

Growing into the Life of Christ

John 1:1–5, 9–14

Let us pray: Father God, thank You for giving us a new year. In this new year, build us up as a church that continually receives the powerful light of Your Word and reflects it faithfully to shine upon the world. We pray in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our light. Amen.

A scientist once challenged God to a contest to see who could make the better human being. God agreed. As the scientist bent down to pick up some dirt to begin, God said, “No, no—you go find your own dust.”

As we enter the new year, each of us carries certain goals and hopes. From the Lord's perspective, there is also something He desires for us. Just as we hope that our children and grandchildren will grow well and become mature and fruitful people, so our Father God desires that the life of Christ He has placed within us would grow and bear fruit.

For life to be sustained and to grow in a healthy way, human beings need sunlight like plants. That is true for our bodies. In the same way, our spirits also need light.

Through the Gospel of John, Christ reveals Himself as the true Light who shines in order to give us life. This Light recreates those who receive Him as children of God, brings them into participation in God's glory, and enables them to dwell in the fullness of grace and truth.

My hope today is that as we come to understand how this Light gives us life, we may renew our hope for being reshaped and growing anew in Christ throughout this year.

This Light that was present in the beginning is the same light we encounter in Genesis chapter 1. When the Word that was in the beginning shines upon us as Light, what happens to us? Genesis shows us clearly. While Genesis speaks first of the creation of the visible world, the old creation, it also points to the new creation that has taken place in Christ, for all Scripture bears witness to Him.

The six days of creation represent the whole course of a Christian's life. They show the stages through which we grow.

The time before the first day of creation corresponds to our condition before we believed in Jesus Christ. Genesis tells us that the earth was formless and empty, and

darkness was over the face of the deep. Before faith is given to us, our lives are formless and empty, no matter how much wealth we possess or how high our position may be. We are living in darkness. The deep refers to the waters of death. Yet Scripture says that the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Before the light came to us, the Spirit of God first came over our darkness and was already guiding us so that we might come to know Jesus Christ. When we went to church holding our mother's hand, or when we went because a friend invited us, it was the Spirit of God who was at work.

With the coming of light, the first day of creation begins. Strictly speaking, light was not created. As we saw in John chapter 1, this light came forth from the Word, who is God. When God said, "Let there be light," that light came into the world. When we first heard about Jesus from someone, when someone invited us to go to church, and we said, "All right, I will go," that light was shining upon us.

However, if we do not move beyond this point, we can remain as "first-day" Christians. If we come to church only once or twice a year, like a plant that receives light only once or twice a year, we cannot grow.

As we continue to receive the light of Christ, we move on to the stage of the second day. God placed an expanse in a world filled with water. It is like submerging a balloon in water and creating a space within it. After we receive God's light and come to know Jesus Christ, a space for Him begins to form in our hearts and minds. Time and place for God appear within our lives. We begin to think about Jesus, and we come to church. An expanse is also formed in our relationships. Where we once spent our time mainly with those who did not believe in Jesus, we now come to have more friends who do. As this space grows wider, the waters of death are pushed back.

Yet a faith that remains only at the second day is still a stage in which there is limited space and time for Christ, but He is not everything. The waters of death are still present. Colossians 3:11 tells us that Christ is all. This is the direction in which God is leading us.

On the third day, God gathered the waters into one place and caused the dry land to appear. This land refers to the good soil that comes into being in Christ. As our faith grows further, the waters of death recede, and the land is revealed where the Lord can plant the tree of life within us. Christ is planted, and a foundation is laid for Him to grow as the tree of life. On this third day, God also created plants and fruit trees

by His word. On this land, we prepare to become strong oaks that are not easily shaken, palm trees that share their fruit, and a vine that is built together with other members of the body of Christ.

Without the fourth day, however, these plants cannot live well. On the fourth day, God created the sun, the moon, and the stars. The spiritual sun that our souls need is the Word of God. Many Christians live without the Scriptures, but without the Word, there can be no growth of life at all. The spiritual moon is the church that reflects the light of Christ. The stars can be understood as believers who are mature in faith. Through fellowship among Christians, the Spirit of Christ flows from one to another. This fellowship nurtures us and leads us toward mature faith. That is why we need a community of faith in which we are nourished by the Word and grow through mutual fellowship.

On the fifth day, God created the fish. Fish represent a vitality that can live even in the waters of death. This life is more dynamic than the life of plants. God also created the birds of the air. They represent believers who are no longer bound to earthly things.

On the sixth day, God created livestock and wild animals. Livestock offering milk and meat represent Christians who have a life-giving power that provides for others. A further stage of growth is represented by the wild animals, which point to conquering strength, like that of a lion. This is faith that overcomes sin, Satan, and the world.

Beyond this, God created Adam. Adam is a type or pattern of the One who was to come (Rom 5:14). He prefigures Christ, who would enter the world. That Eve came from Adam points to the church, the bride, coming forth from Christ. Concerning the union of Adam and Eve, the apostle Paul quotes Genesis 2:24 in Ephesians 5:31–32 and explains it from the perspective of new creation, saying, “This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.”

The final goal of creation is union with Christ. The Lord desires that we, as the church, will become His bride, and He is calling us to be prepared and adorned as a bride. The reason God gave us light in Genesis chapter 1 was to present us as a pure bride to Christ (2 Cor 11:2).

While we were in darkness, that is, while we were still sinners, the Spirit of God came to us first. Then God worked through His Word, and from that Word came light,

which marked the first day of our salvation. How, then, do we continue to grow through each stage? Just as a person does not grow simply by wanting himself to grow taller, growth is something only Christ can bring about. Yet for growth to happen, we must be nourished daily with good food. In the same way, our role is to pray to the Lord, to enjoy Him in His Word, and to have fellowship with Him, so that Christ may take full possession of us. The work of the beginning takes place in us day after day.

When we first invite the Spirit of God, open the Word to receive it, and then dwell in the light that comes from it, the work of new creation continues throughout our entire lives. Spirit, Word, and light. This order does not change.

This work of new creation is joyful, but it also comes with the pains and labors of childbirth, because our old creation and old self constantly try to pull us back. But if you long for the light of the Word, that Word will divide our soul from spirit and lead us into the realm of the spirit. It will divide our joints and marrow, our fleshly living, so that the evil spirits of darkness retreat (cf. Heb 4:12).

In this way, God will cause us to grow step by step, with the vitality of good soil, plants, fish, livestock, and then wild animals. In the end, He will make us into the beautiful bride of Christ. May you live with this vision and hope throughout the year 2026. Amen.

Let us pray: Loving Father, thank You for creating new life in us through the cross of Christ. Continue to feed us as Your children, so that we may not only drink spiritual milk, but also grow into mature faith able to receive solid food. Even when we experience the pains of growth, comfort and strengthen us with the loving words of the Father. Enable us to enjoy the life of Christ in every part of our lives, to let it flow out to others, and to become a pure bride, full of life and fruitfulness, bearing spiritual offspring. We pray in the name of Jesus, our Bridegroom. Amen.