



Pastoral Prayer:

Merry Christmas!!

We are gathered here this morning as friends and family & also a Church family to celebrate the birth of Jesus into our world.

And if you think about it CHRISTMAS IS ONE HUGE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION ISN'T IT?

Now, we at one time or another have celebrated our own birthday...with family, friends. We get a cake, candles, we sing Happy Birthday...this is our tradition.



And you see the reason why we celebrate birthday's is because *our arrival/our being born/our presence in the world* **changed things** for the better to the people in our lives.

Now, it is estimated that in human history 105 billion people have lived upon the Earth.....and each of those births is significant and additionally, each one of those births has **changed our world**.

Now some of those lives have **negatively** affected our world.....names like *Adolf Hitler, Genghis Khan.... and Lady Gaga* come to mind.



Likewise there are those who have **positively** influenced our world [*right*]....names like *Sir Issac Newton, Abraham Lincoln, and Susan B. Anthony.*

Within those 105 Billion Birthdays....there are a number of lives who have left a positive CHANGE.

But there is **ONE** among the BILLIONS that stands out from the rest. And His Birthday is so impactful, so important that even secular atheists cannot deny that ***He is the most important person who has ever lived.....AND HIS NAME IS JESUS.***



And so today on the Eve of Christ's birthday ... we are continuing in our ***Encountering Jesus series*** which celebrates Christ's coming and we are going to examine this morning one essential aspect of Christ's character..... that being, that Jesus is ***THE LIGHT***.

Not, "a light", as in one among many...but rather Jesus is ***THE LIGHT OF OUR WORLD***.

This is a bold claim, but it is also one of the primary reasons why Christmas is so special.



Encountering
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Now, we learn about this truth in the very first chapter of John's Gospel where in chapter 1 John references Jesus being light not once or twice, but 7 times for emphasis.

Therefore we glean that it must be really important that we understand the significance of this statement/idea.

But the question we might ask ourselves this Christmas Eve morning is... what does it mean for **us** HERE, NOW, TODAY that Jesus is THE LIGHT?

Meaning, many of us have heard that Jesus is THE LIGHT, but how should that truth effect and impact our lives?



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And so THIS is what I hope to illuminate in our hearts and minds this morning as we continue to prepare ourselves to celebrate Advent.

But first by a show of hands, how many of you put up Christmas lights this year? Either on your home or on your tree. You can also raise your hands if you drove to see some Christmas light.



Christmas lights are synonymous with Christmas... if your neighbor spent all day putting lights on his house in August, you'd probably think he was crazy... as if he wasn't wrapped too tight... and he probably wouldn't be.

But if you spend all day putting lights on your house in December... everyone knows what its all about, it's Christmas.



As we get started.....I want you to watch a short clip of the home of Tim Gay, a man from upstate NY who set the Guinness Book of World Records for the # of Christmas lights on his home.

Take a Look.



Now this is a man after Clark Griswold's own heart.

Let me give you some stats so you can have a better understanding of how many lights Tim put up. He won the record with 601,739 lights....these lights are choreographed to 239 songs that took 35 hours to program. The entire set up took 2 months... using 8 miles of electrical cords and 40 miles of wire... and Guinness estimates that a quarter of a million people came out to see Tim's light display. *[in upstate NY were nobody lives]*

And not only did Tim set a record for the most Christmas lightshe also set records for the ***highest electric bill.***

Now some of you are thinking, why would anyone want to do this? Why would anyone want to spend the time/money required to pull off such a thing?



Well Tim said he did it for his children..... you see he wanted his children to wake up on Christmas morning and feel the majesty and Wonder of Christmas...and he figured that 8 miles of Christmas lights might do the trick.

And while “this father” Tim Gay might have set a world record for Christmas lights all because he loved his children.

Church, this morning I want to paint a picture for you of another father, who had an even bolder vision for HIS CHILDREN.



You see God the Father in His divine plan knew our darkened world needed a REMEDY.

And God the Father also knew that we were ill-equipped to pull ourselves out of darkness and so HE SENT A LIGHT INTO DARKNESS AND HIS NAME IS JESUS.

And so we celebrate Christmas because the Son of God, came down to LIGHT UP OUR WORLD... and church what we are going to see is that even though this happened 2000 years ago in a manger in Bethlehem... this event still has **profound** implications for our lives today.

John 1:1-9 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. *4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

And so, if you haven't done so already please turn in your Bibles to the Gospel of John chapter 1 as we turn toward our scripture text for this morning.

Read:

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about *the light*, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not *the light*, but came to bear witness about *the light*. 9 *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

Continue Reading:

John 1:1-9 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. *4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

Here in this short text we find out so much about Jesus.....we learn that Jesus is the Word of God the [logos] of God... this doesn't mean that Jesus is merely words on a page, but rather a LIVING REPRESENTATION OF GOD.... [we learn] that He existed before creation.

We also see here that there isn't anything that has come into existence that wasn't the direct result of the power of Jesus [The Word].

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And verse 4 gives us insight into **how** Jesus came....it says **IN HIM WAS LIFE, AND THE LIFE WAS THE LIGHT OF MEN. THE LIGHT SHINES IN THE DARKNESS AND THE DARKNESS HAS NOT OVERCOME IT.**

Church this is a profound concept concerning the nature of Christ. He is **LIFE AND LIGHT.**

Think about our natural world for a second: What on planet Earth can live in absolute darkness? Hardly anything..... there are a few species who live in the depths of the ocean or in caves.....but even they benefit from and thrive on things that **do** have direct interaction with light. The point is CREATION SCREAMS TO US THAT LIGHT IS NECESSARY FOR LIFE.

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And here John makes a point not from the natural world but from the spiritual world..... that Jesus has come full of **Life**..... armed with **Light**..... to shine forth with a power that darkness is powerless against.

If you were to enter a dark room with a flashlight... you'd notice that wherever you point that flashlight the darkness disappears, it makes way for the light. Darkness is powerless when it comes to light..... light always overcomes darkness.

And Church the beauty of the Gospel is that this is exactly how Jesus came into our world.

John 1:1-9 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 *In him was life, and the life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.*

This is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ... AMEN!

This is Good News to those who would receive it.

In Romans 1:16 Paul states... *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes.*

The Advent of Jesus was God displaying His power over Darkness, and the Glory of His Son. And we who believe on the Son..... we will no longer live in darkness but be guided by the LIGHT OF LIFE.



You know there is a movie that came out a week or so ago....you might have heard of it. **Star Wars The Last Jedi**. Do we have any Star Wars fans here this morning?

Don't worry I'm not going to spoil the movie for you....but as many of you know the Star Wars franchise is built off the back of the struggle between LIGHT and DARKNESS.

In every single Star Wars movie the main character has to make a decision as to whether they are going to fight with the RESISTANCE [representing LIGHT] or the EVIL EMPIRE [representing the Dark Side].



And so within the big Star Wars epic...in the midst of all of the light saber battles and fighter pilot duels...at the core of this story is this struggle between **light** and **darkness** and a culminating **choice** that everyone has to make.

[You see everyone thinks that George Lucas had an original idea with the concept behind Star Wars...no he ripped this eternal conflict from the pages of scripture]



Because the scriptures describe a darkness coming into our world that was pervasive. At the Fall [Genesis 3] we see mankind descend into sin and death.

Ephesians chapter 2 describes [*we humanity at that time*] being controlled by this Dark Force [*describing us as*] without hope and without God..... but then something happened.

Let's read about what happened again in verse 6 of our text.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

Reading once again:

Church you see God had a plan He had a remedy. And here we read that John the Baptist came to prepare the way for the ***True Light which Gives Light.***

Jesus is TRUE LIGHT in the sense that throughout history there have been many who have claimed to have attained enlightenment....they have claimed to possess light/truth....but in fact the only light they offered was nothing more than the dimmest of candles.... but by comparison JESUS THE TRUE LIGHT SHINES FORTH LIKE A MILLION SUNS.

Jesus is the TRUE LIGHT because His offering of a way out of DARKNESS is legitimate.

6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. 8 He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. 9 *The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.*

But notice something with me......when our text says that He [Jesus] gives light to everyone... this *isn't* saying that everyone receives it.

Meaning... it is possible to be given a gift and not receive it... *some of you might experience that tomorrow morning when you open that gift that looks like its been re-gifted about a dozen times...now, someone might give you that 12 year old popcorn tin... but you probably won't receive it. You'll re-wrap it and have it ready for it's 13th recipient next year.*

[Pause]

You see the truth is that even though JESUS CAME INTO OUR WORLD 2000 years ago SHINING FORTH INTO DARKNESS **MANY DID NOT RECEIVE HIM THEN, AND MANY DO NOT RECEIVE HIM NOW.**



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And so while verse 9 is so imminently **hopeful**....it is only **useful** if we ... receive that LIGHT.

I'd like you to engage in a thought experiment with me. *I want you to imagine that you are in absolute pitch-black darkness. You cannot see a thing. And then all of a sudden from overhead an enormous light shines brightly on you. You are found... ..but the question remains, is this a blessing, or is this a curse? Well, that depends on whether you are lost, or if you are a run away. If, you're lost you will be joyous in that situation. But if you are a run away you will be terrified because you have been found out.*



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And Church you see how we will respond when ENCOUNTERING JESUS as THE LIGHT largely depends on whether or not we see our deep need.

When we know we are lost in darkness... we will often search for any light we can find.

But conversely when we live in rebellion as the “runaway”... instead of running toward the light we often run in the opposite direction... afraid of being found out.

You see many run away from the call to be ChristLike in their lives... because they do not want to come out of the darkness they are in.

Matthew 5:14, 15 (ESV)

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

But listen to what Jesus says to His disciples in Matthew chapter 5.....here in the Sermon on the Mount He tells them that living as the runaway isn't an option for those who would seek to follow Him.

Read:

This passage at first glance can seem confusing, because we have been talking all morning about how Jesus is THE LIGHT and now here He tells His disciples that they are THE LIGHT.

What Jesus is telling them is that HE IS THE SOURCE OF ALL LIGHT.....and they are to be an extension of His ministry and live as a REFLECTION of HIM.

Matthew 5:14, 15 (ESV)

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Verse 14 takes that concept and goes on to cast vision for our Christian lives, it says that our lives are to mimic a CITY SET ON A HILL, ONE THAT CANNOT BE HIDDEN.

A City that is set on a Hill Shines through the darkness... ..it can be seen from far away.

Therefore those who would consider themselves disciples of Christ cannot hide THE LIGHT they have been given.

JESUS IS THE SOURCE....WE ARE HIS REFLECTION.

Matthew 5:14, 15 (ESV)

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.

15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.

Think about it this way....

There is a scientific term that you probably haven't heard of called ALBEDO.....now ALBEDO is the measurement of how much sunlight a celestial body reflects.

The planet Venus, for example, has the highest albedo in our solar system at .65.

In other words, 65 percent of the light that hits Venus is reflected. Depending on where it's at in its orbit, the almost-a-planet Pluto has an albedo ranging from .49 to .66.



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Our very own night-light, the moon, has an albedo of .07. Meaning only seven percent of sunlight is reflected, yet it lights our way on cloudless nights.

In a similar sense, each of us has a **spiritual albedo**.....meaning we each have a degree to which we **allow** the LIGHT OF CHRIST TO REFLECT OFF OF US.

And while the Goal is 100%, we must evaluate where we are falling short in our reflection of Christ.....because our world needs to see His light through us.



This Christmas might those of us who have received THE LIGHT OF CHRIST.....carry on the ministry/message of Jesus....reflecting His character, heralding His Joy, spreading His peace, living in His Love.

Might we be inspired by the power that the Holy Spirit gives.....to actually live each day as though we have encountered Jesus.

And as we reflect Him... others will see our Savior through our lives lived In Faith... and we will be Disciples who make Disciples.

Pray: