Opening remarks.

➢ We continue our series on *Whose Birthday Is It Anyway.*
  ▪ In the first week, we were reminded that the news of the Savior is always good news and newsworthy.
  ▪ Last week, we recognized that all other gifts mean nothing in comparison to the real gift given at Christmas.
  ▪ Today, we will seek to understand what happens when the lights fade.

Background

➢ I Love Christmas Lights!

➢ As a young child.
  ▪ We lived in a rental home.
    • We lit lights, but there were limits to what we could do because of the landlord.
    • Mom got tired of re-taping the lights to the windows every year and moved to candelabras.
      ♦ BORING.

➢ Middle School & High School
  ▪ When I hit middle school, we were building our own home, so I thought this was it!
    • Surely, now Dad would be more willing to light up the house and yard.
    • Wrong again.
    • We stuck with the candelabras.
      ♦ We just moved from orange bulbs to white ones to make sure no one called the fire department because we were so far back from the road.
    • I did manage to get approval for a couple years to put lights up under the soffit around the front of the house.
      ♦ Again – only white.
    • It is then I determined I would light up as much as I wanted when I got a house of my own.

➢ Lighting up!
  ▪ When we got our own home, I could not wait to get our house lit up.
• We were given lights and I had to buy more.
• I light every part of the house I could attach lights and found every shrub and tree and fence I could.
• I started blowing circuits.
  ▪ I was not finished either.
• When I started working for the Home Depot, I found even more fun.
  ♦ Now the lights had friends called blow-ups.
  ♦ I also found this thing called a multi-plexor.
    ➢ Now my many lights in the yard and on the house could dance and blink to music.
    ➢ Oh! I was so happy.
  ▪ I was also excited because it had a ripple effect.
  • When we moved in, our house was the only one that was lit up.
  • Within the next two years, almost every house on the street was lit.

❖ Growing up.
  ➢ I started to notice another phenomenon taking place during that time.
    ▪ Technology was allowing bigger and more elaborate displays to be created.
    ▪ In addition, more and more contests began to appear.
  ➢ Then a few years ago a television show showed up.
    ▪ It is called *The Great Christmas Light Fight*.
      • I should have known that it was going to be trouble just looking at the title.
      • I am a sucker for Christmas light displays, so I had to watch.
      • It was fun to see so many creative displays.
      • But I began to notice two distinct problems.
        ♦ It actually was a fight for that $50,000 prize.
          ➢ People really started talking smack about other displays.
          ➢ They were spending thousands of dollars just to get the biggest and brightest displays.
        ♦ The other problem – the vast majority of the displays contained thousands of light bulbs but brought no attention to the true light.
WHEN THE LIGHTS FADE  Rev. Scott Shetter, Dec. 15, 2019

- Even if they did, it was most often allocated to some space in the back corner or because of the historic significance of the decorations.

The dangerous process of thinking.
- Thus began the process of taking a better look at Christmas lights.
  - I first found that I could not find much fault in them without finding fault in my own display.
    - Mine was not pointing to the true Light in my exterior display either.
    - Just as secularization has turned the good news into the call for Santa and the giving of gifts to be more about oneself, so too had the lights turned into a personal statement rather than pointing to the true Light of the world.

Digging deeper.
- Isaiah tells us that those walking in the darkness have seen a great light.
- John tells us that the Light has come among us to live with us even though the world does not naturally recognize Him.
  - Have you ever wondered why the world does not recognize Him?
  - We know that the world has been blinded to the truth.
    - Only through the Spirit of God does a person come to receive sight and recognize the true light.
    - Maybe the world is blind because all of the false lights have hidden the true light from their eyes.
      - When you are in the city, it is nearly impossible to see the stars.
        - You must get away from all the city lights in order to see the stars.
        - This is called light pollution.
      - With all the Christmas lights turned on, with all the enormous displays, is it possible that the Light of the world is no longer seen at Christmas because of all the light pollution we have created.
      - The Good News is buried on an obscure page; the greatest Gift is relegated to history; the Light of the world is no longer visible because we have drowned it out with our own light displays.

- When the lights fade.
One of the things that saddens me every January, is when everyone puts their Christmas lights away.

- The lights have faded and gone out.
- The street looks so dark.

What happens after the lights fade?

- The world tells us that it has been a great holiday season and looks forward to the next one.
- As Christians we are reminded that there is a cross in the midst of the star.
- We do not live in darkness even after the lights have faded.
- John 8:12 tells us, “Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life.”
  - Every light can go out, but there is one that can never be extinguished.
  - Have we forgotten this brothers and sisters?
    ✦ We have the best news the world has ever known.
    ✦ It is our responsibility to lift up the Light above all lights.

Conclusion

- There is no reason for the light to be dimmed.
- We have this news.
  - Proclaim the news of the Gift above all gifts and the Light brighter than the largest display.
- Whose Birthday Is It Anyway?

Closing Prayer.

- Light of the world, we have inadvertently tried to drown out your light with our own colorful displays at Christmas. This year help us to point to You, the one true and holy Light, sent as the Gift from the Father. We proclaim You Savior and Lord of all. Amen.