

2007 Christmas Day
John 1:1-18
Isaiah 52:7-10

Focus Statement: Christ makes us light.

Function Statement: The hearers live in the light of Christmas.

Last night I spoke of how light entered this sin darkened world in the form of the Christ child. It is a true and wonderful picture. The idea of the Christmas Eve candlelight service itself evokes a quiet contemplation of the stable in Bethlehem that first Christmas night. And while we all know that what happened that night was magnificent and awesome and glorious just as the angels sang out in their joyous hymn, we also keep the manger scene as a small and quiet thing in our hearts, something we ponder quietly as the Virgin Mary did. I mean, we can't really help be keep it small and quiet. It's about a baby. Think about how most of us react when somebody brings a newborn into our presence. We get quiet. We oooh and aaaah in wonder over the miracle that is every new human life.

As we contemplate the manger scene we all know that the fullness of God lies there, but this is God wrapped up in swaddling cloths, a little baby meek and mild, looking as helpless and vulnerable as any newborn does. And it is good and right, for Christ came in humility to be the humble servant of all. And that it happens at night accentuates the smallness of the baby Jesus. The light of the world is in the manger and the world outside is dark. We lit all those candles last night and held them in our hands as a symbol of that light coming to us. But in this big sanctuary there was still a lot of darkness. The light of the candles was a comforting symbol of the light of Christ coming to us, but it was a small light fitting with the size of the baby in the manger.

Good morning! The day has arrived! Merry Christmas!

That's kind of the feeling we have on Christmas morning. We don't think small and quiet, with think big and bright and loud. Our God and Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is too awesome to leave lying in that manger for long. His light is too bright to keep in that stable. I think that's why the powers that be choose the beginning of John's Gospel for Christmas Day. John doesn't let you dwell on the baby, but makes you dwell on the Christ; the majesty the world received as a child.

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. 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.”

John makes sure we know from the get go that Jesus is a lot more than a man born of woman in Bethlehem. John speaks of Jesus as the Word that is God and is with God from everlasting. John speaks of Him as life and light, but not as life and light passively lying in a manger under His mother's care. No, John speaks of life and light in action shining out into the darkness, and the darkness being unable to stop it. This speaks of a clash, of a battle between light and darkness. The manger was before the fight, but today we stand on the other side of the battle.

The battle was on the cross. His glory is on the cross. We were children of darkness, children of sin. But it was on the cross that the power darkness and sin and death were defeated by Christ. And in Christ rising to eternal life again on Easter morning, Christ enabled all who believe in Him to gain that very same life, that very same all encompassing light. Through Christ we are no longer the children of sin and darkness.

“But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.”

Contrast these two images of our Christmas practice. Christmas at night. Christmas in daylight. Christmas at night reminds us of a time when we were in the darkness, waiting for salvation from our sins, wondering at the strange way in which it arrived in the little baby Jesus. But Christmas in daylight, this is Christ victorious for us! The darkness has been destroyed, the battle won and salvation is ours. It is as if on Christmas Eve we are looking backward into the darkness at the wonderful arrival of that humble little baby of light, the candle burning in the darkness. But today the light is not in the darkness, but the light has taken over and the darkness has been banished. We know the glory that is the risen Christ of light. His purpose has been accomplished. His battle has been won. Through Him we have been taken from the darkness and made into light. Today is a day not to dwell on the past arrival of Christ into the world, but a day to bask in what that arrival means today: the daylight of His victory in which we now live!

“Break forth together in singing, you waste places of Jerusalem, for the Lord has comforted his people; he has redeemed Jerusalem. The Lord has bared his holy arm before the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.”

We are the ends of the earth, and we have seen the salvation of our God. We have heard the call of His Holy Spirit, and been brought into the light of Christ through Holy Baptism. We cannot look back at Bethlehem and see just a small baby, the hope of mankind lying in the manger. No, we stand today in the brilliance of His light. We can do

nothing else but look back and see a baby, yes, but much, much more than that. We see a king. We see our victor. We see almighty God in all His strength coming to dash the plans of the evil foe. We see everything that we were once lacking before God—purity, righteousness, obedience, holiness—We see the light that is God Himself, and we see Him poured out into our humanity for us, that today, we might stand here before God in faith, and our God sees all of those things in us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord,” writes Paul. It’s true. We were once darkness but now are light. We were once night but now are day. Christ made us so. A lot of people say everyday is Christmas Day. You can argue that however you want. But through our Lord Jesus Christ one thing is sure; every day Christ makes us day.

Live as children of the light. Merry Christmas.