

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS
First in an Advent Series: “Jesus, the Light of the World”
First Sunday in Advent --Communion Sunday—John 3: 16-21
The Church of the Covenant

This time of year as we struggle to put up Christmas trees, with tiny lights on them, that have been stored in the basement since last Christmas, and invariably become jostled around until one of the lights gets loose or broken, and because they are designed that if just one of the lights doesn't work, then *all* of the lights don't work, we discover the season's way of making us patient—that is, that we try to find just that one little light bulb that doesn't work, fix it, so the whole strong of lights work. *“I am the light of the world”*, says Jesus (John 9:6). Jesus is that one light bulb. If He is not working and lighting your life then nothing else is lit up either. Because, beloved, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS.

We place candles in our window and lighted decorations around our door, but this is not the light of the world. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS. There is the light at the shopping center to induce us to buy more presents, but that's not the light of the world. There are people who wish us “Happy Holidays” but that's not the light of the world; “Merry Christmas” is. There are people who take manger scenes from courthouse lawns but that's not the light of the world. Why ever would you want to separate the light of the world from the laws that govern us? There are retailers who want to call it “sparkle season”, but there is no sparkle without Jesus being the light of the world. There is no LED light that can substitute for Jesus being the light of the world. We live in a time that exemplifies our scripture for today—*“This is the judgment”* says the gospel writer John, *“that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light...”* (John 3: 19) The world tries to do backflips to take Christ out of Christmas, to remove Jesus as the light of the world, to try to substitute other things for Jesus. Why is that? Because the world loved darkness, not light. There are too many people who try to substitute their own holiday traditions for Jesus being the light of the world. It never works. Because, beloved, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS.

John 3: 16 says—*“For God so loved the world that HE gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life...”* Perish is a wonderfully interesting word here. Perish means go to hell, go directly to hell, do not pass “GO” do not collect eternity. Perish is going into the dark abyss, the place of absolute darkness and absolute separation from God. God doesn't want anyone to perish; that's why God has sent Jesus into the world, to light the world and the way to everlasting life in Him. But people choose darkness rather than light; people choose a false light rather than the true light; people don't want to come to the true light that illumines every man's life, lest their deeds would be seen as they truly are, lest they would have to amend their ways, lest they would have to get serious about Jesus as the light of the world and allow HIM and HIM only to shine forth from their life. No “salvation lite” (L-I-T-E) here; only salvation through HIM who is the light of the world.

Everything other than Jesus is a darkening world; is trusting in a false light that seeks to substitute other things for Jesus. Apart from Jesus being our light we are sucked into the utter darkness and vortex that is the dark abyss. Light or darkness? Jesus or the false light of the world? The light of eternity or the permanent and utter darkness of separation from God that is hell? What kind of light—what kind of Christmas do you want?????

Have you ever almost completely given up hope? I have spoken with many people over the years in the churches I have served. Sometimes people are tempted to give up hope when they face something debilitating like a disease or a problem that seems without solution. It is like they keep checking that

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We place candles in our window and lighted decorations around our door, but this is not the light of the world. THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS. There is the light at the shopping center to induce us to buy more presents, but that's not the light of the world. There are people who wish us “Happy Holidays” but that's not the light of the world; “Merry Christmas” is. There are people who take manger scenes from courthouse lawns but that's not the light of the world. Why ever would you want to separate the light of the world from the laws that govern us? There are retailers who want to call it “sparkle season”, but there is no sparkle without Jesus being the light of the world. There is no LED light that can substitute for Jesus being the light of the world. We live in a time that exemplifies our scripture for today—*“This is the judgment”* says the gospel writer John, *“that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light...”* (John 3: 19) The world tries to do backflips to take Christ out of Christmas, to remove Jesus as the light of the world, to try to substitute other things for Jesus. Why is that? Because the world loved darkness, not light. There are too many people who try to substitute their own holiday traditions for Jesus being the light of the world. It never works. Because, beloved, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS.

John 3: 16 says—*“For God so loved the world that HE gave His only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life...”* Perish is a wonderfully interesting word here. Perish means go to hell, go directly to hell, do not pass “GO” do not collect eternity. Perish is going into the dark abyss, the place of absolute darkness and absolute separation from God. God doesn't want anyone to perish; that's why God has sent Jesus into the world, to light the world and the way to everlasting life in Him. But people choose darkness rather than light; people choose a false light rather than the true light; people don't want to come to the true light that illumines every man's life, lest their deeds would be seen as they truly are, lest they would have to amend their ways, lest they would have to get serious about Jesus as the light of the world and allow HIM and HIM only to shine forth from their life. No “salvation lite” (L-I-T-E) here; only salvation through HIM who is the light of the world.

Everything other than Jesus is a darkening world; is trusting in a false light that seeks to substitute other things for Jesus. Apart from Jesus being our light we are sucked into the utter darkness and vortex that is the dark abyss. Light or darkness? Jesus or the false light of the world? The light of eternity or the permanent and utter darkness of separation from God that is hell? What kind of light—what kind of Christmas do you want??????

Have you ever almost completely given up hope? I have spoken with many people over the years in the churches I have served. Sometimes people are tempted to give up hope when they face something debilitating like a disease or a problem that seems without solution. It is like they keep checking that

light-less string of lights over and over again, but they never find the light that is out, and after about the 200th time that happens they near hopelessness and despair that their string of lights will ever light again. Or perhaps it is some good thing for a family member, a hope in the heart for someone we love, but it doesn't come to pass, it is seemingly denied, it feels hopeless and without possibility. The string of lights will never light again, we think. Or someone is in a loveless relationship. There is no hope, no possibility here. The lights are out and cannot be rekindled. Or perhaps someone has lost their job and has been looking and searching and there seems to be nothing to be had; the more the person seeks and they do not find, the more hopelessness creeps in and takes up residency. Even an extraordinarily positive person can give up hope eventually; beaten down by life's circumstance. Ever had a goal in your life that suddenly becomes not achievable? Never going to happen? A picture of yourself in your own mind's eye that will never come to pass? A long time dream crushed by the darkness of life? Ever gotten to that point where you stand on the edge of the dark abyss? Looking over the edge and asking -Is that all there is? Is darkness and hopelessness all that remains? Have you prayed and prayed and prayed about something only to almost conclude, "God, you must not exist, if there is no hope of God's answer to my prayer and intervention and provision of hope." Have you ever almost forgotten that JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD? That God sent the Son into the world that no one would perish, no one should ever be sucked in by the dark abyss, but that everyone who believes in HIM would possess a HOPE, as the Bible says, that "does not disappoint us..." (Romans 5: 5)

So what do you do when you get to that point? This Christmas the top string of lights on my Christmas tree was out and I resolved that I would find the one offending bulb that was out and fix it. I tried for an hour and a half the first day. I wiggled every bulb. I relentlessly thought that I could find the problem and fix it. I failed. So another day came and late into the night I struggled to find that one bulb that was out. It almost became an obsession. I even prayed: "Lord, you find me the bulb that is out." I almost got myself to the place where I thought -"So what if the top of my tree has no light on it?" Christmas will still come even if I have a dark Christmas tree. All to no avail. So what did I do? I took off the string of lights from the tree ("took" is a kind word; ripped is a more correct word) and went to CVS pharmacy and bought a new string of lights. Guess what? The top of my tree is now well-lighted; the offending string is in the garbage.

Here is the point. If we focus on the problem we will get more of the problem. If we focus on the darkness we will get more darkness. **Ah, but if we focus on the light we will get more light. Darkness begets darkness. Light begets light. JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.** Jesus is the light in the darkness; HE is the hope for the hopeless. Awaken! Focus on Christ and He shall give thee LIGHT.

I conclude by quoting from John 1 -"*The true light (not the false light the world offers) that enlightens every man was coming into the world (the light born into our world through Jesus at Christmas). He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, yet the world knew Him not (no wonder people run after false light and especially at Christmas). He came to His own home (He has come to The Church of the Covenant) and His own people received Him not (inconceivably, how many people miss the light of the world and especially at Christmas). But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave power to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.*" (John 1: 9-13) JESUS IS THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD. This Christmas, come to Jesus, receive the light, and hold the HOPE of the world within. 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!

THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS
First in an Advent Series: “Jesus, the Light of the World”
First Sunday in Advent --Communion Sunday—John 3: 16-21
The Church of the Covenant

This time of year as we struggle to put up Christmas trees, with tiny lights on them, that have been stored in the basement since last Christmas, and invariably become jostled around until one of the lights gets loose or broken, and because they are designed that if just one of the lights doesn't work, then *all* of the lights don't work, we discover the season's way of making us patient—that is, that we try to find just that one little light bulb that doesn't work, fix it, so the whole strong of lights work. *“I am the light of the world”*, says Jesus (John 9:6). Jesus is that one light bulb. If He is not working and lighting your life then nothing else is lit up either. Because, beloved, THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD IS JESUS.

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