

## The Coming of the Light

Well, the wait and preparations are finally over! The baking is done, the presents have been wrapped and put under the tree, the decorations are up and travel plans for the holidays are set. Put in a couple of storms the last couple of weeks and the stress levels have risen significantly, especially with this bomb cyclone so close to Christmas, upsetting travel plans and activities. At times during the hub-bub of all the Christmas preparations and trying to get things 'just so' and done on time, it may seem like we are in a tunnel. We see the light at the end of the tunnel and while sometimes it may seem like a long way off, we are not sure if it is the end of the tunnel or a train barreling down on us.

It is significant that the church had set the celebration of Jesus' birth after the winter solstice, the day with the least amount of daylight. The daylight begins to lengthen and by the 25th, we can actually begin to detect this increased amount of light in our lives. In John's Gospel account, he equates Jesus as the light of the world, a light to overcome the darkness which the world had fallen into when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit. While Luke and Matthew in their Gospel accounts make the connection that Jesus is from the line of King David, John makes the assertion that Jesus was with God from before the creation and is God and was sent from God to redeem the world. This was done simply because of God's love for God's creation and us. In Luke's account of Jesus' birth, he makes the case that it happened when Augustus Caesar was the emperor of Rome and ruled the Roman world under the 'Pax Romana.' This 'Roman Peace' was actually maintained through the ruthless actions of Augustus Caesar and the Roman army. No one dared to offer resistance to Caesar under the very real threat of being severely beaten by the Roman army, who swore allegiance to Caesar. The Roman senate even went so far as to decree that Augustus Caesar was a god. So, we see

this contrast being set up by the authors of the Gospel accounts to show the differences between Caesar and Jesus. Using John's analogy of light, we could say that the Gospels offer a contrast between the rulers in and of the dark with Jesus, the light come to save the world.

To use the analogy from the beginning of this sermon, the authors of the Gospels present the story of Jesus as a story that the light we see at the end of the tunnel is the light while the light of the Caesars of this world is the train, a false light that will run right over us. Light is a useful analogy for religion, especially Christianity. Paul and the other writers of the New Testament often encourage believers to live a life that is worthy of being in the light; of not wanting to hide our actions in the dark, being ashamed of what we do, knowing that it is wrong and hope that no one finds out what we had done. In our rite of baptism, we light a candle for the baptized, representing a reflection of the light of Jesus to the world. On Christmas Eve, many Christians light candles to represent the coming of the Light of the World, that is, Jesus, into the world - a Light that will push back the darkness revealing the love of God. This light represents the spirit of Christmas, the spirit of giving to and for others, of seeing the needs of others before our own wants and desires, the spirit of love for one another, the spirit of seeing the light of God in each of God's children.

Unfortunately, for too many people, once the candles are extinguished, once the decorations are taken down and put away, once the gifts are put away, so too do they put away the Christmas spirit until next year. They may think that it is something that is special that shouldn't be out all year round for fear of it becoming too ordinary, not noticed. However, we need to remember that most times, God does come to us in the ordinary, in those times that almost seem like we are in a rut; we just need to recognize when God shines that light on us. In other

words, we lose the Christmas spirit when we don't see the light of God that is in each other; when we think that the light at the end of the tunnel is the train and not the life-giving light of Jesus.

As we continue with our Christmas celebrations, let us also be mindful that our preparations for the coming of Jesus are not complete, that while we have been given light, we are still in that tunnel. When Jesus comes again, we will be brought into the fullness of God's love, into the eternal light where life will be beyond our wildest imaginings. Until till that time, may we be guided by the Holy Spirit to journey to the light of Jesus, preparing for His Second Coming.

YouTube links:

Service: <https://youtu.be/cU44z60mc3I>