I hate video games. On the news feed of Google there are always three or four stories, of a total of eight or nine, on video games. In other words, stories about something as inane as video games competes with stories about politics, sports, science and religion on the internet. That means that young people are Googling these video games at a huge rate and they become newsworthy because of that interest. And these video games are always excessive in their violence. And most of them have an overlay of satanic evil or witchcraft as a theme in the video game. Violence and demonic evil sells and it sells particularly at Christmas evidently. So we are pumping into the heads and hearts and souls of our young people obscene violence mixed with evil spirituality and at Christmas. Anything sound wrong about that to you? Feel like it fits with Christmas to you? Any wonder young people shoot up their schools and take their own lives? There was a young man with whom I am familiar who was so obsessed with video games, and a particular video game called the World of Warcraft, which was violent war games wed with witchcraft as an overlay, that it broke up his marriage to a lovely young Christian woman. He chose evil video games over his Christian wife. Parents, and grandparents, don’t you dare buy one of these video games for your kids or grandkids. If we’re talking about banning something ban these kinds of video games. Because the spiritual reality is this –garbage in, garbage out. Evil in, evil out. Violence and the demonic in, violence and the demonic the result. That’s where we are this Christmas...Sad, but true...

But if GLORY enters into someone’s life and heart, then it is GLORY that issues forth from their life. Christmas is about the glory coming in all its fullness in the birth of the person of Jesus Christ. Its not about dark video games. Its about the light that shines from the face of Christ. “The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1: 5) That’s what the Gospel of John says. In Old Testament times when Moses entered into the presence of God, the glory shone so strongly all around him, that he had to cover his face with a veil because the light shining from the glory that was on his face was so intense he was afraid he might scare the people of Israel. But now when we enter into God’s presence the veil is to be ripped away. People are to see us shine with the glory of God. There should be a radiance written upon our face, a joy that exudes from our heart, a light that shines from our eyes. As the scripture says “with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord (we) are being changed into his likeness, from one degree of glory to another.” (2 Corinthians 3: 18) Glory in, glory out! The radiance of God within our heart, the light of God shining forth from our heart!

How does this come about? The story of the birth of Jesus in the Luke birth narrative is instructive. Last week I discussed the pronouncement of the angel to the simple shepherds. The angel of the Lord comes into their darkness and as it says, “The glory of the Lord shone around them.” (Luke 2: 9) The first step is the GLORY that comes FROM God. The glory of God
shone around the shepherds. The next step is like unto the first but different. For then a large number of countless angels shows up, the “heavenly host”, and they sing unto God, “Glory to God in the highest!” (Luke 2: 14). So first the radiant presence of God arrives, GLORY FROM THE LORD. And then the angels sing back to God and give back to God the GLORY they have received. “Glory TO God in the highest”. First, there is GLORY FROM God and then there is Glory TO God. First the glory shines all around and only then can we reflect back that glory to God in heaven. We reflect back to God the glory we first receive from God. I had never seen this spiritual dynamic in the Luke birth narrative before. But it is the truth. Garbage in, garbage out. Evil in, evil out. Ah, but GLORY in, then GLORY OUT. The light shines into our heart and only then back out into the world in Jesus’ name. We can only reflect back to God what we have first received from Him. So the question of Advent remains –have we had a living, vital encounter with the Living Christ? Is it so profound that the glory has shown into our heart and onto our face? Are we aglow in the Spirit? Glory in, leads to glory out. Does the light that first shone at Bethlehem shine in us this year?

I love our stained glass window restoration process. Because it speaks to us of how the GLORY needs to shine forth from The Church of the Covenant. Since 1983, on the outside of the stained glass windows was a dark layer of occluded Lexan plastic. Last week sermon noted that by removing the darkness we are better able to see the light inside the sanctuary; the GLORY can shine through the windows now in Jesus name. But the reverse is also true. Because for more than 30 years these windows of the story of Jesus cannot be seen from the outside of the church. The world could not see the Nativity Window because it was covered with a veil, with dark, dirty occluded plastic. It was plasticly and false; the light and the glory could not shine out from our church and into our community and world. For the first time in 30 years when we shine the light on the inside of our sanctuary the world outside can actually see it. Glory inside, glory outside. The light shining within becomes the light shining without. The world can now see the story of Jesus because our light is shining. So let your light shine before men. Do not put your light under a bushel. But let the world see the light and glory of Christ streaming forth from your face this year.

Lexan is like every negative thing we place over the light that keeps it from shining. By contrast, Communion is that close, personal encounter with the Living Christ who said, “Let there be light”. Come to HIM and ask HIM to take away everything that is dark and evil, cloudy and occluded, that the light HE brings to our hearts this Christmas might shine out from our church in Jesus’ name. Rip off the veil of sin and darkness and let the glory SHINE! Amen and 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!