



Saint John United Methodist Church
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Message for December 24, 2022
"The Themes of Christmas: Light"
Speaker: Pastor Tom Grieb
Scripture: John 1:1-15

Light in the Darkness

You probably didn't know this. I know I didn't until I read about it a couple of weeks ago. On December 6 at precisely 2:56 p.m. EST, 86 percent of the world's population was in darkness. At that precise moment, it was night across all of Europe, Africa, and virtually all of Asia. At that same time, the rest of the world, including the United States, experienced daylight.

The "*darkest day*" around here took place last Wednesday. December 21 was the winter solstice. I call the winter solstice "*Optimism Day*" because there is a bit more daylight every day until the summer solstice. I crave the light of the sun and the warmer temperatures that come along with it.

Seasonal Affective Disorder is a real thing. We don't do so well in the darkness.

You have heard it said that "*the night is always darkest before the dawn.*" Tonight, we celebrate the dawning of a brand-new day ushered in by the light of God's Son, our Savior. We celebrate the fact that light has come, and because of that, darkness no longer reigns supreme.

We read about such things in John 1:1-5.

John 1:1-5

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

Light for All

At creation, we hear God the creator say, "*Let there be light,*" and as we know, following that life sprung forth.

In our passage for tonight, John strikes the tie between life and light. He recognizes that Christ brought life, and that life was light for all. The word "*all*" hits me every time. The light of Christ is offered to all, including you and me.

Light to Live By

Eugene Peterson in his paraphrase of the Bible says that the life Christ brings is "*light to live by.*"

That light makes a difference in an otherwise darkened world. In a word, Christ has a way of lighting things up. We know all too well that the world is a dark place when devoid of that light.

- Wars rage at great loss of life and property.
- People go without while others profit.
- Injustices of all sorts proliferate.
- Selfishness and greed abound.
- And people are dehumanized and treated horribly.

The light of Christ works to counteract these things.

- Peace is pursued.
- The needs of others are considered.
- All are understood to be persons of worth.
- Service above self becomes a way of life.
- People are viewed through the lens of love.

The world needs the light of Christ. It is a beacon that sets our course and guides our way. His light offers hope now and for all eternity.

Darkness Is No Match

This night, above all nights, we proclaim with all we are that darkness is no match for the light. We started this season hearing from the Prophet Isaiah about such things.

“The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:2)

We celebrate the dawning of that light tonight.

Jesus himself said, *“I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.”* (John 12:46)

This is Christ’s desire for every one of us.

It Comes to Us to Respond

It comes to us to respond. And immediately you’re thinking, *“Oh please, don’t give me one more thing to do. This season is already too busy, and the New Year doesn’t look any different.”*

Responding, though, to the light is the very thing we need to do.

Many of you are familiar with Microsoft Viva. It is designed to keep you on task. It pops up every morning with a list of the things you promised others you would do. This one came up a couple of days ago.

It reads, *“Who of us hasn’t marveled at the birth of a newborn?”*

I asked that question in last Friday’s weekly email. I chuckled when I saw it pop up on Viva. It was like it was sent directly from God. I thought to myself,

- *“That’s the very thing I need to be doing.*
- *I need to marvel at the birth of the newborn King.*
- *I need to marvel at the bright light that has come.*
- *I need to let that light guide my way in the darkness so often surrounds me.*
- *I need to celebrate the light of Christ and let that same light shine through me.*

I figure you need to do the same. How are you responding to the light of Christ this Christmas?