

**Better than Anything Christmas**  
**Advent week 4: The Gift of Light**

Beaverton Campus...we are praying, seeking God and looking into our community for a need that we can focus upon and actually move the dial in Beaverton and Gladwin. Start praying, seeking God and looking at this community for where we can bring the love of Jesus, our gifts to meet a real need.

**One thing that has always been a part of Christmas is light.** There are candles, lights on the tree, in the lawn, and on the house. Now you can project them onto your house or even on to trees in your yard. Candles on trees seem to be a really bad idea.

**No matter how far away we get from Christmas being about Jesus, there will always be this part that begs the question, "Why all the lights?"**

Here's why. **The Word (Christ) was in the beginning. The Word was with God. The Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was with God in the beginning. <sup>3</sup> He made all things. Nothing was made without Him making it. <sup>4</sup> Life began by Him. His Life was the Light for men. <sup>5</sup> The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness has never been able to put out the Light. John 1:1-5**

Jesus was present with God, creating everything that was created. And then he describes Jesus' life as "the light for men." And this light that has come cannot be stopped by any kind of darkness.

**Jesus even said it about himself before John wrote those famous words. Jesus spoke to all the people, saying, "I am the Light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will not walk in darkness. He will have the Light of Life." John 8:12**

**In this series called "A Better Than Anything Christmas". We are looking at the gifts that can be ours because Jesus came as a baby and grew to be our savior. We looked at...God's promises that come through Jesus...truth about our hearts.**

Today we are looking at the gift of light that Jesus came to give. **What does it mean that Jesus is our gift of light?**

**Have you ever** been stumbling around your house during a **power outage** or been out in the woods when your **flashlight battery** dies? **Light is a gift when it's dark. Dah.**

In many communities, churches were the **first to have electric lights**. What a gift to the community. That was a big deal.

Let's look at John 1 again. **His Life was the Light for men. <sup>5</sup> The Light shines in the darkness. The darkness has never been able to put out the Light. John 1:5**

**All through scripture, God brings light into darkness.** That begins in **creation**. The **pillar of fire** leads the Israelites when they left Egyptian captivity. And the **star** that directed the Magi to where Jesus was living in Bethlehem. **The light is a way of understanding God and what he wants to do.** Darkness is a way of understanding what **the absence of God** and what he wants to do is like. **Darkness is about evil and ignorance with no cure.**

**Jesus came as light that entered on the scene to deal with both evil and ignorance.** That's what it means by...**"The light shines into the darkness...**

**Jesus entered into a scene** where there was evil that seemed unstoppable. That situation was fraught with ignorance about who God was and how to please him.

**So how does light enter into and defeat these two aspects of darkness in the world?**

**Light exposes the wickedness that wants to take place in the shadows.** The mold can't grow in the darkness. Light gives **clarity where there is ignorance and misinformation**. It exposes and illuminates.

**Jesus spoke out against evil, oppression, hatred, immorality, etc. Jesus exposed the wrong teaching of the religious leaders.**

**In other words, light gets us to see reality. No pretense can stand in the face of light that exposes and illuminates.**

the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light. And for those who lived in the land where death casts its shadow, a light has shined." Matthew 4:16

Sin = Darkness...Tolkien describes evil as a shadow

- All of the evil things like dragons, orcs, goblins, balrogs are all created underground in the darkness.

**The shadow is cast by death and the fear of death. In that shadow is where evil and ignorance does the enemy's work.**

**A shadow comes when the source of light is blocked. The light didn't disappear, it is just blocked.**

**We see this reality displayed in a physical way when Jesus, the light, was crucified and died. From noon until three o'clock it was dark over all the land. <sup>46</sup> About three o'clock Jesus cried with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why have You left Me alone?" Matthew 27:45**

**God looked away from His Son because he became the bearer of our sin. He literally turned his face. His face didn't shine upon him. Death literally blocked the light of the son and cast a shadow when Jesus was crucified. The reality of that is that the sin causes death and death still casts a shadow. It's like the elephant in the room that no one really wants to acknowledge or talk about.**

**We don't have the power to stop it in our governments and law enforcement. There aren't enough laws, lawyers, judges, and cops to compel or scare the evil out of people. We aren't going to, by getting "the right people" elected, get people to behave more "Christian". We can't be getting rid of bad laws and adding good ones to will people to behave.**

**We don't have enough information or technology or teaching to solve it. The answer to evil and ignorance won't come gradually in a progressive**

**way. We won't evolve into it. Education won't solve evil or it already would have.**

In the book Peter told you about last week, *Hidden Christmas*, by Timothy Keller he says it this way..."They are looking to their experts, to the mystics, to the scholars, for solutions. Yes, they say, we are in darkness, but we can overcome it ourselves. People make the same claim today. Some look more to the state, some more to the market, and everyone looks to technology. Yet they share the identical assumption. Things are dark, but we can end that darkness with intellect and innovation." Pg 17

"The meaning of Christmas is that love will triumph and that we will be able to put together a world of unity and peace." New York Times

**So how's that working?**

- We believe that we have the resources to do it.

**The only answer for our wickedness and ignorance is the light and that only comes from Jesus.**

**We have to start with light as a gift and there's nothing we have that can do what it does. That must mean that...Light comes from outside of us.**

**Truth is given and revealed. You don't find it inside yourself. You don't discover it through therapy or years of introspection. Not that those things are bad, they just don't produce light. It is given, it is revealed.**

**God is a missionary God. He started this being sent and going into business.**

**<sup>19</sup> "The Light has come into the world. And the Light is the test by which men are guilty or not. People love darkness more than the Light because the things they do are sinful. <sup>20</sup> Everyone who sins hates the Light. He stays away from the Light because his sin would be found out. <sup>21</sup> The man who does what is right comes to the Light. What he does will be seen because he has done what God wanted him to do." John 3:19-21**

This is a foundational difference between what Jesus did and taught and it still is today in our culture.

Yes, the light comes from outside of us. We did not create it, find it within ourselves, or generate it from our own ability or ingenuity. The scripture also clearly affirms that...**Light is the only way I can see myself clearly.**

It allows me to **judge my own actions**. It also shines a little deeper by **allowing me to see my own heart, my own character**.

Peter talked about Jesus coming to get to the heart of our issue. He told us to **repeat this verse**... Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a loyal spirit within me. <sup>11</sup> Do not banish me from your presence, and don't take your Holy Spirit from me. <sup>12</sup> Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and make me willing to obey you.<sup>13</sup> Then I will teach your ways to rebels, and they will return to you.

We are self deceptive by nature. We tell a story about ourselves and then act like it is true. "My actions are ok, because they reflect who I say I am."

Notice where the illumination is coming from in this story; yes, it is coming from me. I'm trying to generate my own light. I am my own captain. I am my own king.

It's called pretending. Kids do it for fun. Adults do it because of fear and guilt.

Have you caught yourself recently pretending that you know who you are and what you are supposed to be about instead of having that stuff revealed to you by the light.

Light reveals whatever is there, the sin for sure, but also what God put into us, that image of himself. It reveals what God put into us when he designed us. Only the light can reveal why you are here and what you are supposed to be doing while you are here.

**Help us to love the gift of light and to live in it. Do I love having what is really there exposed? OR do I prefer my fake self. Live in the light means to allow Jesus to shine on you all the time by remaining in his presence, listening to what he reveals and tells you.**

**You can't clean a room that is dark. It's just pushing the dirt around. You can't rearrange the furniture in the dark, you just bump into it.**

**"There are those who rebel against the light, who do not know its ways or stay in its paths. Job 24:13 NIV**

**That brings us to another way that light is a gift...Light allows me to step confidently.**

**Is anyone unsure about what 2021 is going to bring? Is there any hesitance in us as we step into it?**

**This is the light that goes with us into dark places. It's more like a lamp and less like a street light. It's a lamp that someone else is carrying. We join him and we can have confidence when we step to the edge where the shadow begins that it is ok, because we are with the light.**

**We can choose to step into the shadows. This is about pride for those who choose to step out of the light. "I can figure this out, or power through this." I don't want the gift I want to be in control. I want to be the one carrying the lamp.**

**Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path. Psalm 119:105**

**That means Jesus and everything he did and taught. He is the light and he continues to shine today through his presence, **The Holy Spirit, the body the Church and his Word, the Bible.** Those three places have the light of Jesus that is a gift.**

**We've been very practical to this point. Light from Jesus is very practical and necessary. We need light because of the evil and ignorance that we have no answer for. It's a gift because it doesn't come from me, I can't**

generate it on my own. It's practical because it helps me see myself accurately, both my sin and what God has given me to use for his glory. It, of course, helps to have confidence to step out into a very confusing and dark world.

Let's stop being the craftsman or builder and play the part of the poet or the artist. Light makes us stop, stare, and smile. **Light is beautiful, therefore Jesus is beautiful.**

That's why Robin and I took a walk to look at the lights Friday night. That's why we will go to the thing in Freeland every year even though our kids try to ruin it.

I am offended if someone forgets to turn on the Christmas tree lights. I mean why wouldn't you have them on all the time? It's not like we are using candles on a dried out real tree. So, in my disgust, I step behind the tree by the bay window and tap my foot on this button. On come the lights.

If you look long enough at this world and at people, you will see a lot that is ugly. He's my guarantee. If you look long enough and constantly at Jesus, you will see that he is the most beautiful person to walk the earth. If you will abide in him, his beauty will amaze you.

When we come together like this, we are always asking, "God, what are you saying to me," and "What do I need to do to obey or align my life to what you are trying to tell me." This is our way of...**Stepping into the light.**

I want to challenge you to step into the light in a very specific way. Pick up the outline that came with this sermon and look at the bottom. I want you to use this now and when you are at home.

**What has walking in darkness looked like for you? Was it about disobedience or ignorance? Were you not in the light or did you step out of the light that Jesus provides? It begins by recognizing the darkness for what it is. It might not seem bad now, but remember the shadow leads to death. Ultimately, our enemy has come to steal, kill, and destroy.**

**My darkness was not wanting anyone to look too closely at me for fear that they would see that I didn't know what I was doing. I wanted to appear like I knew how to do this job. The light was not within me but it was there and I had to step into it. I had to humble myself to say that I don't have the answers.**

What about you?

**Give praise for how following Jesus has brought you light.**

**Tell someone your praise story. Is there something you know about life now that you didn't know before the light came? Is there anything about your own life that you know now and have freedom from? Is there anything about the hope that you now have that you couldn't see before the light came. Has God given you understanding about why you are here and what he wants you to do? Stand up and give credit where credit is due and that is Jesus, because he is the light of life.**

Yes, I want you to tell somebody. Today, this week...

**What do I need to do to step into the light? What is he saying to you? Don't just enjoy the pretty lights this Christmas. Take a step into it. That means out of something into the light. You have to walk with the one who has the light, who is the light, in order to experience this amazing gift.**

I really hope you will take the time to take this outline home and answer these questions. **Yes, write them down. That has an amazing way of making it real and it will help you continue to step into the light.**

Here's a couple of verses to take with you.

**Jesus spoke to all the people, saying, "I am the Light of the world. Anyone who follows Me will not walk in darkness. He will have the Light of Life." John 8:12**

**The man who does what is right comes to the Light. What he does will be seen because he has done what God wanted him to do." John 3:21**



**And one more thing; when someone mentions how pretty the lights are,  
you can tell them why there are lights at Christmas time.**