

“WHO IS THE LIGHT?”

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2nd SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TEXT: JOHN 8:112 & 14:6

GOD’S WORD: JOHN 1:1-9

I – TWINKLE, TWINKLE:

One of the first pieces of poetry most of us learned as children concerned a star. It went something like this:

Twinkle, twinkle little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky.

As I thought about this little poem recently, I wondered if it wasn’t written by someone who was pondering the Christmas story, especially that as written in the Gospel of John. John starts his Gospel just like Matthew and Luke did, with a story about the birth of Jesus. But John’s telling of the story starts out a little cryptic doesn’t it? He doesn’t start out by telling you about virgins and carpenters. He doesn’t mention anything about trips to Bethlehem, angels, stars, or shepherds. He starts out telling us that there was a Word, with a capital “W” who has been there since the very beginning of time. Then in the middle of the story he switches and tells us the “Word” is the “Light.” It leaves one asking who is the “Word,” who is the “Light.”

And before he tells us who the light is, he tells us who it isn’t. In verses 6-8 of John’s birth narrative he tells us:

⁶ God sent a man, John the Baptist, ⁷ to tell about the light so that everyone might believe because of his testimony. ⁸ John himself was not the light; he was simply a witness to tell about the light.

I think one of the lessons John is teaching us is that each of us must decide who the light is. We must each answer the childhood question of “Twinkle, twinkle little star, how I wonder what you are? WHO IS THE LIGHT?”

II – STAR CLUSTERS:

Have you ever looked up into a night time sky at the stars? They seem to come in clusters don't they? There are many to look at, many you could stare at and put your hope and dreams on. Which light is the right one? The story of Christmas, the birth of Jesus, shows you a cluster of stars too. It's up to you, as John did, to weed out the minor stars and find who this Light really is.

- There is the angel Gabriel, the messenger of God who proclaimed the birth of a baby to Mary and Joseph. Is he the light? Aren't angels called beings of light?
- There's Mary. A scared teenage girl who agrees to carry out the wishes of God, who is proclaimed faithful and obedient. Surely she's a light for God.
- Or maybe it's Joseph. A strong hard working man who lays aside his personal reputation and standing in the community to marry a pregnant girl, and it's not even his child! Surely he's a light for God.
- Could it be the Inn Keeper who took the time to share a stable? It doesn't seem like much, but he didn't have to do it, he was showing a little hospitality, maybe a flicker of light from him?
- How about the shepherds? They were surrounded by God's glory as choirs of angel's sang to them. They ran to the stable to see a baby they weren't even related to.
- How about some Wise Men, who traveled from foreign lands in search of a baby? They sacrificed everything to follow a star.
- Wait a minute – that's it! It's the star! That's the brightest thing in the story of the nativity we look at each year at Christmas. Certainly a star is light isn't it?

But all of these characters in the Christmas story are just like John the Baptist. They are minor stars. The real star is the baby.

III – TEXT:

If you continue on down through the birth story in John you reach verse 14 which tells you:

“so the Word became human and lived here on earth among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the only Son of the Father.”

The real star of the story is the baby in the manger, Jesus, the one and only Son of God, born to be the Savior of the World.

John might have started out his Gospel being a little cloudy, a little cryptic, but he certainly made up for it later as he recorded the very words of Jesus, who plainly answered the question, “WHO IS THE LIGHT?”

One day Jesus is speaking to the people, in ear shot of the Pharisees, when he said this:

John 8:12 (NLT)

¹² Jesus spoke to the people once more and said, “I am the light of the world. If you follow me, you won’t have to walk in darkness, because you will have the light that leads to life.”

Jesus himself answers the question brought about in John 1:4-5. Jesus himself tells us who the light is. The light is him! Jesus is telling them, and us that he is the inexhaustible source of Spiritual nourishment. He is the genuine light by which truth and falsehood can be distinguished. He is the light by which we can establish our direction. If we turn towards Jesus the Light, we turn away from darkness. We can endure and see our way through all the darkness we pointed out last week.

On another day, as he was speaking with his disciples, he tells them the same thing in some even plainer words:

John 14:6 (NLT)

⁶ Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to the Father except through me.”

Jesus is telling them just how bright a light he truly is. He doesn’t claim just to know the way, the truth, and the life. He isn’t telling us some formula that can be applied to humans as their way to heaven...to God. He says he **IS** the way, the truth, and the life. He **IS** the way to heaven. Matter of fact, he says he is the **ONLY** way there. Jesus is the Master of life. He is the LIGHT to follow.

IV – FOLLOW THE LIGHT:

I subscribe to a couple magazines that I have always enjoyed and got some information and education from. The two prominent ones I read each month are National Geographic and The Smithsonian. I used to subscribe to Newsweek as a means to get some of my more worldly news, but in November 2008 I had to cancel my subscription and have never gone back regardless of how cheap they tried to make it for me to do so. I did this because they made it plain to me that they had lost sight of “THE LIGHT” and had let the world try to take its place.

In the November 17th issue that year I read an article that started this way:

“Some princes are born in palaces. Some are born in mangers. But a few are born in the imagination out of scraps of history and hope.”

It then went on to talk about the president elect, Barack Obama. I didn't get upset because he was going to be president. I prayed for him as I have all of our elected leaders, but I will never put him on a cross and elevate him to the level of Jesus Christ, nor will I anyone else. He may have been a star, but he's not THE LIGHT! It upset me so bad I still have the article.

In our lives we must do the same as we do with the Christmas story. We have to look in to the field of stars that surround us and decide who the light really is. We are bombarded in our lives with people and things that want us to believe they are the light of our lives. The world would have us to believe that certain politicians, regardless of party, are the lights to be followed. The world would have you believe that Tom Cruise or Ellen DeGeneres, or Oprah are the lights we should follow. How about various sports teams? Even some churches have set up their leaders or their buildings as the light source. Then we throw in things like money and power, which are supposed to bring us light and happiness, and it's easy to see how you can be misled, how you can travel towards the darkness and not even know its growing dim around you.

None of these are the true light, regardless of what your magazines, television, or social media shows you there is only one Light who you should be following. Only one light that can shine through the darkness, only one Light who can lead you through life for all of eternity. That light is Jesus Christ, the Light of the World. My message for you this day is, FOLLOW THE LIGHT!

V – HOW I WONDER:

So we know who the star is, but what about answering the second part of the poem, "how I wonder what you are." Let me answer that with a brief video that someone called to my attention:

"AMAZING GRACE LIGHTS" video

I don't wonder, I know...The Light of my life is the Savior of my life. The star of Christmas, the baby in the manger, came to bring the grace and love of God to the human race in a way we could understand it. When you follow his light you find eternal life and light. One day in my life I found the Light and the words of the childhood poem changed to:

TWINKLE, TWINKLE LITTLE JESUS
HOW I'M GLAD YOU CAME TO SAVE US

I pray you have all found Jesus and are living in the light.

AMEN