

**THE LIGHT OF MEN**  
**Christmas Eve –December 24, 2012 –John 1: 1-14**  
**The Church of the Covenant**

There is a very simple spiritual principle at work at Christmas. The new life of God was being born into the world through the birth of His Son Jesus Christ. A new light was dawning, not just in the heavens over Jerusalem, but also in the hearts of people. As the scripture from John so elegantly puts it –“**In HIM (in Jesus) was life, and the life was the light of men.**” (John 1: 4) Two things exist at creation, nothingness and what God has created; darkness and light; evil and good. When God spoke a WORD into the nothingness and said, “*Let there be light.*” He was speaking a WORD to His creation, to us, that He is all about LIFE and LIGHT and GOODNESS. Everything else is death and darkness and evil. Again as the gospel of John begins --“*All things were made through HIM (through Jesus), and without HIM (without Jesus) was not anything made that was made.*” (John 1: 3) The light was sent into the world at the beginning, as the first act of creation, and as we know, Jesus is the light of the world. He says of Himself: “*I am the light of the world. He who follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.*” (John 8: 12) And God speaks another WORD to His creation; this one spoken through His Son Jesus. In Jesus is LIFE and LIGHT. As John notes: “*The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world...*” (John 1: 9) And this WORD became flesh, the WORD God speaks at the incarnation of Jesus, is brought to reality in the very person of the One born in Bethlehem. Jesus is begotten into the world as LIFE and as LIGHT and as GOODNESS. This is who HE is; this is what HE brings.

There is a great cosmic battle, if you will, going on in the starry night of Bethlehem. On one side are arrayed the forces of nothingness and chaos. And on the other side are arrayed the forces of life and creation. On one side are arrayed the forces of darkness; on the other side the forces of the LIGHT of the world. On one side EVIL; on the other, GOOD. The true light that enlightens every man was entering into the world, yet, as it says, “*Yet the world knew HIM not.*” (John 1: 10) He came to his own people, but His own people “*received HIM not.*” (John 1: 11) People chose nothingness over LIFE; darkness over LIGHT; evil over Jesus. They chose not to receive Him; they chose not to have His life within them; they chose not to have His light shine forth from their lives. But then it says, “*But to all who receive Him, who believe on His name, HE (Jesus) gave power to become children of God...*” (John 1: 12)

**The simple spiritual principle is this –the darkness cannot grow if the light of the world is invited in; but darkness will grow and flourish if the light of the world is not received.** Receive Him not, dis-invite the light from any place and the darkness receives a foothold, and the darkness grows stronger, and the darkness becomes more deep and malevolent.

In 1962 the Supreme Court in a landmark decision, *Engle v. Vitale*, made its foremost ruling against prayer in public school. For those of us who grew up and were in elementary school in the 1960's we still remember prayers, and Christmas carols, and Christmas parties and Christmas cards and Christmas recitals and every classroom with a Christmas tree, but were we to return to school today it would feel like an alien atmosphere; one in which Jesus was nowhere to be found. 50 years ago Jesus Christ, the light of the world, got dis-invited from our schools. Slightly more than one Biblical generation ago the light was asked to leave...and since then I think it is safe to say the darkness has become emboldened. Darkness only can thrive in the absence of light.

More recently there has been a whole host of rulings removing things like manger scenes and depictions of the Ten Commandments from public property. We have dis-invited the Light of the World from the public square...since then I think it is safe to say our public life has become more and more acrimonious,

with less and less agreement, and even with people saying that our form of government is broken. I think it is safe to say that the darkness has become emboldened. Because darkness can only thrive in the absence of light.

We've had these terrible shootings in Connecticut just recently. I'm trying to think back to 1962 when I would have been in third grade if something of that sort would have ever even been possible. I find when people say, "We just cannot understand how this could happen?", I keep thinking to myself, "When you dis-invite the Light of the World from anything you give the darkness free reign and power. 50 years of not receiving the light lies as the root spiritual cause. Mark my words --Because that kind of chaos, darkness and evil can only happen in the absence of light.

I want to go back to the Connecticut setting for the moment. Judging by the number of church funerals in its aftermath, it would not be true to say there was no light. Judging by the number of heroic teachers who shielded their children, it would not be true to say there was no light. We saw many heroic displays of the kind of love and light Jesus has brought into the world. Officially the light of the world cannot shine...but unofficially the light may always shine from our life and our heart and no court ruling can stop that.

So we come away from all of this wondering, what can I do? I am just one person. I am just one candle struggling in the windswept darkness, what can I do? The darkness seems so strong and pervasive and it seems to be growing, sometimes maybe even winning.

The gospel writer John tells us what we can do. He tells us to "receive Him"; to receive the light. Tonight, this very night, we have the opportunity to receive again the light of the world Jesus. Invite Jesus to shine forth from your life. Invite the love and light of the world to dwell in your heart. Don't dis-invite Him from your heart, or your family, or your neighborhood, or your community, or your workplace, or the public square. No, that would just give the darkness permission to win. Rather, invite the light of the world to shine forth from your life this Christmas. Because light beats darkness 100% of the time, every time, without fail. There is a great cosmic battle going on between chaos and creation, darkness and light, evil and good. But the tiniest candle beats back the darkness every time.

Because here is the beautiful promise of Christmas --*"The light shines in the darkness...and the darkness has not overcome it". (John 1: 5)* It never has and it never will. Let us go over to Bethlehem to see this great thing that God has done. HE is the light of men. And what shines from our Savior's face is the light of God...because Jesus is the light of the world. Amen.

*By: The Reverend Dr. Stuart D. Broberg, The Church of the Covenant, Washington, PA  
IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!*