

1 John 1:1-9

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. ² The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. ³ We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We write this to make our joy complete.

⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶ If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. ⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

⁸ If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

Life isn't a matter of milestones but of moments.

--- *Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy*

One life - a little gleam of Time between two Eternities.

--- *Thomas Carlyle, Scottish writer*

Life is a great big canvas; throw all the paint on it you can.

--- *Danny Kaye*

Life is like a dogsled team. If you ain't the lead dog, the scenery never changes.

--- *Lewis Grizzard AJC journalist*

Life is not having been told that the man has just waxed the floor.

--- *Ogden Nash American poet*

All you touch and all you see, Is all your life will ever be.

--- *Pink Floyd "Breathe"*

Life is a horizontal fall.

--- *French poet Jean Cocteau*

Life is a cement trampoline.

--- *Howard Nordberg*

The Internet is so big, so powerful and so pointless that for some people it is a complete substitute for life.

--- *Andrew Brown, English journalist*

If I had my whole life to live over again, I don't think I'd have the strength.

--- *Flip Wilson*

For all that other people or famous people or you or I might say about it, what if life isn't just about me? What if it's bigger than that? What if it goes beyond what we experience or the mark we might think to make in the 10 or 20 or 50 or 90 years we're given? There is something that goes beyond what Tiger Woods did and what Oprah says and how your team did this year and how they'll do next year, something that goes beyond getting groceries every week and keeping your house in good repair and your car running, something that goes beyond management and labor, time clocks and vacation days, government activities and school district decisions, having enough life insurance and being able to have

health insurance. That something is life in fellowship with God. Go beyond what you normally think of life and grab hold of this:

On the First Christmas, Life Appeared

It's not that we can stop giving attention to all the things we have to do and the various concerns we all have, but let's all understand that God does not intend our lives to be defined by successes or failures, good years or bad years, sickness or health, poverty or wealth. When we talk so much about life with God, let's remember who God is. He is bigger than your house, your family, your problems and how many years on earth you'll have. God never started and he'll never end. He always has been and always will be. When you have life with God, you have something bigger than life. That's why it's called eternal life – life with God that will never end.

On Christmas Eve we are stopped in our tracks by these arresting words: the life appeared. The God who always has been and always will be, the God who is life itself appeared in a manger. World-creating power, blinding-to-the-eye glory, incomprehensible wisdom and the source of all life shows up with ten little fingers and ten little toes. The God who never slumbers is sleeping like a baby for 22 out of 24 hours.

Instead of deadlines and stress and employment issues and family issues and tiredness and frustration and trying to get along with people and trying to make ends meet, what if this holy child is really what life is all about! What if he is actually life itself! John proclaims to us tonight that he is. Jesus is not a concept. This little boy is bigger than all of us, bigger than everything. He's the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. He who is life itself appeared in a manger, in Mary's arms, in the temple, on a mount giving a sermon, on trial before Caiaphas, on a cross, in a grave and then not in a grave.

Life isn't merely about you and me and the 6 o'clock news. This boy was eternally with God the Father, is one with God the Father, created the world with God the Father, but appeared, became fully human, to give you the life that's really life. This Jesus whom John also saw, heard and touched links you with the eternal God. If you've been looking for it in the wrong place, that's where the joy is – in fellowship with God.

God is light. He is everything that is right and true and good and pure and holy. So what's he doing hanging out with people like us? We can't be in fellowship with him if we are everything that is wrong, false, bad, dirty and sinful. Nor can any of us think for a moment that we can be in good with God but do or think or live however we please. What cuts us off from God and robs us of joy and can bury us in despair is sin.

Every denial of our sin is a dismissal of God's Son lying in the manger. Whenever we conceal our sin instead of confess our sin, we don't celebrate Christmas, we desecrate it. The day that we don't need to say, "God have mercy on me, a sinner," is the day we turn away from the manger and away from the cross and walk into the darkness. There's no life with God and there's no joy to be found, not even on Christmas, if we think our sins don't smell, if we think we can waltz through December with nothing to

confess and walk into January with our “decent behavior” putting a smile on God’s face. That kind of thinking would not be a lie. That would be a big lie.

When the life appeared in the manger, God shined his light in the world, the light which has scattered the darkness of our sinfulness and has given us life with God. When this boy was about 33, your sin disappeared in his crucified, dead body, never to see the light of day. Here is God’s Christmas promise to you through his Son Jesus: Whenever you know and admit to God the sinner you are and the sins you’ve committed and you’re looking and begging for mercy and pardon and peace, God’s response is entirely predictable. What sin? I eliminated your sin in my Son. The blood of Jesus, God’s Son, purifies us from all sin.

The Jesus of Christmas is the Jesus of Good Friday and the Jesus of Easter Sunday. When you have to look deep inside yourself day after day and God convinces you that you can’t like what you see there, this is what you are to know: There is no debt of sin that Jesus didn’t already pay for. There is no disgraceful sin that Jesus wasn’t already shamed for. There is no sin that makes you worthy of death that Jesus didn’t already die for. That’s the angels’ good news. That’s what prompted the song, “Glory to God in the highest.” That’s what left shepherds awe-struck. That’s what amazed those who heard the shepherds. That’s what Mary pondered in her heart. That’s your peace with God because in Jesus God’s favor rests on you.

Life appeared, bigger than you and bigger than me, bigger than all our problems, bigger than all our sins, bigger than the world’s sins, but small enough to be held in his mother’s arms, so that you can know this life and have this life and enjoy this life with God that will last forever.

In his day John wrote these things to people like you, as he put it in chapter 5, people who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. The joy I’ll have this Christmas is knowing that all of you are walking in the light of Jesus’ forgiveness, grace and peace. We have eternal life in him. That means nothing will ever separate us from him or from each other. Nothing. Ever. That is life!

MDS