hold of reality, of eternity.

And Andrew said, I think my brother needs to know about this. And he went and found Peter, Cephas, Simon, brought him to Jesus. You see, the life was received.

They had an experience with the Lord Jesus Christ, not external, but internal, not something just religious, something that got on the inside. This is why in the gospel of John, he always links life with something

internal. The water of life.

What do you do with water? You drink it. The bread of life. What do you do with bread? You eat it.

You see, the life has to get on the inside. And they receive that life in his gospel. John wrote like this.

He came unto his own world as the creator and his own people received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he the privilege to become the children of God, even to them that believe on his name. To receive is to believe, to receive him inwardly.

And so the life was received. Now, my friend, have you received this life? That's what it's all about. In order for Jesus Christ to give you life, he had to die.

In order for Jesus Christ to forgive our sins, he had to take our sins. In order for him to impart eternity, he had to go through the sufferings of time. And John says that life was received.

How do we receive that life today? Through the word. The word tells me about the Savior. I trust the Savior.

I believe his word. The life is imparted. He that heareth my word, said Jesus, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life.

Its resurrection, the life is received. The great tragedy today is this. Many people know that the life is needed.

And many more people know that the life was manifested. But not many people want to receive it. They say, yes, Jesus did come to reveal God's life and to give us God's life.

But, but what? Well, I've never received it. Why? And you can give a long list of excuses why you've never received the life, but you can't give me one good reason why you shouldn't receive the life. You can talk to me about your job and your friends and your family and your religious background and your problems with the Bible.

Those are excuses. I say to you, why have you not received the life in Jesus Christ? Which leads us to the fourth stage in this marvelous experience of eternal life. The life needed? Darkness, death, despair.

The life manifested. Eternal life, joyful life, real life, loving life. The life received like bread, like water.

The life shared with others. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you. Why? That you also may have fellowship with us.

And truly our fellowship is with the father and with his son, Jesus Christ. And these things declare we unto you that your joy, or as some versions have it, our joy, and both are true, that your joy and our joy might be full. The life shared.

It's inconceivable that a person should possess life and not want to share life. You are here today because your mother and your father shared their life with you. They were a part of that creative miracle that God gives to parents.

And if you're a Christian, you're a Christian today because Jesus Christ shared his life with you and somebody came along and told you about it. And so John is writing here about the life shared with others.

Life cannot be kept.

Life has to grow. Life has to reach out. There are multitudes of people who claim to have the life, but they have no burden to share the life.

And I wonder if they have the life. That's what John did. That's what Andrew did.

They went out and they shared the life. They said, we have found him. We want to share joy with you.

Lots of people in this world share misery. I tell you, if you want to share misery, just stop anybody, any place and say, how are you? You'll find out. I picked up a newspaper at the newsstand one morning and said to the gentleman there, any good news? He said, is there ever? We want to share joy.

We want to share fellowship. Lots of people in this world are building little walls around themselves and saying, don't get near me. I'm afraid.

Don't touch me. I'm worried. And the Christian says, look, we're reaching out.

We want to share fellowship with you. We want to have in common with you what we have in common with the Father and the Son. We're in fellowship with Him.

You come and be in fellowship with us. And let's worship Him and praise Him and serve Him and experience fullness that your joy might be full. Lots of people are empty these days.

Oh, the emptiness of life. And they're trying to fill up those empty places with entertainment and all of these other things. They don't work.

They don't work. And they go from emptiness to emptiness to emptiness. And we Christians have the joy of going from fullness to fullness to fullness and of His fullness of all we receive and grace upon grace.

And oh, how we ought to share this. The life is shared with others. Now, if you know you have eternal life, are you sharing it with other people? Say, well, I'm a quiet type.

That's all right. God isn't going to change your personality, but He will change your purpose so that what you do, you do for the glory of God. Are you sharing the life? Oh, during this season of the year, how essential it is that we take advantage of the opportunity and share the life.

Now, at what stage of this experience are you this morning? The life needed. Are you in darkness and death and despair? The life needed. The life manifested.

Have you seen that in Jesus Christ is the only life? He is the true God. He is eternal life. The life received.

You say, Pastor, I've never done that. Then do it. Do it today.

Receive that life. You say, but if I do, what will happen? You'll enter into fellowship with life. You'll enter into fellowship with joy.

You'll enter into fellowship with forgiveness. Sin's washed away. A new life comes in.

A new creation. Tremendous power and blessing. You say, I've already done that.

Good, then you ought to be at stage four. The life shared with others. Did anybody learn from us this last week that there was life in this world in Jesus Christ? If not, why not? What were we doing? How busy were we? What was so important that we allowed that despairing, dark and dead man to go by us and we didn't say, hey, mister, we've got life.

You see, this Christmas, the promise of Christmas is life and the promise has always been life. Always. Is it needed? Yes.

Is it available? Yes. Eternal life. Where? In Jesus Christ.

What do you do? You receive him by faith. He that hath the son hath life. He that hath not the son of God hath not life.

And don't you come to me and say, hey, pastor, I'm living it up. Oh, no, you're not. You're dying it down.

The promise of Christmas is the promise of life. Real life. Loving life.

Joyful life. Full life. Eternal life.

The very life of God through Jesus Christ. Will you receive that life? Thank you, Father, that as we meet Jesus Christ in the pages of the word, we meet life and that he's all we need. All that we want is in Jesus.

Thank you, Father, that he's available today, that he died for our sins and arose again and returned to glory, sent the Holy Spirit, the spirit of life. And I pray that today, Father, there will be many here who by faith will receive Jesus Christ and experience life, real life, not some satanic substitute, not some fleshly counterfeit, not some worldly pretense, but real life, authentic life, enduring life. Oh, may it be so.

We ask it in Jesus name. Amen.

Audio: <https://sermonindex1.b-cdn.net/17/SID17626.mp3>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/warren-wiersbe/what-christmas-promises-be-not-bound/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net