

MINISTRY BY MAIL
Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship
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Third Sunday in Advent, December 19, 2021

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(Hymns found in The Lutheran Hymnal, CPH, 1941)

Hymns: 75, 63:1, 126, 498, 359.

Lessons: Isaiah 60:1-9, 2 Corinthians 4:4-6, John 3: 14-21.

Sermon Text: John 1:1-9.

Sermon by Pastor Robert Mehltritt

In the name of Jesus Christ, Dear Fellow Redeemed,

Try closing your eyes tight to shut out the light. That might give you some clue about what darkness is. You can't see things. You don't really know what is happening around you.

We really don't experience darkness like the people in Bible times did. We are so accustomed to having light everywhere, and all night, that to experience any real darkness, is most unusual for us. It is easy to take light for granted. We have light almost everywhere in the world. At the flick of a switch we can have light. But perhaps you have been in a cave when the guide turned off all the lights and had you cover up your glowing cellphones and even your glowing watches to experience total darkness.

That kind of darkness is the picture of sin.

Darkness is where crime likes to live and do its evil deeds. Manufacturers of lights have had advertising which pointed out how light makes our world a safer place to live because where there is light, there is less crime and wickedness.

John the Baptist *“came as a witness to testify concerning that light [that Jesus brings into the world] so that through [Jesus] all men might believe.”*

Saint John's Gospel begins talking about John the Baptist and promptly points to Jesus. John the Baptist made it clear that he was not the light of the World but he makes it clear that

JESUS IS THE LIGHT

- 1. John the Baptist was a witness to the coming light of Jesus.**
- 2. Jesus brings true light into the world.**
- 3. We have the calling to witness to the light that Christ brings.**

Light is one of the best pictures we have of the difference that Jesus makes in the lives of people. Without him, people continue to live in the darkness of sin. By nature, people are pretty happy living in darkness. People don't want the light to shine on their evil deeds. Sin flourishes in darkness. Crime hides under the cover of darkness. Wicked actions think they can get by without discovery in darkness.

You heard in our Gospel lesson when Saint John wrote two chapters later that *“Whoever believes in [Jesus, God's only-begotten Son,] is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son. This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.”* John 3:18-21 (NIV)

During the Advent season we often make mention of John the Baptist. He was sent into the world to point the way to Jesus, to prepare the way for him by preaching that people should repent and turn from their sins. He was pointing toward the light of the world. Jesus is the one who brought light – the light that brings eternal life –

into the world. In fact, Jesus is light. John knew his calling. He wasn't the important one. He said that he wasn't even fit to carry the shoes of the Savior who would come after him. John's message included these words: ***"I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry."*** Matthew 3:11 (NIV)

When God first created light in the empty, formless, darkness that covered the earth, he said ***"Let there be light,' and there was light. God saw that the light was good, and he 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--the first day."*** Genesis 1:3-5 (NIV)

The light was good. From that time on light has been used as a picture and a metaphor and a symbol of what is good and darkness has been used as a picture and a metaphor and a symbol of what is evil.

That picture is carried throughout the Scriptures. Paul writes to the Ephesian Christians: ***"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord. Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible. This is why it is said: 'Wake up, O sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.'"*** Ephesians 5:8-14 (NIV)

The Christian is to have nothing to do with the unfruitful, useless, evil deeds of darkness but is to expose them, reprove them, refute them. ***"Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them."*** Ephesians 5:11 (NASB)

Throughout the scriptures we find pictures telling us about the light that the Lord God gives us. For example, we read in Psalm 27: ***"The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"*** Psalm 27:1 (KJV)

When Jesus came into the world, he brought true light.

John's gospel uses the word "light" more than any other Gospel, usually referring to Jesus. For example: ***"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, 'I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.'"*** John 8:12 (NIV)

A little later John writes that Jesus said ***"Are there not twelve hours of daylight? A man who walks by day will not stumble, for he sees by this world's light. It is when he walks by night that he stumbles, for he has no light."*** John 11:9-10 (NIV)

Before he headed on his way to be crucified for the sins of all men, for their deeds of darkness, Jesus spoke of himself. He told people listening to him after his entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, just days before he was crucified: ***"You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light."*** John 12:35-36 (NIV) Just a few verses later, he told them: ***"I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness."*** John 12:46 (NIV)

We, every Christian, has the calling to follow Jesus and to be a witness to the light he brought to mankind.

Jesus said ***"John was a lamp that burned and gave light, and you chose for a time to enjoy his light. I have testimony weightier than that of John. For the very work that the Father has given me to finish, and which I am doing, testifies that the Father has sent me."*** John 5:35-36 (NIV)

In his first letter, Peter wrote this about believers in Jesus, the true light: ***"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*** 1 Peter 2:9 (NIV)

Because believers live in the marvelous light of God, we have opportunity as well as the command to share that light.

In his first letter, Saint John writes ***"This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins"***

and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” 1 John 1:5-10 (NIV)

When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, he gives them and us some strong admonitions.

“But you, brothers, are not in darkness so that [the day Jesus comes back to judge the living and the dead] should surprise you like a thief. You are all sons of the light and sons of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness. So then, let us not be like others, who are asleep, but let us be alert and self-controlled. For those who sleep, sleep at night, and those who get drunk, get drunk at night. But since we belong to the day, let us be self-controlled, putting on faith and love as a breastplate, and the hope of salvation as a helmet. For God did not appoint us to suffer wrath but to receive salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. He died for us so that, whether we are awake or asleep, we may live together with him. Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.”

He then loads that chapter with real-life practical encouragement. *“Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other. And we urge you, brothers, warn those who are idle, encourage the timid, help the weak, be patient with everyone. Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not put out the Spirit's fire; do not treat prophecies with contempt. Test everything. Hold on to the good. Avoid every kind of evil.”*

And we close our sermon with Paul's beautiful benediction to the Thessalonians: *“May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it. Brothers, pray for us. Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. I charge you before the Lord to have this letter read to all the brothers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”* 1 Thessalonians 5:4-28 (NIV) Amen.

“May the rising sun who comes to us from heaven shine on those living in darkness and in the shadow of death and continue to guide our feet into the path of peace. Amen”

Have you looked at any of our YouTube videos? We hope to resume creation of weekly videos in the future.

ADVENT VIDEOS:

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YouTube Pastor Robert Mehlretter

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First Sunday in Advent:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V0Ow7ERRVtg>

Second Sunday in Advent:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4M3gcuiS2Q>

Third Sunday in Advent:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcrf_ZShW_I

Fourth Sunday in Advent:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k0r8nw8kpwM>