

Sermon January 3, 2021 Epiphany Sunday

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Jesus is the light of the world. Let us all leave the darkness of this world and live in his light!

Before the power of electricity was harnessed and used for lighting, everyone was limited to candles, lamps, and lanterns. Fire was the only source of light. There was simply no other option. Electric light was not available, and no one even thought about it or lamented its unavailability. Since the discovery and development of electricity, people can have plenty of light all the time, 24/7. However, in the grand scheme of things, electric light is a VERY VERY recent development.

St. Paul speaks about a similar development in human spirituality. For most of history people worshipped and developed theologies of false gods. They were not aware of any other choices or options. They didn't know about God's love, blessing, and life in Jesus Christ. They didn't even think about it or wish they had it. But then, like with the electric light, there was a huge change in the spiritual realms. Jesus Christ had come to be the savior of ALL the world. A new spiritual light was available, as Jesus Christ is the light of the world.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "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

This is God's grace we rightly celebrate today on Epiphany Sunday. The wise men were led to Jesus by the light of a special star. Now, Jesus himself shines with the starlight of God's love, pointing us to the mercy, compassion, forgiveness, and eternal life we can find in God. Jesus Christ is the light of the world. Let us all leave the darkness of this age and live in his light!

And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light. John 3:19

When we're in a dark room sleeping or watching TV and someone comes in and turns on the big light, we're like, "Oww! That hurts my eyes! Turn it off! It's too bright!" We see that acted out in the life of Jesus. The wise men came to Jerusalem and thinking nothing of it, asked King Herod where they could find the newborn king. Wise men in those days were known to have this type of knowledge gathered from the stars, so Herod took their request seriously. So much so he hatched a plan to get rid of this threat to his throne. Kill the child! Get rid of him! Turn off the light. It hurts my eyes. His actions brought soldiers to Bethlehem, death to young boys, and tears to their mothers' eyes. Jesus survived the attempt on his life through angelic intervention and made it to adulthood. His safety ended there. When Jesus reached rock star status with the common folk, the religious leaders, like Herod, did not want to be replaced. They brought soldiers to Gethsemane, deceit to the courts, and cosmic death to Jesus.

Darkness hates the light. What is darkness? It includes the abuse of position, power, and privilege. It's wrongful pride, hatred, unlawful gain, breaking one's word, and despising others. It's making our lives the center of all things. It's finding ourselves trapped in habits we cannot break. It's being defeated by hopelessness, despair, and grief.

Herod found himself at the top of his fragile kingdom with an opulent lifestyle and great power. The religious elites held top positions of authority and had great wealth with more on the way if things remained unchanged. They were all trapped in their situations, unable to let go of their hold for an even greater joy.

Jesus Christ, the light of the world, has greater riches than any king. His rule extends across the universe and the spiritual realm. He holds greater authority than any priest and wields power over every spiritual force that would be against us. Jesus Christ has the power over death itself.

Jesus invites us out of the darkness and into his marvelous light. We must consider our own little kingdom we have set up for ourselves not worth ruling. We must make him our king and let him rule over us. At that point Jesus does something remarkable. He shares his kingdom with us. He gives us authority in the spiritual realms. He gives us a claim to all that is his. He gives us seats of high honor at his table. And all of these things are forever! It is just as Jesus teaches, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for THEIRS is the kingdom of heaven." When we come to Jesus knowing full well we have absolutely nothing to offer him but our darkness, he will exchange it for his light.

A whole new source of light has entered the world. It is available to us in Jesus Christ. Jesus is the light of the world. Let us all leave our darkness and live in his light. Amen.

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