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West Valley Presbyterian Church
Light of The World
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What happens when the light moves in?

THEME: Jesus as the LIGHT made a huge impact...We are the light of the world...
let's make an impact

Meditation

So there I was about six years ago doing something so ridiculously
stupid that I am ashamed to even tell you

I was standing deep in a cave without a flashlight

And truly, it was the darkest place I had ever been

I had wanted to go into that cave so badly! I had told my family as we
vacationed in Hawaii that I want to go into it and explore. It looked so
cool and craggy from the outside. They just shrugged. They were lolling
on the beach...They didn't want to come

So I went into the cave by myself...It looked small from the outside so

I didn't realize how far back it went

It just kept going and going...back...back and back. Cool I thought! This
is awesome exploring the unknown! I've always had a sort of reckless

side to me that wants to go and explore something where no one else has ever been!

For awhile I could see because of the broad opening of the cave to the daylight at the front end where I had entered

But finally, as I took a turn and the light slipped away I realized I could not see at all

Not one little thing...

And I stood there paralyzed...

I began to get squeamish wondering what was hanging above my head

What was squishing underneath my feet...and where I should put my hands to hold my balance... I needed a light but did not have one.

I had not thought that far ahead

Luckily I was not the only one who had decided to explore the cave that day; in a few minutes someone came up behind me. They had a little teeny flashlight.

Don't you have a light? They asked me...

I shook my head stupidly "no"

“Here, we will help you” they said shining the tiny little beam in my direction.

That little tiny light changed everything. It got me out of the cave.

It helped me see what I couldn't see before...

It took away my fear, and it led me to safety

When light moves in, in the midst of darkness, even a little tiny beam of light, it makes a big impact! It changes everything. It saves lives, and it shows you what is really going on around you – that you couldn't see before...

When Jesus entered the world as the LIGHT of the world, it changed everything too – his coming even cut history in half. People saw their sin, but they also saw God's grace illuminating their lives in a whole new way. People recognized who God was, and the whole Christian faith was born...It had a big impact... When the Light of the World Moves In things start to happen.

ITS INTERESTING TO NOTE THAT LIGHT WAS THE FIRST THING THAT

GOD CREATED IN GENESIS. Light seems to be a big deal to God.

God said, “**Let there be light**” – FIRST item on the agenda when creating the world...was that there be light.

Before this, the earth was without form, a

void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep

The word in Hebrew “create” is a special word that is only used in scripture when referring to God ...this same word “create” is never used when talking about people making something happen. Because only God can create something out of nothingness – only God can bring light out of darkness

And what he did in creation, he also accomplishes in human lives all the time...bringing light to peoples darkness... (I once was blind but now I see).

C.S. Lewis put it this way, **“I believe in God the same way that I believe in a sunrise. I not only see the sun rising, but by its light I see everything else.”**

Scripture declares, **“In you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.” Psalm 36:9**

1 John 1:5 “God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.”

So when God moves in, light moves in. And the darkness is dispelled, and we see and are aware of things we never had any inkling about before.

Take out your bookmark...its right here and you will be getting a different one each week for the Sundays in Advent with scriptures about light on them. Look at the Isaiah passage at the top...Now everybody get ready...this is a pop open bookmark quiz...

First Question: **What kind of light did the people who walked in darkness see?** A tiny little beam of white light shining from weak batteries in a cheap flashlight? No. Even that little light in the cave as I told you made a huge difference for me...cause any light in a dark situation is so desperately needed

The light of Christ was a **GREAT LIGHT**...do you see that in Isaiah's prophecy?

The people who walked in darkness have seen a GREAT LIGHT

Second Question: **What kind of darkness was it that people were walking in?**

Twilight? Hazy Mist? Partly Cloudy? No...

DEEP DARKNESS....

Deep darkness is when you can't see at all; the people Isaiah is referring are walking in it. They are walking in DEEP DARKNESS.

How can you do that? There are hazards all around you that you don't know are there. You might be going the wrong way. You might fall off a

cliff. You might walk into pit. Who knows? You have no way of telling what might be out there ready to pounce on you, or what is in your way that you might trip over and crack your head on

Also, chances are *deep darkness means you don't have clue as to where you are going* either... You can't see or know your direction.

Walking in the darkness is scary business and confusing and just stupid – so what is implied here is that people don't know they are in darkness – otherwise they wouldn't be walking around. Right?

When the power goes out, and the streets are dark, you don't say "Oh now is a great time to walk around the neighborhood." No way! If you can't see where you are going...you don't take a walk. You stay put until you can find some kind of a light source.

DEEP DARKNESS is contrasted with a GREAT LIGHT because we are supposed to get a clue as to the great impact Jesus made when he came to the world. He illumined everything, like a spotlight in a dark cave; like a flare lighting up the dark sky;

God's GREAT LIGHT entering into our DEEP DARKNESS means three things for us this Christmas

1. **We've got to get adjusted to the light**

If you've been in a dark room for a long time and then you go out into the sun, what happens? Your eyes have to get adjusted to the light. The contrast is so great you actually can't see anything for awhile, right? That's why we celebrate the season of Advent to prepare ourselves for the coming of the LIGHT OF CHRIST. Why don't we just jump into Christmas and celebrate away? Why all this Advent stuff...this waiting and anticipating period? Well, what this is supposed to be is a time of preparation...adjusting our eyes so that we can see what this GREAT LIGHT is trying to reveal to us. At this time of Advent we pray a little more, we have extra devotional material, we might spend time more in the scriptures during this season t. We celebrate Advent so that we can take in this Christmas event gradually and prayerfully so that when Christmas comes - when the GREAT LIGHT appears ' we will be able to truly celebrate and see who Jesus is and why he came in a deeper fuller way. *I'd like you to pray for that this Christmas.* I'd like you pray that Christmas will be a time when Jesus' Great Light - the light of his presence - will dawn upon your heart and you will be able to see him, with greater clarity and truth. Would you do that?

I was talking to someone recently who has been a Christian all of her life. She's seen Christmases come and go and it all seemed nice but not really awe inspiring – pretty, quaint, traditional, sweet etc. , But sitting in a church service just recently she had a profound sense of God's presence very near to her and all around her. And she shared this experience with me, and it was powerful she was moved to tears and she said to me, *“You know...the message that came to me through this awareness of God's presence is that God has always been so present for his people. So close, so available, wanting, desiring a relationship with them. But we couldn't see it...we were blinded (you see that's the DEEP DARKNESS that we are stumbling around in that Isaiah is talking about) And she said, “That's why Jesus came! She said. That's why Emmanuel (GOD WITH US) was born. So we could see that truth. So we get how close he is to us, how available, and how much he desires to be in relationship with us.”*

You see, Christmas is the greatest love story ever written

Christmas tells us that

We have a God who *wants* to be with us. He isn't forced to be with us.

He *wants* to be with us, and he is with us...

His name “**Immanuel**” means “**God is with us**”

But often we don't realize how close he is because of this deep darkness of our own sin, and of the sin of the world.

How very available and ready to respond God is– if we could only see

Getting adjusted to the light for you might be as simple as recognizing the reality of God's closeness to you this

Christmas and reaching out to him with renewed faith.

Second, when a GREAT LIGHT enters into our DEEP DARKNESS

2. **We've Got To Be Willing To Follow The Light**

Second passage on your bookmark. You have the glory of the Lord blazing down on shepherds in a dark field. After those shepherds shielded their eyes and gradually became accustom to the whole landscape draped in the light of the heavenly host what they were expecting to do that night – which was to watch their sheep til morning in the dark– took a totally different turn than what they were planning. Instead of staying in the dark field, they were told by the angels to go and find the light of the world....Jesus. To turn around, go back into the city find him and worship him. This wasn't exactly something they were planning on doing that night at all!

Sometimes when we have been in darkness for a long time, its hard to shift set; its hard sometimes to hear God speaking to us because the darkness and sin of this world separates us from God. Its not always clear, as it was for shepherds (who had this amazing vision and clear direction) which way *we are supposed to go*; and yet I know some of you have shared with me that you have a sense about a certain calling, or purpose that you have felt nudged by the Holy Spirit to pursue. And pursuing this calling or purpose would mean a change in how you do life now, in some way...And you just aren't sure what next steps would be...and the unknown is kind of scary and you just haven't had the time or wherewithal to pursue it further. I want to encourage any of you who might be "seeing the light" in terms of a slightly different direction in your life, to maybe spend a little time during this Advent Season just exploring that sense of call - Now, this isn't for all of you - just some of you who may be being asked to leave the sheep on the hillside - leave the doing of what you've always done - and move closer to encountering Jesus this Christmas by going in a new direction...

I felt like I needed to say this to some of you this morning... but I also want to encourage everyone of you to pay attention to the guidance of the Holy Spirit this Advent and pray about how to follow his leading and promptings more completely. Maybe its time to take a risk in faith...Leaving the sheep on the hillside, or most of them anyway, was a risk. But the light of the glory of the Lord in that darkness trumped any fear, or concern those shepherds had about leaving their fields. Francis Chan states... God doesn't call us to be comfortable. He calls us to trust Him so completely that we are unafraid to put ourselves in situations where we will be in trouble if He doesn't come through."

– [Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*](#)

If he asks you to leave your sheep on the hillside, take the risk... go for it. When you follow the Light of Christ's guidance, God will come through for you.

And that brings me to the third point which is this... Just as the GREAT LIGHT of Christ had a huge impact on the DEEP DARKNESS of our world so...

3. **We've Got To Allow Christ's Light To Shine Through Us So That**

We Can Make An Impact

Just as Jesus said that He was the Light of the World he also said that we...you and I...are the LIGHT of the world. That means that just as much as he made an impact on our dark and sorry planet,

so WE ARE MEANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOO. The Light of Christ's presence lives in us, and is meant to shine out of us. If we are so bold to use Christ's name, and call ourselves "**Christians**" – **little Christs** (that is what the word Christian means) – we need to recognize that we aren't here at church to just amass more information about God, and think about doing good things, and feel better about ourselves because we are in church and happy with our friends. No. Its so much more than that. You and I are the light of the world. Impact makers, change agents for Jesus Christ. Francis Chan put it this way, "**God's definition of what matters is pretty straightforward. He measures our lives by how we love.**"

– [Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*](#)
"**I believe He wants us to love others so much that we go to extremes to help them.**"

– [Francis Chan, *Crazy Love: Overwhelmed by a Relentless God*](#)
I recently heard the testimony of a man who had two cardiac arrests and saw Jesus in an NDE – Near Death Experience. And he said Jesus asks him one question as they are reviewing his life together and he said the question Jesus asked him was this....**What did you do for your fellow human beings while you were on earth?** Notice the question is not "what were your

views on this or that issue”, and it was not “what were your good intentions”, or “how many times did you go to church”, or “how many Bible verses did you memorize”. No. The question was very simple and direct...what did you do to help people out...to make an impact...to change a life...to go the extra mile...to be the light of the world. To help them see in the darkness. What did you do? How did you help them? If we have the light of the world living in us, it is incumbent upon us to share it...and not hide.

This Christmas I'd like you to remind yourself again and again that You are the Light of the World because Christ's light shines through you, and you are meant to make an impact on this world for Jesus Christ....and each of us is going to have a different way that we do that. But in order to remind yourself of this – that you are the light of the world meant to make an impact - I'd like you to do something every time you see Christmas Lights that you are particularly drawn to this Season...Christmas 2013...Maybe you are drawn to a certain display of Christmas lights because they are lighting up a dark corner in a room in your office, or they are shining on a dark street...(our street...really dark...shopping center lights) maybe the lights are in a tree in a park or on a house and you think for a

minute to yourself “that’s lovely”, OR “I really like that display”...if you have that reaction to Christmas lights any time this season the next thing I’d like you to think is this “**I am the light of the World because Christ’s light shines through me**”....can we say that together? Its on the bottom of your bookmark.....So if you see Christmas lights this season that you particularly find appealing, I want you to remember who you are and that you are called to make an impact...as much as a light shining in the darkness makes all the difference. I want you to remember what a high calling this is, and how desperate the world is for the light of Christ that lives within you.

L: Go Out And Share The Light Of Christ! Make An Impact,

Dispel The Darkness!

P: We Are The Light Of The World for Christ’s Light Shines

Through Us!

Let Us Pray...(and for communion)

Jesus coming as a GREAT LIGHT was meant to make a huge impact on the world.

Now we might think the world is a pretty dark place today

But it was pretty dark when Jesus came too

He came into the ancient world 2000 plus years ago...was born into a situation where 90% of the people lived in extreme poverty

Life expectancy for the average adult was 25 years old

He came into a political mess...to the Jews who were longing for freedom from oppressive Roman Rule

And he came at a time when people were tired of waiting around for God to act

Ever get tired of waiting on God?

I certainly do...but I tell you I have never waited 400 years...and that's the time of silence between the Old Testament and the New Testament

We have no record of God speaking or acting for his people during those 4 centuries of time

So when Jesus was born people were at their wits end....you had these religious zealots who wanted to overthrow the Romans by taking matters into their own hands

Thinking that if there was a revolution...God would work through that and show up

And then you had the legalists who believed that if you just followed the law a little more closely with more care...God would show up and work through that

There was such unrest and such hopelessness...it was a dark dark time... not at all like a Hallmark Christmas card.

And then Jesus came into that darkness as the LIGHT OF THE WORLD... and split history in half...shook up peoples religiousness...and showed them who God really was

C.S. Lewis said this... **“I believe in Christianity in the same way that I believe in the sun. Not just because I see the sun rise every morning, but because by the sun I see everything else.”**

This Christmas, as we celebrate Jesus Christ the light of the world...its not just...*Yeah I believe in that historic fact long ago that it happened*, but rather... Jesus is still the light of the world today, and...my faith in him

makes me see the whole world differently right now in the Christmas season of 2013; He didn't just come once long ago in Bethlehem. He comes always, everyday, and his life is inside of you, and when you call yourself a Christian – (what an honor friends when you take on the name of Jesus Christ when you call yourself Christian) – literally **Christian = "little Christ"** – you are saying – that because Jesus Christ lives inside of you – you yourself are committed to be the light of the world as his light shines through you. You are saying that you are all about making a big impact on the world and to be that GREAT LIGHT that dispels the DEEP DARKNESS.

Blessed Assurance...not a Christmas song

But how many references to seeing do you have?

“visions of rapture now burst on my sight”

Fanny Crosby was physically blind, lived her life in physical darkness...

when she wrote this...

But her spiritual eyes were illumined with the light of Christ;

I am somebody who *loves Christmas...*

Every year I have a tree that I decorate with special ornaments that I've saved for years and I deck the whole tree out in white trumpets and birds and bows...and even pearls sometimes...with accents of blue and gold...and then to top it off I add white lights...

The light makes such a difference – it makes the whole tree shimmer. Its beautiful...