

02/19/17 Bucyrus United Methodist Church

**“LIGHT US UP JESUS”**

Pastor: Mike Corwin

**TEXT:** LUKE 11:29-36

**GOD'S WORD:** JONAH 3:1-10

**I - GLOW IN THE DARK:**

From the onset of their lives I have made it one of my personal goals to spoil my grandchildren. I do it openly and without shame. Part of that involves buying them toys that piled up at their house and at mine. The upside of this is that they enjoyed them and had a lot of fun. The downside is that you have to clean them up and weed them out.

I remember doing that one time when I ran across a couple of action figures that had been cast aside for newer things and had resided in the back of a toy closet for a while. They were unbroken except the fact they had lost their ability to glow in the dark, which they did when I first bought them. My first intention was to send them to the great toy graveyard to get the rest they had earned from being mishandled by our grandsons. But it dawned on me that they weren't broken. They weren't glowing in the dark because they had not been exposed to the light for some time. Such things do not have batteries or electricity to light them up. They work on a phenomenon called "PHOSPHORESCENCE." The molecules of the paint or plastic they contain are able to absorb the light energy and enter what's called an "excited state." This means their normal balance is upset and they're bouncing around with all this new energy. When the lights are turned off this energy is released to cause them to glow in the dark.

I put the toys on the windowsill and left them in the sunlight for a couple of days and it rejuvenated them and they started

working/glowing again. They were saved from a premature trip to the landfill and instead were placed back in to play with kids again.

## **II - NINEVEH:**

I want us to think about this principle of Phosphorescence and apply it to the story of Jonah you heard read this morning. I want us to do this because this same principle can be applied to the story of our faith, to our relationship with God.

The city of Nineveh was a well known place. It was a city of prominence and wealth in the region at the time of Jonah. It was the capital of Assyria, the nation that had captured and ruled the Israelites. They were the enemy of the prophet Jonah and his people. It was a big city as the story told us it would take three days just to walk across town. They did not recognize the God of Jonah and the Israelites. They worshipped pagan gods, made sacrifices to them. You can imagine what sin accompanied this pagan culture of warfare, power, and greed. God tells Jonah at the beginning of Chapter 1 to "Get up and go to the great city of Nineveh! Announce my judgment against it because I have seen how wicked its people are" (Jonah 1:2NLT). That started the whole ordeal where Jonah ran away and got swallowed by the great fish for three days and lived in its belly until he was spit back out after he came to his senses and decided to do what God had asked him to do. In the third chapter God repeats his command to go and preach to them about their evil ways and this time Jonah goes and does as he's told. The story tells us that when the Ninevites heard the Word of God...heard Jonah's preaching, they listened and trusted God. The king himself came down off his throne, declared a city wide fast for all the people and even the animals, and commanded them to repent of their sins and cry out to God for forgiveness. The story ends telling us that God did see their change of heart and did forgive them instead of destroying their city as planned.

The story tells us that the Ninevites had been living in the darkness of their sin, but when they were exposed to the light of God by Jonah they started to glow and were forgiven.

### **III - TEXT:**

Jesus used this story of Jonah one day as he was preaching to the generation of his day. He had delivered a man from a demon and was accused of using black magic to do it. As he was disputing this and trying to teach them the truth the crowd grew and people wanted him to do more miracles to prove to them he was who he said he was. Instead he gave them this teaching...

#### **Luke 11:29-36 (TMSG)**

<sup>29</sup>As the crowd swelled, he took a fresh tack: "The mood of this age is all wrong. Everybody's looking for proof, but you're looking for the wrong kind. All you're looking for is something to titillate your curiosity, satisfy your lust for miracles. But the only proof you're going to get is the Jonah-proof given to the Ninevites, which looks like no proof at all. <sup>30</sup>What Jonah was to Nineveh, the Son of Man is to this age. <sup>31</sup>"On Judgment Day the Ninevites will stand up and give evidence that will condemn this generation, because when Jonah preached to them they changed their lives. A far greater preacher than Jonah is here, and you squabble about 'proofs.' <sup>32</sup>On Judgment Day the Queen of Sheba will come forward and bring evidence that condemns this generation, because she traveled from a far corner of the earth to listen to wise Solomon. Wisdom far greater than Solomon's is right in front of you, and you quibble over 'evidence.' <sup>33</sup>"No one lights a lamp, then hides it in a drawer. It's put on a lamp stand so those entering the room have light to see where they're going. <sup>34</sup>Your eye is a lamp, lighting up your whole body. If you live wide-eyed in wonder and belief, your body fills up with light. If you live squinty-eyed in greed and distrust, your body is a dank cellar. <sup>35</sup>Keep your eyes open, your lamp burning, so you don't get musty and murky. <sup>36</sup>Keep your life as well-lighted as your best-lighted room."

Jesus calls them on the carpet. He tells them they must think they're at the circus wanting to see the next big act and wanting to be entertained. Instead he tells them he's not going to be a sideshow for them and that

they already have the proof they need just like the people in the time of Jonah had.

Jonah stood up and told the people of Nineveh to repent and be saved and they did so without waiting for signs or miracles. They heard and they believed. He told them that the very Son of God was now standing before them, giving them the same message and it was up to them to believe it or not. Jesus says he is a much greater preacher than Jonah was so if the people then believed the people now should too. Matter-of-fact if they don't the people of Jonah's time will stand up as witnesses against them when they stand before God on judgment day.

Then he launches into this teaching about light and eyes. He's telling them, and us, that the light has shown in the world. The light is Jesus Christ. Once you see the light you have a responsibility. Once you see the light you're not supposed to hide it from others, not supposed to put it in a dark drawer and only bring it out on Sundays. You're supposed to use it to light the way for others. You're supposed to glow in the dark for Jesus. Someone exposed you to the light - now you should expose others!

He tells us that when we open our eyes to him, to the good things, it lights up our whole body. It makes us want to open our eyes wider and get more of the light inside. If you close your eyes to the light then your body, your life is kept in the dark and is used as a place for sin to live and stink. It's up to you what your eyes let in and what you let in controls how you live.

He also tells us to keep our eyes wide open so that we never cease to be energized by the light. Christians can be like those toys we talked about. They can walk away from the light and hide in a closet of darkness instead. When they do their light begins to flicker, they start to lose their energy and their desire to live with and for Jesus. If they do this long enough they'll cease to glow with that light...they won't glow in the dark.

We must keep our life well lit by opening our eyes and devouring the Words and teachings of God and Jesus as found in this book (Bible), through fellowship, and in prayer. We are to always make sure our molecules of faith are energized and at work so we glow in the dark.

#### **IV - LIVING IN THE LIGHT:**

I hope that you'll agree with me that we are called to live in the light. By this passage today and a lot of others, we are called to be followers of Jesus. We are called to live in his light and to be so filled with it that we light up this community with it. I believe that all of you try to live that life, try to live in that light. That's why you come here on Sunday mornings and other times, because you want to be in that light. You want to soak it up...it's what helps you make in through the week...through your life. You know that your life now and for eternity comes through that light.

There are a lot of people though that don't live in that light, and I can understand it. It is easy to be consumed by the darkness of this world. With the wars in the Middle East, with the genocides in Africa, with the news of people shooting one another almost daily around us, with the constant bombardment of violence from video games and entertainment, with just the daily news, it's easy to dwell on it and be overcome by that violence. It's easy to react to the rudeness and sarcasm of others by using it ourselves. It's easy to be critical of our schools and our governments because we never hear about the good things that happen their daily - only the bad things are dwelt on and publicized. The darkness sucks people in to it by the lure of temptations that abound. Sex and alcohol are openly publicized and used to advertise. We continue to fight battles of gambling because it brings a new darkness to our state. We lead the nation in the

darkness of opiate deaths. We are constantly bombarded with the opportunity to sin...to live in the dark closet of evil and sin.

We have to remember two things. The first is to make sure we keep our eyes wide open, that we practice the spiritual disciplines of Bible reading, prayer, meditation, and fellowship. We must keep ourselves flooded with the light and let it control our lives. Then we have to drag others into the light.

## **V - LIGHT ME UP JESUS!:**

We have proclaimed this the year of light. The year the church turns on the power and the light blazes to extinguish the darkness. We will be looking at ways to live in the light of Jesus by being his faithful disciples, by learning what it means to truly be his follower. This will increase our glow. It will energize the molecules of our faith and cause them to move rapidly and make us the beacon of hope and love God calls us to be. Then we'll be able to share that glow with others and with that light we'll drag the people of this community and others out of the darkness they live in.

When we have this light radiating in our own life it'll be easy to answer the question, "How do we claim the community of Bucyrus for Jesus Christ?" The answer is that we will use the light of Jesus Christ as it radiates from our faith. It happens when we throw open the doors of this closet (our church) and shine that light out into the darkness. It happens when we become Jonah to the people in this community.

At the end of my life I don't want God to look at me like I looked at those toys in the closet. I don't want him to pick me up out of the dark closet of my human life and find me dark and useless. I don't want him to throw me away because I have no light in me. I want him to find me radiant and

glowing with the light of Jesus and standing in the open so everyone else can see his grace and glory radiated from me. I want to glow in the dark!

I pray that you'll open the eyes of your head and heart wider and soak in the light. I want you all to join me in praying, "LIGHT ME UP JESUS!" until this entire community glows in the dark.

AMEN