

Lighting the Way – Pr Jim Sprengle – Christmas Day, 2021

- I. **John 1:5 & 14** - ⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ¹⁴ 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.
- II. **How do you feel this morning?**
 - a. Some of you might be very tired after a long night of time with family, wrapping presents, or drinking an eggnog or two (if you could find eggnog somewhere 😊)
 - b. Some of you might be very happy with all the blessings you've experienced
 - c. Some of you are ready to go back to normal – after several weeks of build up and stress
 - d. On the other hand, you might not want the great feelings of Christmas to end yet!
 - e. Maybe some of you are just at peace, knowing that your Savior, Jesus is alive and well.
 - f. No matter how you feel this morning, one thing is sure – Jesus Christ is born today – the Light of the world overcomes the darkness.
 - g. One of the normal feelings on Christmas Day is letdown.
 - i. It's hard when we put so much emotion and preparation into a specific day, and then when it's over... well, we feel down.
 - ii. For our family, we have planned and planned for Christmas, and now, we only have a few short days left... it just doesn't last forever
 - iii. For children, I can remember many Christmas Days after the presents were all unwrapped and the overload of adrenaline was worn off – and I felt drained and sort of disappointed
 - iv. These are days that we have high expectations for, and rarely do they live up to the hype...
 - h. Unless of course, the focus is on Christ and not all the other stuff.
- III. **Light overcomes darkness.**
 - a. Have you ever noticed how just a small light overcomes the darkness?
 - i. I remember visiting the lava caves outside of Bend with the youth one year... it was absolutely pitch black, but even the weakest light could help you see to walk around.
 - ii. I often use the light on my watch to help me see when I don't want to disturb Michele by turning a light on – and in complete darkness, I can manage to get around with the dim light of my watch face.
 - iii. Just the smallest amount of light can pierce the darkness.
 - b. John is describing the work of Jesus Christ in the beginning of his Gospel.
 - i. John's Gospel is a little different than the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, because he spends more time describing Jesus as God.

- ii. It's always been a debate about who Jesus is – especially if the Bible claims that He is actually God Himself, but John is very clear...
 - 1. In verse 1 it says, "The Word was God," and verse 14 says, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."
 - 2. Jesus is the Word made flesh, the Christ child who came to light the darkness.
- c. When I think of Jesus' birth, I am reminded of several images of light...
 - i. (Matt. 4:16) The people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned. (a reference to Isaiah 42:7)
 - ii. (Lk. 1:79) [The Messiah will] give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
 - iii. (Jn. 12:46) [Jesus said,] "I have come into the world as light, so that whoever believes in Me may not remain in darkness."
- d. So the Bible is a book of many different authors spanning almost 2000 years, and throughout the Old Testament, the prophets wrote about the coming of the Light or the Messiah.
 - i. In all the worst times of life and experience, God send a Savior to give light in the darkness
 - ii. As we live in the "valley of the shadow of death," (Psalm 23:4) we don't have to fear any evil, because we have a Good Shepherd with us who gets us through the darkness
 - iii. And the Prophet Isaiah says, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone," (Isa. 9:2).
- e. For thousands of years, those who believed in the one true God looked forward to a day that the Light would come.

IV. **Jesus, the Light, came in a simple way.**

- a. I suppose if it were up to human beings, Jesus would have come like a nuclear explosion – a flash of light with unbelievable force and power.
- b. Yet, He arrived in the most humble of ways, born in presence of animals in a stable.
- c. Only the shepherds in the field were given a sense of the true power and meaning of God's presence in the form of a baby in swaddling cloths in a manger – as the heavenly host sang and praised God for the arrival of Jesus the Christ child.
- d. In fact, given our desire to make a big deal out of things, we might have been kind of disappointed by the way Jesus came.
 - i. Can't you just see it now? A huge marketing campaign to announce the Savior's arrival – with streamers, balloons, and party favors to celebrate

- ii. T-shirts, hats, and stickers would be selling out as people took advantage of the hype
 - iii. Maybe a laser show or fireworks would be a part of the buildup too
 - iv. And then, when all is said and done, a little baby is born... just like any other – except far from home and without a decent place to stay
 - 1. No hype, no palace, no fancy clothes or wealthy parents...
 - 2. For all the years of buildup – it seems pretty disappointing
 - e. The baby who would light the dark world had arrived with very little fanfare.
- V. **All throughout Jesus' life**, He had to justify His true identity and purpose.
 - a. He was a nobody...
 - b. In His hometown of Nazareth when He claimed to be the Messiah, they asked, "Isn't this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:22)
 - i. He was just another human being like everyone else – so how could He claim to be God with us?
 - ii. How could He claim to be the Light that was promised by God over millennia?
 - c. Even today, people all over the world question the legitimacy and divinity of the Christ – because He left it in the hands of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God to bring people to belief.
 - i. He confronts us with the truth, and we are either brought to faith or we reject Him.
 - d. For all the amazing blessings of God coming into the world as a human being to be the Light in darkness – it doesn't seem to live up to the hype
- VI. **Rather than hype and fanfare, Jesus is simply there for us.**
 - a. It is in our human nature to desire miracles, excitement and signs – which of course God did through Jesus – but we often overlook them as fairytales and embellishments.
 - b. The best way to understand God is that He continues to be with us in the highest of the highs and the lowest of the lows.
 - i. It may not be a giant celebration every day – but even the smallest light overcomes the darkness.
 - ii. Even one birth in the billions of humans could be the start of our forgiveness... and even one death could pay for our sins because it was God Himself who made it enough...
 - c. So rejoice today whether the feelings are low or high – whether there is sadness or joy – whether your expectations were dashed or exceeded...
 - i. The Christ is born this day – the Light that shines in the darkness
 - ii. He lights the way for us in a simple, yet profound way – by a quiet presence of love and grace.
 - d. Merry Christmas and regardless of your ups and downs, may the Light who came into this world, Jesus Christ, be your hope and joy. Amen