

Message #1079  
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"NO LONGER AFRAID OF THE DARK"  
{ Isaiah 9: 1-7 and Luke 2: 1-20 }  
Trinity Presbyterian Church  
Christmas Eve  
December 24, 2004

#### INTRODUCTION

What makes Christmas?

...decorations?

...presents?

...television specials?

Irma and I watched the Mormon Tabernacle Choir Christmas Concert on Wednesday evening--it was glorious.

There's a new movie about the season entitled, "Christmas with the Kranks"...another, "The Polar Express."

Deep inside we know that Christmas, however, is more than Rudolph...Santa...Frosty...and Bing Crosby's recording of "White Christmas!"

It's more than these...and...also something less...CHRISTMAS IS SIMPLE!

...it's as simple as a light shining in the dark room

Centuries before the birth of Christ, the Prophet Isaiah wanted to portray the coming of the Messiah who would take away the sins of the world...bring peace and joy to all who knew Him. He said it this way...

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned...and the people rejoice..."

#### DARKNESS

Have you ever been in a house at night when the electricity went off and it became pitch black? It's an eery feeling as you grope around searching for a flashlight or some candles.

I can remember during W.W.II when they would hold Civil Defense Blackouts and everyone had to turn out all the lights...the street lights were turned off and everyone just sat waiting for the siren indicating all was clear. Everything was so dark!

In spiritual terms, that's what it's like to live without God in your life!

...to live without a Savior

...one who frees us from sin and darkness

...who fills our lives with light

That's what it was like the night Jesus was born in Bethlehem two millennia ago.

That was the image Isaiah was portraying...

"The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned...and the people rejoice..."

Tonight we gather to celebrate the birth of Jesus--also, to celebrate a simple reality--  
**ALL WHO CALL ON THE NAME OF JESUS CAN WALK IN LIGHT AND NEVER HAVE TO WALK IN DARKNESS AGAIN!**

That's good news!

#### SHEPHERDS

Visualize with me that night...shepherds watching their flocks on those Judean hills.

...all was dark

...the moon and the stars were their only light  
...perhaps a small campfire...a torch  
...it may have been chilly and damp  
Then SUDDENLY light pierces their darkness...  
...that light came from the presence of God's messenger-- an angel ..."...and the  
glory of the Lord shown around them...!"  
...and they were terrified  
Strange isn't it! The shepherds were accustomed to the darkness...even wild animals  
lurking in the distance seeking an opportunity to attack their flocks...yet, they were  
not afraid.  
...this was their life  
...protecting their flocks by day and by night  
But then, suddenly LIGHT--light from Heaven that illuminated their darkness and  
they were terrified.

#### SAME WITH US

It's the same with us, isn't it?  
...we get used to the darkness around us  
...things that once shocked us have become the norm  
...sin that once repulsed us has become acceptable  
We've become accustomed to darkness!  
Jesus said...  
"Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because  
their deeds were evil..." {John 3:19}  
...we begin to enjoy darkness  
...consider it "normal"

#### GOOD NEWS

That land--about which Isaiah had written--that lived in darkness, experienced a  
marvelous light.  
...it was simple  
...it almost went unnoticed  
...it was like one small candle being lit in a dark room.  
But the words of the angel illumined their lives...  
"Do not be afraid! I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.  
Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; He is Christ, the Lord!  
This will be a sign to you: You will find  
a baby wrapped in strips of cloth lying in a manger!"  
...light had pierced their darkness  
...a small glimmer of light  
Jesus...the Son of God...had arrived--not in glitz and glitter...  
...not with parades and fireworks  
...but with a cry...a gurgle  
Jesus entered the darkness the way you and I entered it--as a helpless bundle of  
potential!  
Imagine the awe of the shepherds!  
Then thousands of angels appeared and sang: "Glory to God in the highest, and on  
earth peace to men on whom His favor rests!"  
...then they left  
...and the shepherds responded...  
"Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told  
us about!"

## BETHLEHEM

They ran to Bethlehem...

...the long awaited Light of the World had come!

...in the form of a small baby

...whose name was Jesus

...the one we know as Savior...Lord!

They found Him exactly as they angel has told them.

...try to imagine Mary and Joseph's surprise when a bunch of mangy shepherds entered that stable

...even more so, their wonder when they heard how Jesus' birth had been announced to them

It's just a simple account of the coming of the Light of the World...and see just how simple it is for us to dispel darkness--to bring light wherever we are!

...the shepherds heard the good news

...they saw the glory of the Lord

...and Light dawned in their lives

...they found Jesus

...and they worshiped Him

...and they returned to their fields "glorifying and praising God for all the things they had heard and seen!"

That's what happens when one discovers the light and emerges from their darkness!

Their lives are filled with His light!

## CONCLUSION

One of the all-time-favorite Christmas TV specials is "It's a Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown."

...it portrays two kinds of light we see at Christmas

Snoopy and some of the others get caught up in the Christmas Light Decorating Contest.

...for them, Christmas is about dazzling, colored, lights

...perfectly shaped Christmas trees

...the biggest and best presents.

But, Charlie Brown, given the simple task of finding a Christmas tree, blows it.

...he brings back a spindly, nearly needleless tree

...it bends over double when a single Christmas ball is placed on it

...the gang calls Charlie Brown a BLOCKHEAD!

He wonders if there isn't something more to Christmas than all the glitz and glitter.

Then...Linus comes to the rescue.

Linus reminds Charlie Brown--and everyone else who will listen--of the true Light of Christmas. Simply, concisely, Linus recounts the story we heard this evening from Luke {the shepherds--the appearance of the angel--and the host of angels--the visit to Bethlehem--the Light}...and when Linus finishes, he says, "And that's what Christmas is all about, Charlie Brown!"

The story ends with the merging of the two kinds of lights. Armed with the good news of great joy that the Light of the world has been born in Bethlehem long ago, the gang goes back to Charlie Brown's tree. They take all of Snoopy's lights and the simple, ugly little tree is transformed! The gang shouts: "Merry Christmas, Charlie Brown!" and break out in a chorus of "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing!"

Tonight as we have gathered to celebrate Jesus birth there is no greater gift to than to merge the two kinds of light we experience at Christmas, as well.

...all the decorations and lights remind us of the true light

...light that came into the dark world

...light that lights up our lives

The shepherds experienced the glory of God...light entered their lives.

They had a choice--a decision to make...

...to just say: "Hey, wasn't that incredible?"

...to stay and watch their sheep

...or to witness the light for themselves.

We live two millennia from the time that the people walking in darkness saw that great light.

As the shepherds experienced it...

...that light that invaded their darkness

...filled their void

...we too can experience that tonight.

Have you witnessed that light in your life? You can do so right now...it's your choice!

And...wow! What a difference that light makes!