

# “Lighting Up Christmas” – Pr Jim Sprengle – Christmas Day December 25, 2023

- I. **John 1:4-5** – “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.”
- II. **Christmas lights get us in the spirit...**
  - a. I know they are on their way out soon, as we complete our celebration in the next couple of weeks, but they are the highlight (no pun intended) of the season for many people.
  - b. I like to watch that show called, The Great Christmas Light Fight... which goes around the country and shows different people trying to outdo any other people with their Christmas displays.
  - c. I’m not sure when this all became a contest, but I read about the Guinness World Record in 2001 was an Australian family with 330,000 bulbs.
    - i. In response to that, a guy in New York did more than 350,000 bulbs... then they went back and forth until around 10 years ago.
    - ii. The guy in New York holds the record, and just keeps adding to it each year... as of this December he’s at around 730,000 lights.
    - iii. The display has 40 miles of wire, takes 2 months to set up... and whatever he pays in electricity I can’t imagine.
    - iv. I’m sure if you asked anyone who puts up a big display, they would tell you the reason is to bring happiness to people... to bring a little Christmas joy to people who see them.
  - d. Lights are the first sign of Christmas to come, as yards in the neighborhood put up their lights after Thanksgiving, and so do stores, along with many towns on their main streets...
    - i. The lights remind us of the time of year, and the coming of Christmas.
  - e. Unfortunately, these are artificial lights...
    - i. The lights on all the houses up and down our streets, our Christmas trees, and along the businesses will be brought down eventually.
    - ii. As much joy as they bring... they are temporary, and I might add, artificial.
  - f. The temporary and artificial lights in our world give us a momentary lift, but they cannot bring us true joy or fulfillment.
    - i. True joy is only found in our Gospel lesson.
- III. **The Gospel of John begins by getting right to the point.**
  - a. John gives us a kind of Genesis summary, with the beginnings of creation through the Word, which was God. (vs 1)
  - b. He then says that the “Word (which was God), became flesh and dwelt among us - and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.” (vs 14)
  - c. All of this is to say that Jesus Christ came into the world as life and light, which is the opposite of what was going on with death and darkness.

- d. The Prophet Isaiah prophesied about this light, as we read last night, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.” (Isaiah 9:2)
  - i. This is the Light that John is talking about in our Gospel lesson today in words similar to Isaiah, “In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (vss 4-5)
- e. The Light of the world came into the darkness just as predicted long, long ago, as God’s own Son was born to a virgin.
- f. Jesus Christ was born on Christmas Day as the Light that people were expecting for thousands of years... and once He grew to become a man, even He told people that He was the light – as He said, “I am the light of the world, whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12)

IV. **Walking in darkness is the reality of sin.**

- a. The Genesis story tells us about more than creation alone, because it explains the beginning of sin too.
  - i. As Adam and Eve lived in the presence of God and His light without fear or need, they thought they needed more.
  - ii. That first sin against God allowed the darkness of sin to spread throughout all history – and with it, our desire to overcome the darkness by our own means.
- b. We all seek to overcome the darkness in our lives... but it’s never successful because everything we try is temporary... and artificial.
  - i. Many of us are faced with a dose of reality on Christmas morning, as we see the shredded wrapping paper and boxes strewn about... only to realize how much we charged on our credit cards to make all this happen.
    - 1. Just like every gift and new thing, it brings a little sense of joy, but often comes with the guilt of overspending and debt.
  - ii. Others feel a major hangover this morning, as their Christmas Eve was filled with drinking and partying.
    - 1. Mood altering substances become temporary, artificial lights for people everywhere, but the result is just pain and misery.
  - iii. Some of us plan and prepare a huge Christmas feast... which can be a blessing as we come together...
    - 1. Yet, food is also a source of addiction for many people as it becomes a way to counter the darkness.
  - iv. Still others surround themselves with lots of people who are not genuine friends or good people for them.
    - 1. I always say that a good marriage can be heaven... but a bad marriage can be the other place.

2. Many times, we search out and surround ourselves with unhealthy people as a way to feel better, but it breaks us down in the end.
- c. Again, we have a multitude of ways to seek out temporary and artificial joy in the world – but kind of like the guy with the record-breaking light display – we will always seek more.

V. **Jesus, whose birthday we celebrate today, is the true Light.**

- a. We are children of Adam and Eve, and so we will always struggle with sin and seeking our help in places other than God.
- b. Yet, that was the purpose of the Savior's birth, to heal the discontent... to break the bonds of sin... and to give us light that never ends.
- c. None of us want the light to shine in the dark places of our hearts.
  - i. When we think of putting a spotlight on our darkest secrets and sin, we cringe...as we believe that those things should remain in the dark!
  - ii. However, Jesus brings the light of His glory into the darkest parts of our being...
  - iii. He shines the light of forgiveness into these strongholds and places we think that no one could ever forgive us for.
- d. The baby Jesus, the very Light of the world, was born to become the answer to death and darkness.
  - i. All of us who dwell in a land of great darkness... or in our own sinful selves... now have saving grace by God's own rescue plan.
  - ii. The God of the universe, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, altered the course of history by sending the Son to become a human being.
    1. Yes, it's hard to understand, but the Son was always God from the very beginning as it says in John, He was God and with God in the creation.
    2. Yet, the Father sent Him to not only become one of us, but also to grow up and be the person we could not – perfect.
      - a. His perfect life and light would also be the perfect sacrifice for our sins, as He would one day give His life on the cross... but it doesn't end in death on a cross.
      - b. The open tomb is the promise that death and darkness do not hold Jesus – and it does not hold us either – because by grace through faith we are children of God.
- e. God's light has shined on us by His grace and love – and we no longer need to search out the temporary, artificial lights to bring us joy and peace.
  - i. Our true Light – the Light of the world – is here to stay.
  - ii. Praise be to God for this wonderful day, as we are assured of His presence and light in our lives now... and for eternity. Amen.