

The Light of the World

John 1:6-9

December 13, 2020

A little boy forgot his lines in a Sunday school presentation. His mother was in the front row to prompt him. She gestured and formed the words silently with her lips, but it did not help. Her son's memory was blank. Finally, she leaned forward and whispered the cue, "I am the light of the world." The child beamed and with great feeling and a loud clear voice said, "My mother is the light of the world."

The writer of the Gospel of John refers to Christ as the light of the world. John uses the word "light" more than twenty times in referring to Christ.

The function of John the Baptist was to point the world to that light which was in Christ. He was not the awaited messiah. Instead, he was the one preparing the way for the messiah.

In the words of John's Gospel, "He came as a witness to testify concerning [the] light, so that through him all men and women might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light."

The celebration of Advent is the celebration of the light coming into our dark world.

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The Christmas story began in darkness in the first century. People in Palestine was under the Roman's colonization power. They

were in the darkness of political oppression. Social unrest made people anxious and fearful. They were also oppressed economically, because of heavy taxation imposed on them by the Roman power. Jewish laws were strict that those who broke the law were regarded as “unclean” sinners. So many were alienated and discriminated and ostracized. On that first Christmas time, the world was in darkness filled with hopelessness, despair, resignation, and depression.

And thus it was then and thus it is now.

We too live in a world of darkness. Don't we? There are wars and rumors of wars constantly. Ongoing tension and conflicts among nations never stops. Climate changes is another global concern: Wildfires and hurricanes threatens us. All the living creatures suffer, as well.

The Covid-19 pandemic took many lives and the medical experts say more lives will be lost coming month. Many lost jobs and worry about their family and children's well being. Resulting from isolation and separation, many suffer from loneliness and depression, in deeper darkness.

On top of this, we face another pandemic in our country, racism. It adds another layer of darkness in our country.

I don't have to tell over and over about the darkness in this world, because in one form or another, at one time or another, it has touched your life, my life and our life.

Darkness is real and present in this world. Yes, the Bible affirms that the darkness is real and present in this world.

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But we ought to keep in mind that the Bible also affirms that The light has come to shine in the darkness.

This is the Good news to the world. The prophet Isaiah wrote, “people who walk in darkness have seen a great light.”

This morning, John declares: The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.”

John wanted the world to know that a light had penetrated that darkness. That light was Jesus. And the light of the world keeps shining in this world even now.

It shines in the church and outside the church. It shines in the streets and it shines at home. It shines always like sun shining in the morning.

That light shines in prison camps. It shines in hospital rooms and funeral parlors. It shines in Washington DC. It shines in the refugee camps. It shines, empowering and embracing and enlightening people.

Nothing can stop it.

If I might paraphrase Paul, life nor death nor powers nor principalities, nor anything in all creation can stop the light of Christ from penetrating our dark world.

The light of Chris is the light of hope, comfort, renewal, strength and peace.

As John declares so beautifully, “In Him was life, and the life was the Light of humankind. The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness does not overcome it.” (vs 4)

Jesus is the light of the world, the life of humankind. Hallelujah!

Those who have eyes to see, let them see. Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.

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Back to the ranch.

But there is one thing more to be said and heard.

John was not the light. He came to bear witness to the light. Like John, we are called to bear witness to the light. That is our job to do. No, it is more than a job. It is the great honor and privilege to witness to the light in this dark world.

Jesus said, “you are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. No one after lighting a lamp puts it under the bushel basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:14-16)

Isn't it interesting to know that Jesus, the Light of the world gives us a new identity, saying, “You are the light of the world.”?

Last Thursday at the Advent study mtg I heard Max Lucado saying something shaking and eye-opening. Who are we? Lucado said we are a modern-day Mary.

Let me let you hear him saying directly: Christ grew in Mary until he had to come out. Christ will grow in you until the same occurs. He will come out in your speech. He will come out in your actions, in your decisions. Every place you live will be a Bethlehem. And every day you live will be a Christmas. You, like Mary, will deliver Christ in the world.

Wow. Wow.

Meister Eckhart, a medieval mystic said a long time ago that “We are all meant to give birth to Christ.”

We are a modern-day Mary.

Catherine de Hueck Doherty, a Russian Christian who lives the Gospel without compromise put our identity this way:

“We are called to incarnate Christ in our lives, to clothe our lives with him, so that people can see him in us, touch him in us, recognize him in us.”

And she continued to say, “The immense problems of war, of social injustice, of the thousand and one ills that beset the world, these can be solved only if we begin to love one another. When people begin to see, love, respect, and reverence Christ in the eyes of another, then they will change, and society will change also.” Wow. Wow.

How beautiful and wonderful it would be if we see Christ in everyone's eyes and they see Christ in our eyes.

There was a mother mouse who decided to teach her children about the world. So she gathered all of her little mice and set out for a walk. They walked down the hall and turned to the right. Then they went down the hall and took another right.

And suddenly they found themselves in front of the family cat dozing in the sunlight. The mother mouse was scared. But she didn't want to give in to her fright. So she signaled to the children to be very quiet and to follow as she began to tip toe quietly and slowly past the sleeping cat. Just as she was about to get past the cat, the cat's eyes popped open and raised its paw.

The little mice were petrified. What would their mother do? Well, just as the cat's paw started to come down, that mother mouse looked the cat right in the eye and started barking like a dog. And do you know what? The cat was so startled and frightened that it jumped up and ran away! The mother mouse, wiped her brow, shook a little and then turned to her little mice and said, "Children, I hope you learned a valuable lesson. Sometimes it's good to know a second language!"

It is the same way with us. It is good to know a second language. The language of God. Language of hope and love. That is the language of Christ Jesus, the light of the world.

And when this language is translated into action it becomes the most beautiful and powerful language ever spoken.

We're called to become the carrier of the light of the world and to speak the language of light as we live our faith.

Yes! We are modern-day Mary, giving birth to Christ, the light of the world in the world.

So let all modern-day Marys sing together, "Into my heart, into my heart. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in today and Come in to stay. Come into my heart, Lord Jesus.

Out of my heart, out of my heart. Shine out of my heart, O Lord Jesus. Shine out today. Shine out always. Shine out of my heart, Lord Jesus."

In the name of God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.
Amen.