John 1: 1-5

The start of John’s Gospel is well known as it is read as the final reading at a traditional service of carols and lessons at Christmas. But interestingly John does not start his Gospel with a nativity story. John, the disciple who Jesus loved, who was there with Jesus during His earthly ministry, writes a spiritual gospel explaining the divinity of Jesus.

John wrote his gospel about 100AD by which time the early church had spread out of Jerusalem and Israel and into Asia minor and Greece. So, there were more non Jewish Christians than Christians with a Jewish background. Those brought up Jewish would have easily understood that God would send a Messiah, but those without a Jewish background would not, and so John explains who Jesus is in a way that would be easily understood.

John describes Jesus as the *logos* – a Greek word meaning the ‘word’ or the ‘reason’ – he is explaining Jesus’ divinity. For the *logos* is the creating, guiding power of God who made the universe. John writes that the word became flesh, so the creating, guiding power of God became a human being; Jesus is divine.

John explains that the word was with God before creation, He is part of eternity with God and so through Jesus we see the eternal and unchanging, loving nature of God. And, says John, the word has always been with God – the closest possible connection – of the same character and essence as God the Father, which together with the Holy Spirit we understand as God the trinity.

In verse 3 John says that Jesus is the agent through which all were made. He was there at creation, and this is why He and only He can save it – by entering His own creation and atoning for all that human beings have done wrong, He brings salvation.

So, in the first three verses John has explained who Jesus is – the word, divine and with God the Father at creation. And in verse four John goes on to describe Jesus as **life** and **light.**

‘Life’ appears over and over again in John’s gospel. Jesus said ‘I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full’ (10:10). He also said ‘I am the way, the truth and life’ (14:6). Life with Jesus is joyful and fulfilling, the very opposite of condemnation, guilt and death.

William Barclay wrote ‘a man who lives a Christless life exists’, but knowing Jesus brings us life and life to the full, and through him death becomes the transition into a fuller, eternal life with God.

Sin and guilt blocks real joyful life and it is only through the forgiveness Jesus brings that we are free to live fully, as God wants for us. John mentions the word ‘believe’ 70 times in his gospel – if we believe in Jesus, if we follow Him, listen to Him, are guided by Him, we have eternal life.

John also describes Jesus as light. Jesus himself says ‘I am the light of the world’ (8:12). Light dispels darkness. In the creation story dark, formless chaos goes when God says let there be light. Light enables us to see clearly, Jesus reveals to us the true nature of God and how we should live if we follow Him. Also, light reveals to us our true reality – warts and all if you like – He shows us where we need forgiveness and healing and where we need to change.

In verse 5 John writes that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it. GOD WINS. Jesus, the light of the world, triumphs over the darkness of sin, evil and death. Some may hate, persecute and try to put out the light, but they will not succeed. Jesus’ light is unextinguishable, because God’s love is eternal and His loving nature never changes, never waivers.

In just the first five verses, John explains who Jesus is and why people need Him so badly. The word, the life, the light – this is our security as Christians, our joy, our hope.

Life may be difficult, and our world is certainly troubled, but through Jesus we have seen God’s love for us in action, the love that brings fullness of life for all eternity, that no darkness can take from us. Amen