

## **“LIGHTING THE MESS”**

**PASTOR MIKE CORWIN**

**1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**TEXT: ISAIAH 9:1-7**

**GOD’S WORD: JOHN 1:1-9**

### **I – WHERE’S WALDO:**

Do you remember the game a few years ago called “Where’s Waldo?” You saw the cartoons all around and there were puzzle books about it and children’s game books. It was all about finding the figure of a man with a stocking cap, red and white striped sweater, and black eye glasses, who was buried in a picture full of other people. It could be challenging to find him.

I was thinking about that game this week and thought we could easily change the name to “Where’s Jesus?” It seems like the modern times and society has us searching for Jesus and our faith mixed in with a multitude of pressures, needs, to-do lists, painful thoughts, and disorienting circumstances of our lives.

The daily grind isn’t enough, today we add more. Today we begin the season of Advent with all of the Christmas traditions we have learned. With the need to buy the right gifts, decorate our homes, have family gatherings and meals – sometimes multiple ones – and hanging lights and mistletoe. And all the special services we have at the church.

### **II – DARKNESS:**

Let’s add to this the darkness of life. If I take all of this into consideration then it is easy to understand that the holidays can be a time of unhappy challenges, and depression. The demands of the times puts a burden on people that they can’t seem to get out from under. It puts them into a time of darkness.

Then we have to realize the world is full of darkness even before we add the holiday hub-bub.

2020 and 2021 have been full of challenges. We have been living under the shadow of a deadly virus. We have suffered through public unrest and protests. Age old problems such as racism has reared its ugly head once again. Political parties can't get along and agree on anything, starting at the local level and traveling all the way to the federal level. Inflation is ravaging a people who were having trouble making ends meet to start with. We are dissatisfied with the way our medical profession is performing as we seek help for physical ailments. Our prisons are full but our jobs are not. People have become intolerant of one another and rude. You have to worry about whether it's even safe to go to the mall and shop for the holiday, and it seems daily we read or hear about another story of kids dying as they shoot one another. There are homeless and hungry people in the country that is the most affluent on the planet.

Is it any wonder there is a mental health crisis, any wonder that more people died of drug overdoses in the last year than ever before, any wonder the incidence of suicide has sky rocketed? I would suggest it's because we live in a time of great darkness. But there is hope...we just need to turn on the light!

### **III – TEXT:**

This period of darkness is nothing new. The writer of the book of Ecclesiastics said that "There is nothing new under the sun." He was correct. As I read the Bible, as I study the times before and at the birth of Jesus I see a period of darkness. I see a time of government oppression. A time of religious persecution, of poverty, or racism, of slavery, of hunger and homelessness. It was so bad the people had been told about the coming of a Messiah, a Savior, who would help them. The prophets, such as Isaiah, said that there would come a day that God would shine a light into the darkness...

## Isaiah 9:1-7 (NLT)

<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, that time of darkness and despair will not go on forever. The land of Zebulun and Naphtali will be humbled, but there will be a time in the future when Galilee of the Gentiles, which lies along the road that runs between the Jordan and the sea, will be filled with glory.

<sup>2</sup> The people who walk in darkness  
will see a great light.

For those who live in a land of deep darkness,  
a light will shine.

<sup>3</sup> You will enlarge the nation of Israel,  
and its people will rejoice.

They will rejoice before you  
as people rejoice at the harvest  
and like warriors dividing the plunder.

<sup>4</sup> For you will break the yoke of their slavery  
and lift the heavy burden from their shoulders.

You will break the oppressor's rod,  
just as you did when you destroyed the army of Midian.

<sup>5</sup> The boots of the warrior  
and the uniforms bloodstained by war  
will all be burned.

They will be fuel for the fire.

<sup>6</sup> For a child is born to us,  
a son is given to us.

The government will rest on his shoulders.

And he will be called:

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,  
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

<sup>7</sup> His government and its peace  
will never end.

He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David  
for all eternity.

The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies  
will make this happen!

#### **IV – THE LIGHT CAME:**

Jesus, the one prophesied about, was born that first Christmas to fulfill this promise of God to his children. Jesus is the great light who came to help us through the darkness.

Jesus came so that no one would have to live in a mixed up world. So that no one would have to stumble through life in the dark. So that no one would have to fall into the darkness of sin. Jesus came to be the light that allows us to put everything in order and see our way clearly.

Life on this earth will never be perfect, but with Jesus it can at least be clear. We may see the pile of problems or sin in our path and know enough to dodge it. Even if we stumble and fall we won't get hurt like we would in the dark. The problems and darkness of life will still be there, but with Jesus we'll get through them in the light and handle them in an orderly manner instead of running around all mixed up. There's always going to be a mess, but Jesus lights up the mess!

#### **V – ADVENT LIGHT:**

Today is the first day of Advent. The season we celebrate each year as we anticipate the coming of the Christ Child. This year we will be looking at the Apostle John's narrative of the birth story that you heard read this morning. We will be looking at how Jesus is 'THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD.'

No matter what you've been through. No matter the darkness you have or are facing, we invite you to be with us, to find the Light and let it shine through the darkness. Once you find the light, once you allow it to shine in your life the promise from the Gospel of John is that the darkness can never extinguish the light. Let's light up the mess of life together.

AMEN