**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 12-24-2022
The Light in the Darkness**

One of the things that I am thankful for at Christmas each year is that the days are beginning to get longer again. Can I have an amen?

I just love the long days of late spring and summer. And as much as I love the beauty of autumn, I never enjoy the days becoming shorter.

And then there is that moment late in the fall when we all can echo the words of Yogi Berra, the famous baseball player as well as sayer of many famous quotes, who once stated, “It gets late early out here.”

It has been getting late early, hasn’t it? And with it getting late early, it feels later than it is. Even driving my daughters’ home from gymnastics at 5:30 in the dark makes it feel quite late.

But the days, thankfully, are beginning to get longer again. More light is returning. Praise God!

Friends, in the Scriptures, the images of light and darkness are very prevalent. Even in the very opening sentences of the Bible, we read that darkness was over the surface of the deep. And then God said “Let there be light.” And there was light.

God spoke and creation happened. And this is described as light coming and dispensing the darkness.

And again, through the Old Testament and into the New Testament, the imagery of light and darkness is woven throughout.

\*And all of this makes a lot of sense in the natural. When you think about it, until recently, with the harnessing of electricity, life was rather different. When it got dark, people just didn’t flip on the light switch. No, when it was dark, it was dark.

Yes, there was the light of the moon or a lamp or a fire. But when the sun went down, streets quietly emptied, doors were closed and windows were shuttered.

Darkness then was typically the time of the day when people did things that were not so good. Perhaps you have heard the phrase, it was done under the “cover of darkness.”

Darkness was and still is connected with things like sin, with hiddenness, with ignorance, with deception. Light, in contrast, was associated with truth and clarity and holiness.

The Apostle Paul tells the Christians living in the city of Thessalonica in 1 Thess. 5:5, “**5You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness.”**

Similarly, Paul tells believers from the city of Colossae in Colossians 1:13, **13For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.**

Again, light and darkness. Come out of the darkness and into the light.

John, in the letter we call 1 John, tells his readers these words in chapter 1.

**5This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. 7But 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.**

So, as we turn again to the Christmas story through the lens of each of the Gospel writers, it is not surprising that one way the coming of Christ into the world was understood was Jesus being light entering into the darkness.

Now, one other thing before we turn to tonight’s featured Scripture, it is important to remember that the darkness that we are speaking about is a spiritual darkness. There is nothing wrong with the color black or with darker colors. There is the beauty in dark skin, there is the shine off of black metal and the grandeur of shadowy forests, which is truly beautiful. And even for some people, believe it or not, there is beauty found in those black uniforms of the Pittsburgh Steelers. 😊

Seriously though, when we think about darkness, it is a spiritual darkness that we are speaking about.

So let us turn now to John’s Gospel where and the images of light and darkness are central to the Christmas story. Please turn with me to John 1:1-18.

**1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome[**[**a**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+1%3A1-18&version=NIV#fen-NIV-26050a)**] it.**

**6There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.**

**9The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. 10He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. 11He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him. 12Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.**

**14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.**

**15(John testified concerning him. He cried out, saying, “This is the one I spoke about when I said, ‘He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.’”) 16Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given. 17For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. 18No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.**

These words of John are truly amazing. These 18 verses in one way or another touch on all the major themes found in John’s Gospel. One theme is that Jesus is God and yet is somehow also with God. Another theme is coming alive in Jesus and being born again. And then there are the themes of grace and truth and testimony and belief.

And finally, themes of light and darkness.

While John does not describe the birth of Jesus in the details that Matthew and Luke do, John instead goes way, way back.

The very words of John chapter 1 are deeply connected to Genesis chapter 1. Both begin, in fact, with the words, “In the beginning.” And both of them speak of darkness and light.

Which one is stronger? Light. When light comes, dark must leave.

And so Christmas for John is all about God becoming a man and bringing the light of God into the darkness of this fallen world.

John states in verse 5, **“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”** The light wins.

In the natural, when the sun comes up each day, darkness goes away.

The coming of Jesus that happened at Christmas brought the light of God into the world in such a way that this light would never go out. It will never be extinguished.

Since the fall of humanity into sin, and the downward spiral that ensued, reveals people in desperate need of the light of God.

So how did Jesus bring light into the world? It was through His holy and sinless life. The words Jesus said and how He said them. The actions that He did and how He did them. All of this was bringing the light of God into the darkness within humanity.

With the coming of Jesus at Christmas, a light has dawned. As the prophet Isaiah wrote in reference to the future Messiah. “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light.”

Would everyone embrace this light? No. The light of Jesus shines over all, but each person has the God-given freedom to embrace the light of God or to resist and reject the light of God.

Jesus doesn’t force anyone to embrace the light of God and turn to living from a self-centered way to a God-centered way.

This leads to the big question for today. What is expected of us? And it is simply this.

**We are to let the light of Jesus shine in us and shine through us.**

By letting the light of Jesus shine in us, we are inviting the Holy Spirit to convict us of any sin. And whatever He sheds His loving light on, we are to look to Him for help to allow the light of God into that part of our life. He will give us grace to grow in Jesus Christ.

A beautiful prayer taken right from the Bible is “search my Lord and see if there be any wicked way in me and lead me in the way everlasting.” This is a good way to pray. Let us offer the Holy Spirit full permission to convict us, to shed God’s light upon us, that we might grow more like Jesus.

The Bible calls his sanctification. It involves us becoming more like Jesus in godly living.

And there is joy that comes as we yield to the Holy Spirit’s loving conviction.

But this sanctification also involves letting the light of Jesus shine through us. Each of us is part of God’s plan to continue to let the light of Jesus shine and overcome the darkness of this world. It is truly Christ’s light in us, but God desires each of us to be vessels of his light in this world.

Let’s be intentional in seeking to share Jesus with others. We carry the light of Jesus into this world by boldly sharing Jesus with others. Invite them to church. Invite them to an event or a small group or out to lunch. Build relationship with people. Be open about your faith. And look for opportunities to bring that light of Christ to others.

Isn’t that amazing? Our amazing God, who doesn’t need any of us, desires to shine His light and His love through us. That’s just amazing. With the help of His Spirit, let’s shine for Him in this world. Amen.

Sources:

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Awaiting the Already by Magrey R. deVega