

“HOW LONG WILL THE LIGHT STAY ON?”

PASTOR MIKE CORWIN

4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

TEXT: REVELATION 1:8 & 21:22-27

GOD’S WORD: JOHN 1:1-9

I – LIFE SPAN:

This last couple of weeks has been full of problems as we approach the Christmas Holiday. It seems that every day a new crisis takes place. Last week the state elevator inspector was in and let us know that we had issues with our three elevators that needed to be addressed. The first of that week saw me on a ladder as Janice handed me light tubes so her overhead office light would work again. In the process of this we are arranging the repair of our organ and trying to finish off the downstairs Sunday school rooms at a time when you can’t get what you need because it’s on a boat someplace waiting for a change to deliver. These are just the most notable things I can call to mind. You can imagine what needs to be done to keep two buildings up and running. Then you throw the human needs on top of this and you can understand the phrase we use in the office when we refer to “The Crisis of The Day.”

All of this got me to thinking about the fact that everything has a life span. Elevator parts don’t last forever, eventually they wear out and break down. Electric lights wear out and malfunction. Light bulbs need replaced from time to time because they burn out and quit lighting up the area they are aimed at. We have to occasionally buy new clothes because they wear out, new cars because they don’t last forever, new batteries because they die, and the list goes on and on. Even our bodies function on this same principle. They have a lifespan, they wear out, they break down, and they eventually die.

This shouldn’t surprise us, it’s actually a Biblical principle. Remember the passage from Ecclesiastes 3 that starts out, “There is a season for every activity under heaven (Vs.1)” It immediately then tells you next that there’s “A time to be born and a time to die (Vs.2).” There is a lifespan on everything.

II – FAITH LIFESPAN:

So, if this is all true Pastor Mike, if there is a lifespan on everything, what about my faith? Does it have a lifespan? Light bulbs burn out, light fixtures blow up, but what about “THE LIGHT?” You’ve

spent three weeks telling us about the light of Christmas, but how long will it last? We know the star of Bethlehem must have had a lifespan, must have burned out, or we'd be able to see it today wouldn't we? We know the lights on our Christmas trees burn out, the Advent candles burn down, and evergreen trees don't stay green forever when they're in our living rooms. The trimmings of the season don't last, so what about "THE LIGHT?" How long will it burn? How long will it shine?

I would start out answering your question by telling you that there are exceptions to every rule. It's true certain aspects of our faith have a lifespan. Church buildings and fixtures have a lifespan. Sunday school classes have a lifespan. Denominations and movements have a lifespan. Church dinners and traditions have a lifespan. Even the things in our churches that have a plaque on them, have a lifespan. They don't last forever, but eventually wear out or die out. But these are just the trimmings of our faith. They just help us celebrate and practice our faith just as Christmas trees and lights help us celebrate this season. The real object of our faith is the real object of Christmas, it's the Light, it's Jesus the Christ child, and he has no lifespan. He is the exception to the rule.

John tells us in verse 5 of his Christmas story that "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness can never extinguish it." The Light of Christmas, the Light of the World, has no lifespan. The creation has a lifespan, but the Creator does not.

III – TEXT:

John told us about this eternal light not only in his first writing you heard read this morning, but also in his last...the book of Revelation. In the first book of the Bible we hear about the creation of light. In the Gospel of John we hear about the Creator being the light. In the last book of the Bible we are told about the Light being forever, from the beginning to the end.

Let me share with you some verses from the book of Revelation that should answer today's question of "HOW LONG WILL THE LIGHT STAY ON?"

Revelation 1:8 (NLT)

⁸"I am the Alpha and the Omega—the beginning and the end," says the Lord God. "I am the one who is, who always was, and who is still to come—the Almighty One."

In the first chapter of the book we find this verse from God, who presents his Son to us and gives us the same attributes he has. The one attribute highlighted here is that God is eternal. God is beyond eternal, so is the Son.

Alpha and Omega is the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, and just as they mark the beginning and the end, God marks the beginning and the end. God, with Jesus (remember the first part of John's birth story – the light was there in the beginning and everything was created

through him, he gave life to everything), was present before the world began, and they will be present when the world ends.

The next text I want to share with you tells you about where they'll be when the world reaches the end of it's lifespan.

Revelation 21:22-27 (NLT)

²² I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. ²³ And the city has no need of sun or moon, for the glory of God illuminates the city, and the Lamb is its light. ²⁴ The nations will walk in its light, and the kings of the world will enter the city in all their glory. ²⁵ Its gates will never be closed at the end of day because there is no night there. ²⁶ And all the nations will bring their glory and honor into the city. ²⁷ Nothing evil will be allowed to enter, nor anyone who practices shameful idolatry and dishonesty—but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The world may end, but the light won't! Matter of fact, the end of this world will bring the light into better focus. At the end of this world, God will establish the new world, when he will create a new heaven and a new earth. When he will make his home among his children for all of eternity. And that light will shine in that new place.

There won't be any churches to crumble and need constant upkeep. We will live with THE CHURCH, in the presence of God and Jesus. So there will be no need for buildings where people go to seek them. There won't be a need for sun, moon, stars, or light bulbs. The glory of God will illuminate the city and everything will be lit up by the Lamb of God...by THE LIGHT – Jesus, the Son of God. His light is so bright and so eternal that there will never be such a thing as night, as darkness again, because his light will never go out.

Those who have found Jesus in this life, those who have accepted him and become a child of God, will live in the eternal presence of that light. There will be no end, no omega, because the light can never be extinguished. Darkness will never cover the city of God and sin will never invade it.

IV – IT STAYS ON:

Man-made lights have a lifespan. They burn for minutes, hours, or days, but they eventually go out. Flashlights start out bright but eventually the batteries wear down, the light grows dim, and the beam dies. Candles start out tall and bright, but over time they burn down and snuff themselves out. We know that stars have a lifespan and eventually flame out and are extinguished too. But the Light of the world can never be extinguished. There is no darkness that can overwhelm it, or extinguish it.

It was tried remember? The Light was born under a star in a stable and immediately had to flee the country to Egypt because King Herod was the first to try. He killed all the babies in the region

trying to do it, but God would not allow it and sent an angel to Joseph telling him to take the Light and flee so it wouldn't be extinguished. The baby grew up and traveled the region preaching the Good News of God's love to all who would listen. This infuriated the religious leaders of the day and they set out to extinguish the Light. They got one of his own followers to betray him. By the light of lanterns they arrested him in the garden where he prayed. With torches they led him through the darkness to be confronted by those who were in the dark, priests. They handed him over to the Romans and demanded his light be snuffed out. They beat him, mocked him, spit on him, humiliated him, and then they marched him up a hill and nailed him to a cross. He hung there until he died and as darkness descended on the land it appeared that they had all won...that the Light had truly been extinguished. That the darkness of sin and death had done what John told us could not be done. They sealed the Light, darkened by the stain of our sin, in a tomb, sealed out light with a large stone over the entrance, and let those who had followed the Light to weep in the darkness.

But the light had not been extinguished and on the 3rd day the Glory of God shone around as the angels rolled back the stone and The Light lived. The light survived. The light still shined!

V - THE LIGHTS ON FOR ME:

So WHAT DOES ALL THAT MEAN TO US? It means the light is always on. Jesus was there at our beginning as he watched us being formed in the utter seclusion and darkness of the womb as the Psalmist tells us (Psalm 139:15).

It means that the Light shines in the middle of our earthly lives. No matter what we face, no matter what we go through, Jesus is there. He said so in the Gospel of Matthew as he promised, "And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20b).

And even in death the Light is there. He promises us in John 14 that when our time here is done he will come and get us because he's prepared a room for us in God's mansion (John 14: 1-3).

So the Light is with you as you are conceived, as you live, and as you die. Jesus Christ has no lifespan and because of his sacrifice for our sins, neither do we. We join him in being an exception to the rule. Just as he burst forth from the tomb of death, so will we if we accept the baby in the manger as our Lord and Savior and allow his Light to shine on us, in us, and through us.

The light will never go out, and when we believe we will always be in the light.

AMEN