

Friday — Light for the Darkness

Read Isaiah 60:1-6. In verse 2 there's talk about the darkness that covers the earth and a thick darkness that is over the people. I mentioned yesterday, generally speaking, that darkness in our lives is sin. But what exactly does that darkness entail in our lives today? Take a few minutes to brainstorm that, both for darkness in our world as well as the darkness that may be very specific to you. There are a lot of emotions that come with darkness – fear, unknown, stuffiness, feeling stifled and closed in, being immobilized, feeling alone. Darkness is where Satan lives and where evil lurks. It's a synonym for our sin. The darkness in our lives and in our world is very real and can be very powerful. But we have the Light – something and someONE who is much more powerful yet. And it is the Lord who acts first, who comes and shines on us – we get to be light in the darkness of this world! It is His love that compels Him to shine His light and His love into our world and into our lives. The urging in verse 4 is something we at times forget. We're told to lift up our eyes and look around us. See what the Lord has done and what He continues to do. See what happens when His light is in your heart. We become radiant and attractive! And that's all part of the Lord's plan for us, His people. We're to go into the dark places of this world and shine His light. Where can you go? How can you shine? With whom can you share some hope and light in the midst of their particular darkness? Pray for those in darkness and pray for the boldness to see the opportunities the Lord presents to us to let His light shine.

Saturday — The Shining Light

Read John 8:12 and Matthew 5:14-16. We hear very clearly, and I believe most of us know it as well, that Jesus is the Light of the world. He states it clearly in John 8 and we also read the verses in John 1 where John the Baptist made it clear that he was not the light either – John had simply come to point people to the light. Jesus is the Light because He was ultimately the One who dispelled all darkness – the darkness of sin and of death – and we know that He continues to dispel that darkness every day in our lives. But then comes a twist that the Lord is so good at doing! Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5 tells us that WE are the light of the world. How did that happen??!! And why? As always, God is working out the details in order to fulfill His plan. It is Jesus' light that shines in our hearts through our faith, belief, and trust in Him as our Savior. And with His light shining in us, we become the light – little Christ's, if you will. And He sends us out into His world to shine His light, to share His love, and to hold out the hope that we know so others can see through the darkness of their lives. So continue to live your life in such a way that Jesus' light shines brightly in your words, your actions, your attitudes, and your life – so that all may see and know Jesus!

This week's *Bring It Home* devotions were written by Pastor Glen Schlecht
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Bring It Home

*Devotions for
the week of
January 7, 2018*

What Now?

How can you “let the light shine” with Jesus’ love? Who in your circle of friends and acquaintances does not know Jesus or may be struggling with some issues of darkness right now? Pray for that person and then look for an opportunity to let Christ’s light and love shine through you in some practical and tangible way as you share Jesus and His message of life and hope with that person.

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Monday — Epiphany

January 6 is the 12th day of Christmas – and the meaning of that goes far beyond the fun Christmas carol by that name. For Christians, the celebration of Christmas actually *begins* on December 25 and continues for the next twelve days, rather than ending on the 25th, as much of our culture approaches it. Our Christmas celebration actually culminates on January 6th, which is known as Epiphany, the date Christians for centuries have celebrated and remembered the coming of the Magi or Wisemen from the East. Those Magi followed the light of a remarkable star which led them to Jesus. Epiphany is all about light and letting that light shine. In the dictionary Epiphany is defined like this: “an appearance or manifestation especially of a divine being; a usually sudden manifestation or perception of the essential nature or meaning of something; an intuitive grasp of reality through something (as an event) usually simple and striking; an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure b: a revealing scene or moment.” That’s why on Sunday we celebrated Epiphany with lights and candles all over and also why, throughout this coming season of Epiphany, we’ll continue thinking about the Light of Jesus shining brightly. For today, take a look at these three verses from the Psalms and Proverbs and consider the power of Jesus’ light shining in our lives – Psalm 97:11; Psalm 118:27; and Proverbs 13:9. Give thanks for His light shining in your heart!

Tuesday — The Magi

For the next two days I want to take a look at some of the very significant elements surrounding the coming of the Magi from the East who came to see and worship Jesus. Begin today by reading Matthew 2:1-12. Think about how amazing our God is as He takes care of details we probably would have never thought of. Who were these wisemen, why did they come, and how did they know? These are questions that we don’t have solid answers for. It seems that God placed in these peoples’ hearts, through their studies of the stars and perhaps other historical information, maybe even including the Old Testament Scriptures, the insights they needed to realize what God was up to. The Magi coming to seek and worship Jesus has profound implications for all of us, primarily demonstrating that Jesus had come into this world not only for the Jews but for all people. In the opening verses of this story, we also hear the contrast between light and darkness as King Herod was showing how dark the human heart truly is without the Lord. He was conniving, lying, and deceiving, trying to find a way to locate Jesus – not to worship Him but to kill Him and protect what Herod thought was a threat to his throne. But again, God was at work in the details. Ironically God even used Herod to assist the Magi and then, in a dream, kept that entourage safe by sending them home by another route, avoiding Herod. For today, give thanks that our gracious and loving God has the desire in His heart for all people to know Him and His love for us. Consider the ways you have experienced God taking care of some of the details in your life. Then give Him thanks for the care He has for you.

Wednesday — Joy, Worship, and Gifts

Read the story of the Magi again today in Matthew 2:1-12. In verse 9, we see once again, as we thought about in yesterday’s devotion, God taking

care of the details. He had put this remarkable star in the sky to lead the Magi to Bethlehem and then He got very specific in having the star move in the sky until it came to exactly the place where Jesus was and had the star stop right there and shine. Isn’t that cool?! What was the response of the Magi? First, they were overjoyed! Joy is a gift God gives to us as His people, this peace and contentment in our hearts of knowing that God is here. Then they worshipped Jesus as they presented Him costly and precious gifts that they had brought with them from the East. These were gifts befitting a king – and God had put before them that it truly was a king that they had come to see. Amidst what were undoubtedly simple and humble surroundings with the house in which they were now living, they knew that this little child was royalty. The story of the Magi is still a beautiful picture for us today. We, too, are called to seek Jesus and follow Him and His light. As we know He is with us and, through the assurance of our baptism, He is in our hearts, we too have a joy that comes in knowing Jesus. Joy is not just happiness but it is knowing the hope we have that no matter what may be going on in our lives, Jesus is with us and will be with us for all eternity. And so we worship Him – we gather each week with fellow believers and seekers to worship, to come to receive the gifts He came to bring of love, life, forgiveness, and hope. We too give gifts – our offerings and our very lives, using the gifts and talents we’ve been given to serve others and in so doing, we are serving and giving back to our Lord. What gifts can you give in the weeks to come or in this year ahead that demonstrate your love and your thanks for the Lord being in your life?

Thursday — Living in a World of Darkness and Light

Read John 1:1-9. What did you read about light? It’s related to life, it shines in the darkness, it is not understood, John was not the light, John was to witness to the light, the true light is intended for everyone. Like John the Baptist, we are not the light but we are very much part of the formula. Jesus is the Light, the true Light who has come to give light to everyone. It is Jesus who has come to chase the darkness out of our lives. We know that “darkness” to be sin – my sin, your sin, the sin and brokenness that shows itself in so many hurtful and ugly ways in our world and in our lives. Jesus chased that darkness when He entered it for Himself on the cross and through His death. We deserved the suffering and the pain He experienced and the death He died. But because of His love for us, He allowed His light to be extinguished for the briefest of time. When He rose again on Easter morning, we were assured that the Light would never go out again – He had conquered the darkness once and for all. Yes the world in which we live is filled with darkness, but it is not void of light – Jesus is here, Jesus is in us, we are here, we are light, we are shining! Because of His victory, the light of His love and His presence allows us to glow, to shine each day as we reflect His light and His love in our own lives. How can you be light in this world today – for a person, in a situation, at your work place, in your home? Today give thanks for His light that chases our darkness each day and gives us opportunity to stand tall in the assurance that we never have to live in the darkness again.