

LIGHT: LIGHT OF THE WORLD**Isaiah 60:1-3, John 1:1-14****(Read John 1:1-14)**

Intro: This is the last Sunday of Advent. This Advent, which has been the first four Sundays of this month, and next week where we are continuing to celebrate Christmas, our theme is been redeeming the symbols of the season. So many things that have little or nothing to do with celebrating the birth of Christ, like Frosty the Snowman, sleigh bells, heroic reindeer, and tubby merry elves, just to name a very few, have become synonymous with the celebration of Christmas. We chose several symbols of Christmas that are appropriate for helping us to worship Jesus who came to a manger. We have looked at feasting and then evergreens in the first two weeks. Last week, we looked at snow, and next week, in our fifth Sunday fellowship, we will discuss the giving of gifts, and talk about what we can bring to the King.

Today we're talking about light which is definitely a symbol of this season. When the Magi finally arrived to meet the Christ Child perhaps as many as 2 years after he was born, they followed an amazing star that guided them to where he was. The texts that Bonnie read earlier from Isaiah and what I just read from John one, talks about the light of the world. So, this is a discussion that doesn't have to go far to find a very wonderful spiritual application.

As we learn about this, we will have some tools to share about the light of the world. We can think about it as we put our Christmas lights up, or as we take them down. We can teach our children about it as we travel around looking at beautiful Christmas decorations, or as we walk through Candy Lane Trail at Freer Field. We can even use it as a teaching as we drive past a massive light display like we saw the other night as we sang Christmas carols to Marguerite Mahlke. Let's talk about light.

First. . .

Darkness is for lying down, but light is for rising up

- I love sunshine! The lack of rain that drove our region to a significant drought over the late Spring and Summer had one up-side – we had a lot of beautiful sunny days – definitely more than what is normal. That memory, coupled with the fact that November and December have been exceptionally gray and gloomy has threatened to sink my spirit into the pits. I need light to raise me up!
- The prophet has a message of hope to illumine God's people – *Arise, shine, for your light has come and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you.* Isaiah 60:1 The darkness of a gloomy world has its inhabitants nodding to sleep, but the light of God that shines through his people shouts, "Arise, shine!"
- It's the job of the people of is to shine out to the world. David Guzik writes, "*First we receive God's light and then we have a service to perform (arise, shine). You can't shine until your light has come, but once it has come, there is something wrong if you don't arise and shine.*"
- And the glory of the Lord is risen upon his people and it's no earthly light, this is the light of the Glory of God. This not a harsh and burning light – it's the kind that warms the soul of people who have been locked in the gloom. When and I buy Christmas lights, no matter for what purpose, we like the ones that have a gentle and warm glow – they are so much more welcoming than the cold and harsh lights we often see. The light that shines through God's people needs to be welcoming. In Isaiah God shows that his plan to illuminate the world will be all encompassing – not just the Jewish people, but the Gentiles too. The light is for all humanity.
- That's why light at Christmas time is so very apropos. Because . . .

The light shines in the darkness

- That light is Jesus – the light of the world. Without Jesus we wilt away from the lack of light. We're lost. My brothers and I use cat eyes for marking our path to our deer stands. Once we have determined the best place to lie in wait for an unsuspecting deer, we mark the path with reflective tacks that are called cat eyes. In the cold darkness at 5:30 AM as we enter the forest, our path is marked by blindingly bright tacks on trees and logs about ten yards apart. A good way to mess with someone, and, of course, we would never consider it, would be to remove those tacks, or worse change them to take the one following them around in circles.

- In John 1 Jesus is referred to as the very Word of God. He is the once and final message for the salvation of humanity – he is the life and the light of humanity. F. F. Bruce, writes, *“In the first creation (in Genesis 1:2), ‘darkness was upon the face of the deep’ until God called light into being, so the new creation involves the banishing of spiritual darkness by the light which shines in the Word.”*
- And, even with such brilliance, shining in the darkness, our text tells us that the darkness did not comprehend it. We saw that even the people of God, the ones he told to “Arise and shine!” didn’t see the light. Listen, *He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him.* John 1:10-11. Guzik responds to these verses with, *“The world did not know Him: This is strange. God came to the same world He created, to the creatures made in His image, and yet the world did not know Him.”*
- But to the ones who do know him – the light washes away the darkness. Lionel Whiston writes, *“Jesus was truly alive and his life was a beacon light to humankind. The life of Jesus was the light by which men were to walk in a new dimension of being. The life of Jesus, like light, revealed the dark places as blacker and visible places as brighter. Jesus showed people their selves as they were, but also the selves that they might become.”* It’s a light that transforms and grows the way a light in a greenhouse helps plants to flourish and grow in the cold, dark depths of winter.

Jesus is the light and he overcomes the darkness

- Yes, he does more than shine. Jesus enlightens the spirit, mind, and heart of everyone who responds to the light. It was always there. Floyd Filson tells us, *“This light was always in the world he had made. He was always illuminating all men; yet because of the hostile darkness and the sin of those very men, the world did not recognize the light and acknowledge its obligation to him.”*
- And there is no other light. John points out that John the Baptist came and he pointed to the light, but that he was not the light. The light can only be Jesus and there is no other light because there is no other way. An important point here is that John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and so should we. Being with the light as we are when we are with Jesus helps us absorb the light so we can take to a dark world.

Conclusion: Our final verse is how we will close out our talk. It describes how light is a symbol that is easily redeemed at Christmas. Listen, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.* John 1:14. Whiston, writes, *“This eternal Christ, the son of God, empties himself of all prerogatives and takes on human form and relates to us as a fellow human being. Yet shining through this flesh in word and deed is the glory of God. Only one born of God could be so glorious, so full of grace and truth.”*

Jesus came into the world that he created to be just like his created ones. He came as the lowliest of the lowly – as a baby to a peasant family and his first bed, a feed trough. He was human and he knows what humanness means – he’s experienced it. He knows us. But he’s God in all his glory. We have seen his glory – it shines bright. It shines brightly in his people. They come out of the darkness, blinking at the brightness of the light of the world.

Jesus is the light of the world. It’s perfect reminder to us as we look at the lights on the trees behind me, or as we drive around and see properties decorated by their owners to be the biggest display anywhere! All the while, they are pointing to Jesus. Their lights proclaim the light of the world. Amen.