

Light Of The World
Series: Advent 2009, #4
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Introduction

Christmas is a joyful, festive season. We love to sing the carols, see the beautiful decorations and take in special events, such as the Christmas Program this morning. All of this as we celebrate God's gift of love to us, Jesus Christ.

The season also has contrasts. The contrast between light and darkness is inescapable. The dark nights and bright Christmas lights. Some people are artistic with their Christmas light displays while others go *extreme*. Mark and Kathy Hyatt of Fort Lauderdale, Florida have a website devoted to their Christmas light display. They say this year they lost count of how many lights they are using after they reached 150,000. Now that's *extreme!*¹

On the original Christmas, there was a brilliant explosion of light on a dark night when a multitude of angels announced Christ's birth to shepherds out in the fields. Then there was the star leading the magi for many nights on their trek to worship the One "born King of the Jews."

Our theme this morning is *Light Of The World*. Jesus Christ is the *Light of the World*. This basic Bible truth is familiar to many. But what does God mean when He declares that Jesus is *the Light of the World*? Let's explore that briefly this morning. Our starting point, in the words of the old hymn, is that ...

The Whole World Was Lost In The Darkness Of Sin.

The contrast of light and darkness as symbols of good and evil spans the world's cultures and religions. This should not surprise us because the contrast comes from God. It is seen in how He reveals Himself, and He built it into creation. Manmade religions reflect this imprint.

However, darkness does not always imply evil or sin. We see this as we look at the Bible's record of darkness and creation. Listen to the first part of the Genesis creation account, paying attention to what God says about darkness.

"The earth was formless and void, and *darkness* was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters. Then God said, 'Let there be light'; and there was light. God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the *darkness*. God called the light day, and the *darkness* He called night. And there was evening and there was morning, one day." (Genesis 1:2-5)

The darkness was over the waters, the formless and void planet earth. God created light and darkness (cf. Isaiah 45:7; Jeremiah 31:35). The physical darkness here has no reference to

or suggestion of anything evil. Darkness and light were created according to God's design for the planet and life here.

But the moral contrast appears as we move to what the Bible tells us about darkness and fallen creation. When Adam and Eve sinned, they plunged into the darkness of sin. Sin existed before that. Satan and the angels who rebelled with hi, against God were the first sinners. But now sin was in the people, the world, God created and called good. Satan the usurper now is, the apostle Paul tells us, "the god of this world [who] has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving so they may not see the light of the gospel of Christ..." (2 Corinthians 4:4). "The whole world lies in the power of the evil one," or Satan (1 John 5:19), who "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

By nature and action all of us are sinners, spiritually "dead in our trespasses and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). "There is none righteous, not even one" (Romans 3:10). We are "slaves to sin" (Romans 6:17) as we live in Satan's realm, "the domain of darkness" (Colossians 1:13). This darkness is so pervasive and deceptive that people "call evil good and good evil" (Isaiah 5:20).

And the consequences are not just for here and now, but forever for all who live and die in this darkness. One of the visions God gave the apostle John was of the final judgment of all who die in darkness, who die in their sinfulness and sin. He recorded it in chapter 20 of the book of the Revelation.

"Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (11-15)

Yes, *The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin*. But that old hymn continues, "*The Light of the world is Jesus.*"

The Light Of The World Is Jesus.

Jesus is the light. The apostle John emphasizes this truth in his gospel and first letter. In the first chapter of the gospel he wrote, "In Him [Jesus] was life and the life was the *Light* of men" (4). And, "The *Light* shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it [or, overcome, overpower it]" (5). Again, "There was the true *light* which coming into the

world enlightens every man” (9). And then there are Jesus’ own direct statements. 8:12, “I am the *Light of the world*; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the *Light of life*.” 9:5, “While I am in the world, I am *the Light of the world*.”

Let’s return to the question “What does God mean when He declares that Jesus is *the Light of the World*?” First, this is not just a New Testament truth. It was, remember, God who created physical light. Moving on from physical light, Psalm 104 opens,

“Bless the LORD, O my soul! O LORD my God, You are very great;
You are clothed with splendor and majesty, covering Yourself
with *light* as with a cloak...” (1-2a)

Then in the New Testament, the apostle Paul tells us that God “dwells in *unapproachable light*” (1 Timothy 6:16). 1 John 1:5 states that “God is *Light*, and in Him there is no darkness at all.” Jesus Christ is God the Son. He is Light.

The basic idea of the symbolism of light and darkness in Scripture is moral. Light is holiness, goodness, truth and life while darkness is sinfulness, evil, falsehood and death. As I mentioned earlier, God has built the contrast between light and darkness into our physical world so it would be easy for us to see the moral and spiritual picture, as easy as ... telling *night from day*.

“*The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin.*” Without God the Son who is the Light of the world, there is no hope for escaping this darkness.

Jesus is the Light and He brings light to us. There are so many dimensions of this truth—from the light Jesus brings to open our spiritual eyes to God and His truth, to placing our faith in Him, on to how we live as believers and then, eternity with God.

Let’s start with our coming to Christ. God told the nation of Judah through Isaiah about the Messiah, the Savior who would come. 9:2, “The people who walk in darkness *will see a great light*; those who live in a dark land, *the light* will shine on them.” This went beyond the gloom and anguish Judah experienced as a nation to their spiritual condition. God made that clear as He directed Matthew and Luke to write that Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in Jesus (Matthew 4:14-16; Luke 1:78-79).

Our spiritual eyes, like everyone’s, were blind to see God as He is and ourselves as we are, to see the grace He offers us, until His light shined into our hearts. *Then* we experienced the truth of Jesus’ words that “everyone who believes in [Him] will not remain in darkness” (John 12:46). *Then* He made us *children of light* (John 12:36). Yes, *then* we experienced what Jesus told Paul when He stopped Him on the Damascus road—

He opened our “eyes so that [we might] *turn from darkness to light* and from the dominion of Satan to God, that [we might] receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.” (Acts 26:18)

Now, as believers, Jesus continues to shine His light on and in us. As He calls us to “lay aside the deeds of darkness” He equips us with the *armor of light* to put on in our spiritual battle (Romans 13:12). With King David we can testify, “You [God] light my *lamp*; the LORD my God *illumines my darkness*” (Psalm 18:28). And also that His “word is a *lamp* to my feet and a *light* to my path” (Psalm 119:105), as well as “The unfolding of Your words gives *light*; it gives understanding to the simple” (Psalm 119:130). Jesus has told us that as we walk by faith in the *light* we will not stumble (John 11:9). When we stumble, when we sin, it is because we carelessly or purposefully have not walked in Christ’s light. Then, we also are privileged to be the light of the world, reflecting, sharing Christ’s light to those who are still in darkness (e.g., Matthew 5:14-16).

And there is yet more. In eternity when we walk the streets of the new Jerusalem, “there will no longer be any night; and [we] will not need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, *because the Lord God will illumine [us] ...*” (Revelation 22:5). Now if you have crystal clear 3-D picture of that, share it with me, and the rest of us! What we know, whatever it will be like, is that the holy, perfect glory and radiance of God will be all the light we need.

Yes, Jesus *is* the Light, and He *brings* light to us.

Conclusion.

“The whole world was lost in the darkness of sin — the Light of the world is Jesus.” I said at the beginning these words are from an old hymn. Philip Bliss wrote this song in 1875, just a year before he and his wife died in a train accident leaving two boys, ages four and one. Among other songs he wrote in the same year were “Hallelujah, What A Savior!” (page 175 in our hymnal) and “Wonderful Words Of Life” (page 270 in our hymnal).

He often would have moments of inspiration where an entire hymn — the theme and verses as well as the melody — would flash into his mind. His hymn “Let The Lower Lights Be Burning” came to him after he heard a preacher’s story of a ship coming into the Cleveland harbor where there were two lights, one at each side of the bay, called the upper and lower lights. The captains needed both to enter the harbor at night. One stormy night a boat could not see the lower lights. After they passed the lighthouse with those lights, they could see its outline, but the lights had gone out. They tried to make it safely to the harbor guided only by the upper lights, but crashed on rocks and the boat sank. Most of the people on board died.² And so came the inspiration for

Brightly streams our Father’s mercy from His lighthouse
evermore, but to us He gives the keeping of the lights along the
shore.

Let the lower lights be burning! Send a gleam across the wave!
Some poor fainting, struggling seaman you may rescue, you
may save.

But when it came to “The Light Of The World Is Jesus”, its said that he was simply walking down a hallway in his home one morning and it all came to him at once. He sat down at his desk and quickly wrote out the entire hymn, music and words.³ More important than the process of writing it, of course, is the truth of these words.

In this Christmas week, remember, thank God that “*The Light Of The World Is Jesus.*” The chorus of that hymn begins, “Come to the light, ’tis shining for thee.” If you have not bowed before God, accepted the truth about Him and yourself, and placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior, come to the light, it’s shining for you today. Tell God you know that you need His forgiveness and life, that you recognize it comes only through Jesus Christ who died and was raised form the dead for you. Ask Him to forgive you of your sins and give you life with Him today and forever. If you do that, or have questions, talk with me, Pastor Tyler or someone else before you leave here today.

If Jesus is your Savior, thank God that you can say with King David, “The LORD is *my* light and *my* salvation” (Psalm 27:1). Thank God that He has not only made you a child of light, but also a light of your world. Then make sure your light is shining brightly through all you say and do in these days before Christmas. Let’s take a few quiet moments now to thank God and commit ourselves to being His light in our world.

¹ <<http://hyattextremechristmas.wordpress.com>>. Accessed 15 December 2009.

² <<http://www.wholesomewords.org/biography/biobliss15.html>>. Accessed 15 December 2009.

³ Bence, Evelyn. *Spiritual Moments With The Great Hymns*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997, p. 235.

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