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## Light in the Darkness

On a very cold and dark Christmas Eve, a little boy and his father walked down a path through the woods on their way home. The boy held tightly to his father's hand. He was afraid. He looked at the lantern in father's other hand and whimpered, "Daddy, I'm scared...and the light only reaches out a little ways." The father squeezed his son's hand a little tighter and said, "I know son, but if we just keep walking, you'll see, the light will keep shining before us all the way home."

This is the darkest time of year. We will soon see the shortest day of the year...or the longest night. But that's not what I mean. For many people Christmas is a dark time. There are people who are living in darkness; the darkness of loneliness as they find themselves alone this season, the darkness of sorrow as they remember loved ones who have died this year, the darkness of gloom as so many people are disappointed because Christmas may not live up to their expectations, or worry, or fear. It seems that the works of darkness; shoplifting, burglaries and other crimes increase this time of year. There is darkness over the world this Advent and Christmas season, and the darkness can crowd out all the joy of Christmas. Like that little boy, people are afraid of the path that lies before them and the light seems to reach out only a little ways.

But Christmas is the season of light. There are lights everywhere; on stores and businesses, in our homes and on our Christmas trees, in the church and on the Advent wreath. There are lights everywhere, but do you know why? Do you understand the symbolism?

Light has always been associated with our God. Into the darkness and chaos God's first words were, "Let there be light...and there was light!" When the Israelites were on their way to the Promised Land, the Lord guided them with a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. When they saw the glorious pillar, they knew the Lord was with them. King David believed, "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear?" The prophet Micah confessed, "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me."

So it was most fitting that when Jesus, the Son of God, came into this dark and troubled world He claimed, "I am the Light of the World!" Just as God was present among His people in that pillar of fire, so, Jesus claimed "I Am" God in person...God incarnate...God with His people. That's the message of Christmas.

There was darkness on the Judean hillside, the night Jesus was born. Those were the days before electric lights. There were no yard lights, or street lights, or headlights,

or lighted signs. Maybe they had a little fire to keep themselves warm. But it was dark! Until that darkness was broken by an angel... by an army of angels...and the glory of the Lord shone all around. It's no wonder that the shepherds were terrified. They had never seen anything so bright or glorious. But the angel told them, "Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy. Unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Savior who is Christ the Lord." All of the darkness in the world that night could not extinguish the light or silence the message. The Light of the world had come!

Thirty years later another hillside was covered with darkness...a strange darkness in the middle of the day. The armies of angels stood ready again to split the darkness and come again to rescue the Lord of Light and to carry out God's judgment against sinful mankind. But out of the darkness from the cross came the cry, "Father, forgive them..."

Three days later, in the darkness just before dawn, light exploded out of an open grave. That light scattered the darkness of sin. That light dispelled the darkness of evil and Satan's power. That light filled the grave as an angel proclaimed more good news, "He is not here, He is Risen!" That terrible, frightening darkness was gone, forever.

This Christmas hear the words of Jesus "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." He comes into your world... into your life...into your heart...God with you. He comes to bring light into your darkness...to bring hope into your sorrow...to give comfort in your gloom...to restore calm in the midst of the storm. He comes to establish God's peace on earth. He comes with a Christmas gift...the gift of life...abundant life...eternal life.

And He says to you, "Follow me." Either you follow Jesus and walk with Him in the light...or you stumble and grope through the darkness of this world alone. St. John wrote, "This is the verdict; Light has come into the world, but men loved the darkness instead of the light, because their deeds were evil.

This Light of the World enlightens us and reveals to us the love of our God. John also wrote, "If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin."

Jesus promised "You will have the light of life." He invites you to put your hand into His, and to walk with Him through the darkness of this world...through the darkness of



## YES Ministries (continued from page 7)

### Abundantly Blessed—Focus on Stewardship Ministry

Abundantly blessed with another harvest and with God's daily sustenance, we respond by generously supporting the mission and ministry of our local congregation and the church at large. "Consecrated Stewards" encourages percentage giving—setting aside a percentage of one's income and each week returning to the Lord from what He has given us. Congregations are then encouraged to sacrifice a percentage in supporting the District and Synod of which they are a member. Together, we send missionaries into the world. Together, we support those who go into the mission fields of the District (Hispanic communities, Sudanese neighbors, isolated deaf families). Contributions for the 2009 District budget can be made through January 2010. Congregations are urged to prayerfully consider their District commitment for 2010. Iowa District West offers a variety of stewardship education resources.

### Camp VBS - 2010

The theme of Camp VBS 2010 is "Creation Station." Children will climb aboard the "Truth Train" and follow the tracks of God's plan for His creation as He shares it in Genesis 1-11. In a culture which denies God's creative power, it is extremely important that our children know the Truth of Jesus. Camp VBS will again offer five Bible-based stories,

theme crafts, special skits, crafts, Bible bops and more. More information will be coming soon!

## President's Page (continued from page 4)

the valley of the shadow of death...all the way home...to the glory, the joy of our heavenly Father's house. He has promised you the Light of everlasting life.

That is what all of the lights are about this season. They are all about Jesus, the Light of the world...about the Light of life...about the glory of heaven. The lights of Christmas push back the darkness with their special glow, don't they?

Have you noticed that it doesn't take bright spotlights or floodlights to make this season bright? A lot of little lights accomplish the same purpose. Each one adding its own special luster to the total brightness. Jesus said, "Let your light so shine before men..." Your light might be small. Your influence in this dark world might seem insignificant... but each of us glows with the brightness of our Lord's love. As He fills your heart and life...your world will become brighter...and the darkness, whatever it might be, will be driven back, farther and farther. And you'll see, the Light will keep shining before us all the way home.

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