

“Life Shines in Darkness” – Pr Jim Sprenkle – Sanctity of Life Sunday February 16, 2025

- I. **John 1:4-5** – ⁴In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- II. **Light and life are intertwined in the Bible.**
 - a. It seems that whenever light shines in the darkness, life is right there with it.
 - b. Of course, in the beginning God said, “Let there be light” and soon after life was created as well.
 - c. But God also uses light and darkness, and life and death to describe what is right and holy versus the sin and brokenness in the world.
 - i. Just as our reading in Ephesians 5 says, “⁶The wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience,” which God says we were before being saved... “⁸for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they [the sons of disobedience] do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”
 - ii. This passage is very pointed in saying that sin, unbelief, and disobedience are darkness and death, but God exposes these things with His light – and we rise from the dead – or come to faith.
 - d. The following illustration shows how light can change our perspective, as an author named Niall Williams wrote in his novel, *This Is Happiness*.
 - i. It tells the story of the day when electricity and light came into a little Irish village.
 - ii. The villagers found that a 100-watt bulb was way too bright, because all of the sudden the inside of their centuries old homes was exposed.
 1. Cobwebs... dirt on the walls... and dust in all the corners became clear to see...
 2. As the people looked at each other, they were shocked by the silly looking wigs they wore, the excessive makeup that was caked on, and the clothing that didn't fit right.
 3. The local general store was soon sold out of mirrors because all the people from the countryside bought a mirror, went home, saw their reflections clearly for the first time, and had to face the harsh reality of their appearance.¹
 - e. This story reminds me of our Confirmation classes when we talk about God's Law and how it can be like a mirror to show us just how sinful and broken we are – as God convicts us and shows us where we have sinned.

III. **Life and light must be shined in the darkness of the world.**

- a. As a Pastor, my responsibility is to proclaim both the Law – which shows us our sin, or holds up a mirror to us and shows us our ugly sin... But I also must preach the Gospel – or the forgiveness won by Jesus for us.
- b. So, turning to the Law... You've probably heard these words before, but we live in a culture of death and darkness.
 - i. The world is full of darkness and sin – and death is embraced as some kind of solution to the problem... not life... not light... not God... but death.
 - ii. You see, people... both Christians and non-Christians alike... look to death as the answer to their problems... they trust in death rather than God Himself.
 - 1. If a person has severe dementia or Alzheimer's, then death will take care of it.
 - 2. If a woman fears what the birth of an unplanned baby will bring to her life, then death is the answer.
 - 3. If a person steals from me, well, they might get shot.
 - 4. If someone is diagnosed with a fatal disease, they should be allowed to take their own lives, and we will call it "death with dignity" – again, so death solves the problem.
- c. God tells us what we are and what we are not to do.
 - i. The 1st Commandment says, "You shall have no other gods,"
 - 1. What does this mean? "We should fear, love, and trust in God above all things."
 - ii. The 5th Commandment says, "You shall not murder."
 - 1. What does this mean? "We should fear and love God so that we do not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body, but help and support him in every physical need."
 - 2. Who is my neighbor? Anyone whom God gave life to... from the moment of conception in the womb, to the oldest person.
 - 3. God wants us to cherish and respect life – and if needed, to stand up and protect it whenever possible.
 - 4. All life is a gift from God, and we are told this from the very beginning as God created man and woman in His image, and then sent His Son Jesus into the world in our likeness as well.
- d. Now, I realize that this is easy for me to talk about life and death issues from the safety of this pulpit...
 - i. The decisions made around life and death are incredibly difficult.
 - ii. Yet, far too many times, people trust in death to fix the problem rather than looking to God.
 - iii. I have been with many people over the years who had to make a life or death decision for a loved one, and I always said that we are not going to trust death to solve this problem, but we trust in the Lord.

1. These people made decisions with fear and trembling, placing the life of the person in the Lord's hands.
 - iv. Time and time again I have spoken to women who had abortions and were so guilt-ridden and ashamed because they looked back and knew that they acted out of fear and thought that death would solve the problem.
 - e. Sin, darkness, and death will not solve any problems, but trusting in the life that shines in the darkness is always right.
- IV. **The darkness is overcome by the light and life – Jesus our Savior.**
- a. He is the one who shines a 100-watt lightbulb in our darkness and sin, and we quickly realize that our lives do not reflect Him in us.
 - b. As John chapter 1 is the Gospel lesson for Christmas Day, it is the place we see God's desire to send His Son our Savior into the world to bring light and life to all people.
 - i. Jesus is not just a man, but as the first verse says that Word was God, and then verse 14 says, that the Word came to dwell among us... Jesus is God in the flesh... the light and life of all people.
 - c. The reason Jesus came was to bring forgiveness through the only death that really could fix things... His sacrificial death on the cross.
 - i. I guess if you want to trust in death – trust in Jesus' death on the cross – because that is why your sins are forgiven, and we have life.
 - d. Over and over again, Jesus brought light and life to the people around Him, raising the dead, healing those who suffered, and forgiving the sins of people in His midst.
 - i. Jesus sought to restore the sinners who walked away from Him... He wanted to bring back the Prodigal Son, the Lost Sheep, the Samaritan woman at the well, Zaccheaus, and all the others who needed the light and life to shine in their darkness.
 - ii. Jesus seeks to restore you as well – no, you may not have walked away from Him, but certainly we have all sinned against Him in thought, word, and deed.
 - iii. The words of Jesus are clear, "I forgive you, I love you, you are Mine."
 - iv. There is nothing... I repeat, NOTHING that can separate you from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:39)
- V. **Yes,** the world is full of sin, darkness, and death – but life shines in darkness!
- a. As the children of God by Baptism... we were raised from death to life so that we can shine the light of Christ in the world around us.
 - b. We celebrate and promote life (even in the suffering and trials), and we love our neighbor enough to help and support them in their needs.
 - c. Life and light have been given to each of us through Jesus, and now we are the torch bearers – or the ones who shine that light of the Gospel in the world...

- i. ... and the wonderful gift of LIFE will shine brightly in the hearts of all those who are brought to faith in Jesus. Amen.

¹ Niall Williams, *This Is Happiness*, (Bloomsbury, 2020), p. 53