

## Advent Sermon 12/19/18 God with us – Our Guide Isaiah 2:3

Dear Led by the Light:

Have you ever been lost in the dark on the road in your car?

- No signs or streetlights
- No cell phone service for GPS

You just want to get to your destination so you keep driving on through the darkness in the hope that you will get somewhere that has light.

The prophet Isaiah promised hope and light for the lost: “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light” Isaiah 9:2

- That great light was finally shining from a manger in Bethlehem
- The Way home had arrived

There is a little verse of Scripture that may be familiar to us.

- **“We walk by faith, not by sight” II Corinthians 5:7**
- We know that our life as a child of God is a life of faith
- For many of us that life of faith began at our Baptism as an infant and we were taught by the Word our whole life
- For some of us it may have happened later in life when the Holy Spirit through the Word touched our heart and we were baptized as an adult

To know and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior is to walk by faith and not by sight.

- We know that God is Immanuel – God with us
- We know that God is protecting us and guiding us even though we may not be able to actually see him.

- Yet, God is indeed with us even though what we see may try to convince us that such is not the case

At times in this life we may find ourselves in a place where we cannot see ---when the darkness around us becomes too deep and the light of our faith seems so small.

### **How well do we handle darkness?**

- What is all the lights went out and we would be case into complete darkness?
- How would we feel?
- How would we react?

Perhaps you have had a chance to know total darkness.

- Ever been to a cave on a guided tour and the lights are all turned off?
- In such a place one is surrounded by total darkness

Truth be told most of us don't handle darkness very well.

- In darkness we are reduced to being lost children
- In darkness we are searching, frightened, wondering and sometimes paralyzed

As frightening as physical darkness may be to us, there is another kind of darkness that we all have to deal with at times.

- A darkness of the soul and of the spirit
- We experience it at critical times in our lives
- It can leave us frightened and feeling very helpless and very alone

- When we are in the midst of darkness it is not so easy to just say: “We walk by faith, not by sight.”

### **Times of darkness do come.**

- Times when we may feel lost and alone
- Times when we may find ourselves wondering if we will be able to deal with what comes to us out of the darkness

Why are there times of darkness?

- We still live in a sin-filled world
- With sin comes the darkness of suffering, struggle and death
- What we long for is something to break through and get rid of the darkness
- What we long for is light

Apart from Christ we would be lost and wandering – as the world is lost and wandering – in the darkness of sin.

**Isaiah 59:9ff “We look for light but all is darkness...for our offenses are many in your sight and our sins testify against us. Our offenses are ever with us...turning our backs on our God.”**

The source of darkness is sin. Our sin and the sins of those around us.

Jesus came to us to bring the light. John 1:9: “The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.” John 3:19: “Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.”

Darkness is unbelief.

- Darkness embraces unbelief

- Darkness excuses sinful behavior
- People love darkness because they think they can hide their sins in the dark

The light of God with us is exactly what the coming Savior brings.

- He is the light of the world
- When we come to faith, we are given that light to guide us
- We are given that light to help us on our journey through the darkness
- The light has come our sins have been forgiven

The gift of light comes not because the world deserves it, not because the world deserves it not because we have done the right things but because God loves us.

We know that the way out of the valley of darkness is not our doing.

- We cannot create spiritual light
- We cannot dispel the darkness
- We can only bask in the light that God has given to us in Jesus Christ

But at times our light is so small and the darkness so great.

- We walk by faith but we would love to have more light
- We do have more light, for we do not walk this path of life alone
- We belong to a fellowship of light - a fellowship of faith

When the Holy Spirit brings us to faith he also gathers us into the family of faith, the Church.

- When we are united with others our weak and faltering light of faith is strengthened

- And our light of faith can help strengthen others, too.
- Together the darkness is expelled

A pastor was teaching a confirmation lesson on the work of the Holy Spirit and the concept of the Church.

- The pastor gave each student an unlit candle and asked the group to stand in one big circle
- Someone turned out all the lights
- The room went totally dark
- Because of the darkness each felt very much alone

In the darkness the pastor explained that darkness is what sin does

- It separates us from one another and leaves us alone
- For those without Christ life is living in spiritual darkness not knowing where one is going or why one exists

After being in that darkness for a while, the pastor lit a candle.

- He then lit the candles of those standing on either side of him
- Slowly the light was passed from one to the next
- Gradually the light in the room grew
- The darkness was being replaced by the light

While the pastor was talking about this light, a helper went around and blew out each candle one by one. The pastor explained that this is what Satan wants.

- He attacks us and the light of our faith may grow dim or go out
- But when one candle was blown out it was relit by the person standing next to the person with the snuffed out candle

- This is the work of the Church in action, one believer reaching out and helping another believer who is caught in darkness.

**“If someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently...carry each other’s burdens...” Galatians 6:1-2**

When Jesus began his ministry he fulfilled the words of the prophet Isaiah: “The people living in darkness have seen a great light...a light has dawned.” Isaiah 9

Jesus is the Light of the world and he came preaching a message of repentance because the kingdom of heaven was near.

Certainly we may pass through many times of spiritual darkness in our lives.

- We experience the trials of life
- But in spite of the darkness we comfort one another
- We have the light...the truth that no valley is so deep or so dark that the light of Christ is not there
- In the times of darkness our Savior is there waiting for us: “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 3:21

**“God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” I John 1:5**

We are called to live as children of the light.

“O house of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

