

## “The Season of Light”

*(John 1: 6 – 8, 19 – 28)*

**Grace, mercy and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.**

Dear Friends in Jesus,

Advent is the season of lights. Lights in house windows, on Christmas trees, spotlights, candle lights, and twinkling star lights. So many lights, but do you know why? What is the purpose of all these lights? Perhaps we are so used to them, that we don't notice them or appreciate them. Perhaps they have become so much part of the physical and commercial celebrations of Christmas that for us the meaning of light has become something about which we are very much in the dark.

One can hardly appreciate the light if one does not first understand darkness. We all know something about darkness, those times when we stumble and grope around in the dark, fumbling and disorientated..... until we find the light.

The people at the time of John the Baptist were in the dark. They knew their Old Testament well enough to realise that the Light was coming. They knew that God who had seen his special creatures fall from the light of his grace and love into the gloom of darkness and sin, had promised to return his light to his people. The people at the time of our text knew the light was coming, but they were still in the dark. They didn't know when it was coming, and they really didn't understand what the light was. And when it did come, they didn't see it.

At least, however, they were looking for the light, which is more than we can say for many others, either at the time of John or today. One of the most tragic things about people walking in darkness is that many of them do not realise their sad condition. We are people whose spiritual appearance – our attitudes, our actions – reveals the darkness of our sin and selfishness. Most people do not even realise this embarrassing situation. They are happy to live in sin and ignorance, unaware that God justly demands righteousness and holiness, and full obedience to his will. Why don't people get excited about God, about the church, about their Saviour Jesus? They have no need of the Light, because they do not realise they are living in darkness.

And sometimes even we who already know the Lord Jesus fall into this realm of darkness. We shun the Light of God and live for ourselves, rather than for him who died for us and rose again for us. We fail to do his will and neglect him in our worship and prayer. We stand more as flickering candle lights than as guiding beacons in a sin-sick world.

It is no wonder that the message of John the Baptist who came to give witness to the Light, also came preaching a message of repentance. For when the light of Jesus exposes our deeds of darkness we stand guilty before him. And while we might not appreciate that kind of light and prefer to go back to our spiritual slumber, we know how much we desperately need the Light to see our sin..... and our glorious salvation.

How easy to miss the Light, to miss the witness of John the Baptist to the true Light, and pursue many false and flashy lights – perhaps the goal for so many seeking personal happiness from our materialistic world, a world of bright lights. How many people today miss or misunderstand the Light of God, people who think that the real world is one of fun and pleasure. They miss out on the whole purpose of this season of light, the purpose of Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Good Friday and Easter. Thank God that humans' lights are completely overshadowed by the true Light of the world, Jesus.

And thank God for the witness of John to that Light which alone gives light to all people. For we cannot find it on our own. We need someone to show us the light, to find the switch for us, and then turn the light on. John come to us today and he bears witness to the Light. We know so clearly who that Light is, God's true and only Son, who came to die for all our sins, and save us from the power of darkness, who suffered the darkest depths of hell in our place, and who rose in glory to give his light and life for all people.

For when we come confessing our sin, when we admit that we are people walking in darkness, when we realise how desperately we need light to show us the way back to God, then suddenly and miraculously the light comes on. And we see our Saviour who is Christ the Lord! We worship a Baby in a manger, but we understand that his crib of Christmas will find its meaning only in the cross of Calvary. This Child has come to die for each one of us, so that we need not suffer the darkness of death but instead be given life – life to the full! We are led out of darkness into his marvellous light.

When the Holy Spirit turns on the light of Jesus our world changes. We see our whole life – and the world around us – in a new and wonderful way. No longer do we need to live in a world of fear and darkness for our sins have been totally forgiven. No longer do we need to grope around in the dark fumbling in a futile search to find meaning in the confusion of our lives, for we have seen the Light.

We have seen Jesus. With our eyes fixed on Jesus we can walk confidently in faith through our life on earth to the eternal light of heaven.

Advent is the season of lights. We know who is coming: the one true Light. We have seen his light; we walk in his light. We understand the lights of Christmas, and we follow the star to worship Jesus, the Saviour who is Christ the Lord, whom we shall meet in the light of heaven, where we will live with him and in his light forever.. **Amen.**

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Sermon by Pastor Graham Zweck, 13 December 2020