

**Message: “God is Light”**

**Carol shares her story:** “‘Even a place as beautiful as an island could feel dreary when you’re all alone. My husband was away working, and I was left to take care of our 11-month-old son, Edward.’ Carol was feeling lonely.

**‘Why don’t you come with me to the beach?’** her Mom called to ask. ‘It’s never crowded this time of year.’

**Why not?** Maybe there’d be other kids to play with. But when Mom dropped them off the place was deserted.

**‘Looks like it’s just us,’** Carol told Edward as she carried him across the sand. Carol put down a blanket, and he toddled toward the water. Edward pointed eagerly at the sparkling blue. ‘All right,’ she said, picking him up. ‘Let’s take a dip.’

**Holding her baby securely,** Carol waded out into the surf, careful not to go too deep. Edward was delighted with their little adventure and squirmed in her arms. She took another step. Suddenly, the sand beneath her feet disappeared! Carol dropped into the waves.

**She struggled to tread water and keep Edward’s head above the surface.** They were caught in an undertow! Water pulled at them from all sides, creating a whirlpool-like hole that dragged them under. Edward was choking and coughing up water. Her son was drowning!

**Carol kicked her way to the surface again and again,** but she was getting weaker. ‘*God, help us!*’ she thought frantically. Then, hands grasped her arms from behind. The grip was strong but soft at the same time. ‘*What a person this must be,*’ Carol thought.

**The water was no problem.** They lifted the two, as if they were light as can be. They set them down gently back on their beach blanket.

**Carol pushed herself up onto her elbows** and shook the saltwater from her eyes. She turned to thank their rescuer - but there was no one there. Not a soul in sight. They were all alone.

**Edward, crying and spitting up, was lying safely** on Carol’s stomach. She wrapped him in a towel. Just as she finished calming him, she

spotted her mother's car past the dunes. Exhausted and relieved, Carol trudged up to it.

**'What is it?'** her Mom said, seeing their distress.

**'We had quite a scare,'** Carol said. She felt the chill of the ocean melting away, warmed by the light of the sun. Even if she sometimes felt lonely, Carol now knew she was never truly alone."<sup>1</sup>

**It seems we can add another title to Jesus' many accolades:**

**Divine Lifeguard.** I think this is a good place to start our new series of reflections. Given the majesty and glory of what was revealed and celebrated on Easter, we're now back where we live, still basking in the glow, still living the promise, but reentering the march of days and the living of life.

**That is why we now ask, "How we shall live?"** Easter came. Resurrection happened. So what? It's like the wise person who said, "I don't care how high you jumped when you got saved, I want to know how you walked when you came back down."

**We don't walk alone.** We have a divine lifeguard to watch over us. Think about the role of a lifeguard. They tirelessly and endlessly watch out for people, paying attention to our situation and condition, scanning for distant storms and unseen currents that can drag us down.

**All too often, we ignore the risks we face.** There are a few scenarios which come to mind. Maybe we're like those at the beach so focused on fun, we don't watch out for the waves, currents or other people. Maybe we're like those who overestimate their ability, swimming out past the point of no return, putting ourselves – and possibly others, at risk. Or maybe we're like those who are unprepared for the ocean, particularly if our experience has been swimming pools and calm lakes.

**No matter what, when we find ourselves in need,** we have a Divine Lifeguard who watches over us, helps us and takes us to the place where we are to go. We can be in the light of God. All we need to do is rely on God, call out in our need, and then remain in God's love light.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://guideposts.org/angels-and-miracles/angels/rescued-by-an-angelic-lifeguard>

**During this season, we're going to consider how we live as Jesus' followers, as believers.** To help us, we're spending time with the first letter of John. The author teaches us some theology, which is a way of describing what we know about the nature of God. Learning about God will help us better embrace what was revealed in the empty tomb. It will help us understand what it means to be in a relationship with God and people. It will help us as we decide who we are and how we live.

**The first thing we encounter is this: God is light.** God's light is the light of love and life, given by grace. When God spoke, there was light. The waters of chaos calmed, and order was established. All of creation is in relationship with God. The divine light gives life. It is good.

**One caution:** please be careful of how you use the metaphor of light versus dark. This language has been applied to skin tone and used as a justification for racism. This is not the author's intent. They are merely contrasting the lifegiving goodness of God's presence with the absence of God. God's light is a spiritual light. It gives true life, not hatred, prejudice or death.

***"God is light and there is no darkness in God at all"*** (1 John 1:5). Sin and evil cannot exist in the presence of God. Yet we all sin. Paul spoke about our struggle to do good when we so often wrong others.

**Does this mean we don't deserve to be in heaven?** There's been a lot of teaching and preaching about the state of our soul. You may have heard the "fire & brimstone" messages. We can read the words, hear the sermon and think, "I'm not worthy. If you really knew me, you'd know God and other people won't have anything to do with me."

**Hear this: you have value.** What's being revealed isn't about our worth. Jesus said, "*God didn't send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through him*" (John 3:17). Jesus' birth, life, teaching, death and resurrection are God's way of making a new covenant relationship with humanity and all of creation.

**Jesus is showing us what life based on love, kindness, dignity and respect is like.** It's the beloved community, where we gather with family and friends to praise God, learn together, and care for all who are

in need. Then we go out to share this love and extend an invitation to our neighbors to come and join us.

**To me, this is a lot like a recovery group.** We're so used to self-centered and me-first ways of living. We're addicted to sin. We need a higher power to help us. And we need a group of people who we can trust, who will see us for who and what we are and love us anyway. Yes, we must admit we sin. Relationships are founded on truth. But, once we do, we'll find we aren't rejected for our wrongdoing. Those who also know difficulty are there to help us pick ourselves up, brush ourselves off, make amends and rejoin the journey with the group.

**God's light shines on the path forward, the steps we can take to live in this way.** This is life in a community of faith. It's what life in heaven with the divine family will be like. This isn't a reflection on what was, but on what is now revealed and what will be.

**The empty tomb makes this possible.** God's promise is now open to all. Eternal life is accessible. The gift is within reach because of Jesus' resurrection. And the new reality in which we now live is one of joy.

**John said, "*We are writing these things so our joy may be complete*"** (v4). Being part of community is how we live in Christ's light. We live and work in a place of mutual support, shared wisdom and communal hope. And when we fall apart, we are put back together by the loving arms of a community of faith. This fills us all with joy and brings joy to God as well.

Walk, says John, walk in such a way those around you are enlightened. Walk, says John, walk in such a way the world is left a better place – cleaner, sustainable, abundant. Walk, says John, because we are people of the Resurrection who know death is not the final word but a promise of life.

**Walk in the light of God's love for it is the way of grace.** Amen.

*Let us pray ...*

**Acts 4:32-35 (CEB)**

The community of believers was one in heart and mind. None of them would say, “This is mine!” about any of their possessions, but held everything in common. The apostles continued to bear powerful witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and an abundance of grace was at work among them all. There were no needy persons among them. Those who owned properties or houses would sell them, bring the proceeds from the sales, and place them in the care and under the authority of the apostles. Then it was distributed to anyone who was in need.

**1 John 1:1-2:2 (CEB)**

We announce to you what existed from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have seen and our hands handled, about the word of life. The life was revealed, and we have seen, and we testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. What we have seen and heard, we also announce it to you so that you can have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We are writing these things so that our joy can be complete.

This is the message that we have heard from him and announce to you: “God is light and there is no darkness in him at all.” If we claim, “We have fellowship with him,” and live in the darkness, we are lying and do not act truthfully. But if we live in the light in the same way as he is in the light, we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin. If we claim, “We don’t have any sin,” we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from everything we’ve done wrong. If we claim, “We have never sinned,” we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

My little children, I’m writing these things to you so that you don’t sin. But if you do sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous one. He is God’s way of dealing with our sins, not only ours but the sins of the whole world.