

The Light of Life

REVIEW: Welcome to our second Sunday in Advent. We are in a series in which we are looking at Christ as the Light that still shines. Last week we looked at the Light of Hope.

INTRO: This morning we are looking at Christ as the Light of Life. Our view on this can largely depend on our perspective.

I. Two perspectives

- A. As I understand it, the heroine in the book *The Windmill of the Gods* by Sidney Sheldon struggled with perspective on life
 - 1. In the book she had lost her husband early in life
 - 2. She was left with her two kids and trying to put her life back together
 - 3. One night she was lying awake in bed thinking through the recent events in her life
 - a) She thought how easy it would be to die
 - b) How happiness and love are so easily taken away in life
 - c) Then this perspective of life ran through her mind, “The world is Dachau, and we are all Jews”
 - (1) Dachau is a city in Germany
 - (2) But from 1933-1945 it was the sight of the first Nazi concentration camp
 - (3) There, 32,000 people were documented to have lost their lives, along with thousands of undocumented deaths as well
 - 4. The point is that this woman’s perspective on life had become
 - a) The people of the world are prisoners in a concentration camp
 - b) Life is horrible, brutal and basically not worth living
- B. The second perspective comes from a man named Gerald Coffee
 - 1. In 1968 he was spending his third Christmas in a prisoner of war camp in Vietnam
 - 2. The prison guards gave the prisoners some candy
 - a) Captain Coffee could hear the soldiers laughing and enjoying the night with their families
 - b) Hearing and seeing some of the children made him think of his own children
 - 3. He ate the candy and gazed at the red and silver foil wrapper.
 - a) He formed the wrappers in three shapes
 - (1) A swan
 - (2) A rose
 - (3) And a star
 - b) Being Christmas he thought of the star of Bethlehem

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- (1) He placed the shapes above his bed
- (2) For a while that night he gazed up at them
- c) His thoughts drifted to the birth of Christ
 - (1) He knew that it was only his faith that was getting him through this ordeal in the prisoner camps
 - (2) He would later write that there was nothing getting in the way of the awesomeness of that Christmas
 - (a) He had lost everything that defined him as an individual
 - (b) “Yet, I continued to find strength within. I realized that although I was hurting and lonely and scared, this might be the most significant Christmas of my life.”
- C. These are two different stories of human suffering
 1. Two completely different responses to that suffering
 2. One person saw nothing but darkness and despair
 3. The other saw the light in the midst of that suffering and had one of the most significant Christmas’ of his life
- D. This morning we look at the passage in John 1:1-18
 1. This is John’s prolonged statement about the Word becoming flesh
 - a) The word for “Word” in Greek is logos
 - b) The background to the word goes to the OT
 - (1) In the OT we see many times phrases like “The heavens were created by the Word of the Lord”
 - (2) “They were saved by God’s Word”
 - c) So when John uses this term “Word” he is speaking about God’s self-expression in creation, revelation, and salvation
 - (1) The personification in the OT of that “Word” makes it perfect to apply to Christ
 - (2) Christ is the ultimate self-disclosure of who God is
 2. Looking at the obvious parallels to Genesis 1 is interesting
 - a) God created the heaven and the earth
 - (1) In the beginning (the word meaning origin - as in the origin of all things - the start or God Himself) was the Word - the Word was with God and the Word was God
 - b) The first thing created after the world was light
 - (1) In verse 4-5 in John 1, “In Him was life and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.”
 - (a) The awesome thing about light - it cannot ever be defeated by darkness

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3. What we are seeing here is the result of what happened when God stepped onto the stage of human history
 - a) It means that Christ stepped right into the suffering we were facing
 - b) What we experienced, the pain, the problems of the world, He now experienced Himself
 - c) At the time God entered human history in the flesh, the Jews were suffering under the authority of Rome
 - (1) It's true that Rome brought a form of peace with them
 - (2) But it really was because they were bullies and no one could stand up to them
 - d) Add to the political issues the hunger, sickness, injustice, and persecution they faced
 - e) And in the midst of all of this, Christ is the "light of all people"
- E. So whatever pain or suffering you find yourself in today, understand that Christmas is a time in which peace, and love and light and joy are all promises for our lives that are realized in the gift of Christmas, the light of life - Jesus Christ
- F. Jesus' light still shines on us to this day, and because of that, allow me to give you a few things to think about for this week of Advent
- II. First, Jesus Christ is the light which will overcome any and all darkness
 - A. That is the message of verse 5 - "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it."
 1. This really should have been prefaced before John told us this
 2. There should have been a verse 4b that reads "SPOILER ALERT!"
 3. Because John just told us how it all is going to end! - Jesus wins!
 - a) In His lifetime, Jesus defeated the darkness of sin and death
 - b) No more do either of those two things have any hold on the Christian
 - (1) Do we still sin - yes, but we are no longer slaves to sin
 - (2) Do we still die - yes, but death is no longer a fearful experience
 - (a) I went to pray with Dale Reid and his family shortly before he died
 - (b) Dale kept saying over and over, "I don't understand why Jesus hasn't come for me yet. I'm ready."
 - (c) Dale knew where he was going when he died, and there was no fear of the experience
 4. If you are the kind of person that likes to read the end of a book before you read the whole thing, John just saved you the trouble
 - B. Practically, what this means for us is that no matter what we face, Jesus has already defeated it!
 1. John 1:5 is one of the reasons Christmas and Easter are intimately linked

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2. John tells us in advance that Jesus already defeated the darkness
 3. No doubt there are some of you that may be thinking, “You said He defeated any and all darkness. Well Pastor, He hasn’t defeated my darkness. I’m still in the middle of it, and it ain’t letting up.”
 - a) I get it, I really do
 - b) I have been in the middle of darkness that seemed it would never go away
 - c) There are some of you that wonder why you or someone you love has not been healed yet
 - d) Or you are frustrated because someone special was snatched from you by death and you can’t understand why God would do such a thing
 - e) And while I certainly cannot stand here and tell you all of God’s plan in detail, I know a couple of things
 - (1) I know that Jesus’ death and resurrection broke the penalty for sin so that in the bigger picture, we win - we get heaven
 - (2) I know that often times we as frail humanity fixate on what we think God’s response SHOULD BE, and get mad if it is anything less than what we think
 - (a) At which point we need to remind ourselves that we are not on the throne so we do not get to set the terms of everything
 - (b) And because we are not on the throne, we need to stop acting as if God owes us specific things
 - (c) I know that might be hard to hear, especially if you are in the middle of a period of darkness, but what’s true is true
- C. The reason we bow at the manger is not because Jesus is a cute little baby, it’s because of who He is (God in the flesh) and because of what He accomplished - driving the darkness out
1. A little boy once told his parents that his SS teacher was the grandmother of Jesus
 - a) They thought for sure he was confused
 - b) “No, I think you have something mixed up, she cannot be the grandmother of Jesus.”
 2. The little boy insisted that he knew she was
 - a) When asked why he thought this he replied, “She showed us a picture of him and bragged on Him”
 3. The point is simple, what Jesus did, defeating the darkness is something worth bragging about
- D. One thing to remember and then we will move on to the next thing

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1. A SS teacher in NC was teaching his class about “What I Have Learned So Far.”
 2. One of the things he said was, “Never forget in the dark what God has told you in the light.”
 3. God told you in the light that the darkness is defeated and He defeated it - so when the darkness comes (which it will), remember that
- III. The second thing is Jesus is the light that will enlighten your life
- A. John 1:9 “The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world.”
 - B. Jesus called many people out of darkness in His ministry on earth
 1. For the man in the cemetery, Jesus called Legion out of him, calling out the darkness and bringing the light (spiritual/demonic darkness)
 2. He called Lazarus out of a tomb (darkness of death)
 3. He called Zacchaeus out the the shade of a tree (the darkness of sin)
 4. He called Bartimaeus out of blindness (the darkness of blindness/ physical suffering)
 - C. Jesus announced in John 8:12 “I am the Light of the World. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”
 - D. I think that list is interesting of the different people and the different ways in which Jesus shown light into their lives
 1. It shows us that there really is not a type of darkness that Jesus did not overcome
 2. Whether it is death, or sin, or demons, or physical suffering
 3. When Jesus shines the light into your life, the darkness flees
 - E. My honest question is, how many of us really want to come into the light?
 1. I see too many Christians that are afraid of the light of Christ
 2. I think they are afraid of people judging them, being ungracious
 3. So rather than let the light of Christ enlighten our lives, we run from the light, we try to stay hidden in darkness
 4. The problem is, Jesus wants to shine the light of life in our lives
 - a) Stop and think of that phrase for a few moments
 - b) The light of life!
 - c) Jesus is not trying to bring judgement
 - (1) In fact, He said “I did not come to condemn the world, but to save the world”
 - d) Jesus wants to shine the light of life on us to bring us LIFE!
 - (1) Remember, “I came that they might have life and have it to the full”
 - (2) But for us to have full life, He has to shine the light on the dark places in our lives and hearts to help us get rid of that darkness

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- F. Have you ever been to one of those caves like in Kentucky or Virginia
 - 1. The kind you go with a group down into to see what the rock formations are like
 - a) The water dripping or an underground lake
 - b) The stalagmites and stalactites
 - 2. Usually when you are down there at some point they want to demonstrate to you just how dark it really is that deep in a cave
 - a) The lights go off and you cannot see your hand in front of your face
 - b) Even after a few minutes of your eyes trying to adjust, still nothing
 - 3. I read of a family that went down in one of the caves - mom, dad, big brother and little sister
 - a) The little sister grabbed her brother's hand because she was scared
 - b) The brother, just a boy himself, said, "Don't worry, there is someone here who knows how to turn on the lights."
 - 4. When you are facing the darkness, remember that there is someone that knows how to turn on the lights
 - a) Not because He knows more - even though that is true
 - b) It is because He IS the Light which will bring life

IV. Jesus light will empower your living

- A. John 1:12 "Yet to all who receive Him, to those who believed in His name, he gave the right to become the children of God."
 - 1. The word there for "right" is the same for power, as in the power someone has who is in authority
- B. Normally, in our understanding, light comes from power
 - 1. We get electricity from the Electric company, but we sometimes refer to the power company
 - 2. For us as Christians, it is the reverse - we get our power from the One who is the Light
- C. This power that we receive from the Light is a specific kind of power
 - 1. We are not talking about energy to get through the day
 - a) Although all we have comes from God
 - 2. We are not talking about power to face difficult circumstances - even though He certainly does empower us for that as well
 - 3. We are talking about the power, the right to become children of God
- D. When we have trusted in Christ and become a follower of Him, we have become the children of God
 - 1. I have told you many times that not everyone is God's child
 - 2. Everyone is God's creation
 - 3. Everyone is an image bearer of God Himself, marred though we are
 - 4. But we are not all children of God

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- a) That is reserved for the people in view here
 - b) And those people are the ones that God gave the right, the power to - they are followers of Christ
- E. Paul understood this as well - turn real quick to Romans 8:14
- 1. “For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God.”
 - a) It is not just anyone that gets that title “Child of God”
 - b) You must have the Spirit in your life, leading and guiding you
 - c) If you do not, than you are not God’s child - you are still His creation
 - 2. Drop to verse 17 “If we are children, we are heirs - heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.”
 - a) It is the children that get the inheritance
 - b) It is not the creations of God that get the inheritance
 - c) This makes understanding the Light of Christ, the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus imperative
 - 3. It also brings perspective to suffering
 - a) It is in suffering that we are promised glory
 - b) When we walk through suffering, trusting in our Savior, even though it is hard, even though it stinks, it is in the end that we find glory
- F. A wealthy man enjoyed taking his son on trips in which they would often purchase priceless works of art
- 1. The man filled their home with these paintings
 - 2. The boy grew up to become a man, and when war broke out, he answered the call to serve his country
 - 3. In just a few months away at battle, the father received word that his son had been killed trying to save the lives of some of his friends
 - 4. Christmas came and it was a difficult season for him
 - a) His suffering was so great
 - b) He was not sure how he would make it through
 - 5. On Christmas morning a young soldier came to his door and presented him with a portrait of his son
 - a) This young man was among those that his son had saved
 - b) The father was grateful for the visit and the portrait
 - c) He placed the portrait over the fireplace
 - 6. The father often would spend time gazing at the portrait and thinking of his son.
 - 7. Several years later the father died, and the lawyer called family, friends and anyone interested, as the estate was to be sold - the house and everything in it
 - a) The first thing to be sold was the portrait of his son

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- b) The auctioneer called out, "What am I bid?"
 - c) No one seemed interested
 - d) To get things moving, a man in the back said, "Ten dollars"
 - e) The auctioneer said, "We have ten dollars. Do I hear twenty?"
 - (1) Silence
 - f) "Ten dollars going once, twice, sold for ten dollars! The auction is now closed, everyone go home!"
8. The outcry from the rest of the room was enormous
- a) The lawyer stepped forward and said, "The terms of the will are VERY clear. Whoever chooses the son, receives everything."
- G. Romans 8:32 "He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all - how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things."
- H. A great reminder at Advent season
- 1. If you are willing to choose the Son, you will have it all
 - 2. You will receive the Light of Life who came to give you life to the fullest