

You are the Light of the World
February 5, 2023

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church **Pastor Tyson Labuhn**

Grace, mercy, and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Believe it or not, as I prepared for today's sermon, I was curious about the number of lights that were in the sanctuary. So, I asked our facilities manager, but he was not too sure. So, I came into the sanctuary and started to count them. I stopped after 50. Of course, not all of them are the same and each has its purpose. But that number does not come close to the number of lights that are outside the sanctuary, in and outside of the church building.

Most of them are fluorescent lights. But, over the last couple of years, we have been changing them to LED. LED, or the Light-Emitting Diode, produces light under the positive waveform of the voltage—I had to look that up—and what I have come to understand is that LED lights last longer, take up less electricity, and are more efficient.

In this morning's Gospel reading, we heard Jesus say to His disciples, "You are the light of the world." And it is a good thing that God does not decide a person's usefulness based on efficiency. Because I'm not too sure how efficiently any of us are shining His light out into the world. Otherwise, we would have been replaced long ago, especially in light of how much time He invests in us.

While that thought might make us pause, it is also what makes today's Gospel reading so great. Because Jesus does not say that we need to be more efficient or that we need to shine brighter. He simply says to His disciples that they are the light of the world and helps us to see that those who follow Jesus bring light into the world. They brighten it up, even though there is darkness.

In last week's Gospel reading, Jesus talked about this in what have been called *the Beatitudes*. He helps those who have faith in Him to see that they are blessed even though they have struggles. *The Beatitudes* do not make sense to those without faith. But for those who have, who heard Jesus say them for the first time, it must have been like God was turning on the light inside of them.

When God first created the world and said, “let there be light,” He separated the light from the darkness. It was three days later that He created the sun, moon, and stars to light the day and night. But, unlike the sun, moon, and stars, Jesus turns on a new light that separates light from the darkness even in the middle of the day. Because there is only one way to pierce the darkness of sin and unbelief.

And God turns on the light in our lives by bringing us to trust in Jesus. Jesus truly is the Light of the world. And His light scatters the darkness. His Word turns on a light inside men and women, just like it did when He said to His first disciples, “come, follow me,” like it did when people heard and understood *the Beatitudes* for the first time, and like it does today when His Word is mixed with simple water in the waters of Holy Baptism. And people are taken out of the kingdom of darkness and brought into His marvelous light. They become followers of Jesus, fulfilling what St. Paul once wrote to those at the church in Ephesus, “For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light” (Ephesians 5:8).

Have you ever been sound asleep at night when someone walks into the room and turns on the light? It is not very pleasant. It is no wonder why some people react the way that they do when they hear Jesus speak. As St. John explains in His Gospel, “Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of the light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19). Sin loves darkness, but God has a different plan—so that we might see the light as good, God willingly allowed the Light of the World, Jesus, to be extinguished on the cross, that we might see Him for who He truly

is, and light might be turned on within us by what He did for us and on our behalf—we call that day Good Friday.

Jesus' lifeless body was taken down from the cross and laid in a cold, dark tomb. A large stone was rolled in place to seal off any light from entering. There was no window for the tomb because the eyes of the dead cannot see light. But on the third day, with the early morning light of Easter, Jesus overcame death and the grave, opening up the doors and windows to our own graves, promising to us that whoever believes in Him, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Him shall never die (John 11:25b-26).

But until that day comes, our focus is to live in the light of Jesus each and every day as the forgiven children of God who live to share His light with the world around us, that we might fulfill what Jesus says to us today, that we might be the light of the world, letting His light shine through us so that others might see our good works (Matthew 5:16). It is more than personal enlightenment. It is a blessing and responsibility for us. Because it calls us to see and witness the hope that we have in the light despite the darkness, something that I must admit is not always easy at times, because it is easy to find fault in others, to complain when things do not go your way or at least the way that you want them to. Jesus knew about this when He walked this earth. But instead of focusing on the anxiety, worry, and fear, Jesus took the time to bring people, one by one, out of darkness into the light. And in turn, He sent them out with the light of faith to shine like stars in the darkness of this world.

Each one of us, having been baptized, is given the light of Christ so that we might live always by the light of Christ. In Holy Baptism, we receive His Spirit who works within us, prompting us to come to church, confess our sins, and receive forgiveness rather than blaming or excusing sins. And His Spirit encourages us to share the light of Christ by trying to live out our days like Jesus, who fulfilled the law of God through His self-sacrificial

love, allowing that love for God and our love for our neighbor to become known, so that others might come to see the light.

But like the disciples were at times, we only dimly reflect the light of Christ, and sometimes it can barely be seen in our lives. It happens when we allow our temper to go unchecked, when we can say things without thinking, when we can think of things that are not loving, and when we knowingly do things or not do things that allow darkness to creep back into our lives, as well as the lives of others.

But thankfully, God is patient with us. And His Spirit calls us to repent of these things, that we might renounce the sinful ways of darkness in our lives, seek and receive forgiveness for the sake of Jesus' death on the cross, and continue to reflect the light of His love as best as we can all our days.

You know, not all lights are the same. There are over 50 lights here in the sanctuary. Each one is designed to give light in a way that drives the darkness away. There are the 12 chandelier hanging lights. There are recessed lights on the ceiling. The floodlights highlight certain parts of the sanctuary. Not to mention, there is the light that comes in from the stained-glass windows, the lit candles on the Altar, as well as the eternal candle flame that represents God's presence in this place. And yet, they are all here in this place because of the ONE LIGHT that shines in our lives. Jesus is THE LIGHT that drives out darkness, and without Him, we can do no-good things. He is the light of men, and He says to you today: You are the light of the world. So that, with His Spirit dwelling within you, you might let your light shine before others, and give glory to your Father who is in heaven, both now and always.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.